

Joseph Wright's Colosseums back from their Grand Tour

After a period of restoration work, two Joseph Wright paintings will return to Derby Museum and Art Gallery, as part of The Grand Tour Season 2.



Two works by Joseph Wright of Derby; the *Colosseum by Daylight* and the *Colosseum by Moonlight*, were severely over painted in the 1960s. To restore them back to their original glory, conservators have been working to reveal the original works underneath.

The paintings went on display, before the restoration in July 2015, as part of [The Grand Tour](#) Season 1 exhibition programme, *Wright Revealed: Part I*.

Professionals hope to discover what Wright aimed to achieve within these pieces of work and simply find out as much as possible about these paintings and their origin. They will be displayed as *Wright Revealed: Part II*, alongside other examples of Wright's work, as part of Derby Museums' Grand Tour Season 2 exhibition, [Joseph Wright and the Lure of Italy](#).

For images, press visits and any other information, please contact Emma Hallam, Marketing Coordinator at Derby Museums on emma@derbymuseums.org 01332 641925.

This interlude in the main exhibition will be the first opportunity for the public to see the paintings uncovered and as Wright intended them to be seen. In addition to this, the public will be given a unique opportunity to understand and learn about the conservation work that went into revealing these lost elements.

Lucy Bamford, Senior Fine Art Curator said:

“The return of the paintings is really exciting. The work of the conservators has transformed these pictures and revealed many hitherto hidden details. The composition of the *Colosseum, by Moonlight* in particular, is very different from the scene as we knew it before. After their display prior to restoration last summer, we’re delighted to be welcoming visitors back to see the paintings afresh. The re-introduction of the paintings into the catalogue of Wright’s work will add to our understanding of the artist, and the techniques behind these and other late works.”

Tony Butler, Executive Director said:

“Showing these paintings in this transformed state is a fitting finale to the Grand Tour programme. We’re incredibly fortunate to have been able to undertake this work: the treatment required is time-consuming and expensive, so this project has been something of a unique opportunity for Derby Museums, made possible through the generous support of The Pilgrim Trust and The Friends of Derby Museums.”

The paintings themselves first arrived at the museum in 1960 as a donation from Colonel J.G Burton Borough of Chetwynd Park in Shropshire. Amongst the collection donated are paintings that are now main features within the Museum & Art Gallery. In contrast to this the *Colosseum, by Moonlight* and the *Colosseum, by Daylight* were so badly damaged that they remained in the museum stores, regardless of them being the only surviving examples (out of at least four documented paintings) of this famous Italian landmark made by Wright.

Wright travelled to Italy late in life and his trip was one of artistic study as well as also being his honeymoon. During Wright’s trip, he dedicated himself to creating sketches of Roman culture, more specifically, its people, ruins and glorious surrounding countryside. The *Colosseum, by Moonlight* and its daylight companion date from the post Italian period and were exhibited at the Royal Academy in London, in 1789. They do not appear to have sold and it was only during an auction of the remains of Wright’s studio in 1801 that they were finally bought by Thomas Borrow, formerly of Castlefields House in Derby.

An entry in the sale catalogue described both paintings fully, as ‘The Colosseo at Rome with Figures, a highly finished View of this grand and interesting Monument of Antiquity’ and ‘A View of Ditto by Moonlight, with a Figure of a Friar at his evening Devotion to the Virgin’.

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The paintings, as we see them now, do retain many of these intricate details but cannot be described as 'highly finished'. Both paintings were damaged from a combination of age, lack of care and the over painting they have both received from a restorer which left them unrecognisable as Wright's work.

See *The Colosseum by Daylight* and *The Colosseum by Moonlight* from 23 April to 12 June, as part of Derby Museums' [Grand Tour](#) exhibition, [Joseph Wright and the Lure of Italy](#), at Derby Museum and Art Gallery.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Derby Museums

Founded in 2012, Derby Museums Trust is an independent charitable trust which is responsible for the rich cultural and creative history of Derby. It manages three sites across the city, the Museum and Art Gallery, Pickford's House and The Silk Mill, and holds and curates all the art and collections within them, including the world's largest collection of paintings by Joseph Wright of Derby.

The Trust's aim is to bring as many of the objects and treasures in the collections into the public domain as is practically possible and present them in ways that delight and inspire, via education and learning programmes, events and exhibitions, in order to share knowledge and inspire creativity and making amongst the people of Derby.

As a charitable trust, Derby Museums relies on funding and grants from organisations and donations from businesses and the general public, all of which is gratefully received in order to ensure that admission to the museums remains free for all.

Derby Silk Mill – Museum of Making

Derby Museums has secured a first round pass for major grant funding of £9.4m from the Heritage Lottery Fund, £2.5m from Arts Council England and £4m from Derby City Council of a £16.4m development to create Derby Silk Mill – Museum of Making. The project will open up the whole of the Silk Mill, creating beautiful spaces to inspire our visitors and will provide access to 100% of Derby Museums' collections of Making and Social History. The new museum will have our communities at its heart and be uniquely co-produced with the people of Derby over the next few years.

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Arts Council England

Derby Museums has been funded by Arts Council England since 2012 to deliver improved museum facilities and services in Derby. From April 2015 Derby Museums in a consortium with Nottingham Museums and Galleries has become one of 21 Major Partner Museums in England.

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/apply-funding/funding-programmes/major-partner-museums-2015-18/>

NOTES: The Grand Tour

The Grand Tour partnership of Nottingham Contemporary, Chatsworth House, Derby Museums and The Harley Gallery, together with Experience Nottinghamshire and Visit Peak District & Derbyshire, is a groundbreaking example of cultural tourism that aims to showcase the region's diverse richness of art, architecture and landscape to a new generation of local, national and international visitors. Funding for The Grand Tour was awarded to Nottingham Contemporary as part of the joint Arts Council England and VisitEngland Cultural Destinations programme, which supports arts and cultural organisations to work with the tourism sector to deliver projects that aim to maximise the impact arts and culture has on local economies, with further support from the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership.

www.thegrandtour.uk.com

Nottingham Contemporary

Nottingham Contemporary is a leading international art gallery with a strong local sense of purpose. It is the flagship contemporary visual arts venue in the East Midlands, presenting four exhibitions a year in an iconic building in Nottingham's Lace Market, designed by Caruso St John. Since it opened in November 2009 it has presented one of the most highly regarded contemporary art programmes in the UK to a large and diverse audience. It is committed to learning at all levels. Its pioneering, cross-disciplinary public programme is funded by The University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University. It also works with schools, colleges, community groups, families and young people. Nottingham Contemporary's principal funders are Arts Council England and Nottingham City Council.

www.nottinghamcontemporary.org

Chatsworth

The house is renowned for the quality of its art, landscape and hospitality. Home of the Cavendish family since the 1550s, it has evolved through the centuries to reflect the tastes,

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passions and interests of succeeding generations. Today Chatsworth contains works of art that span 4000 years, from ancient Roman and Egyptian sculpture, and masterpieces by Rembrandt, Reynolds and Veronese, to work by outstanding modern artists, including Lucian Freud, Edmund de Waal and David Nash. The garden is famous for its rich history, historic and modern waterworks and sculptures, the Victorian rock garden and the maze. Younger visitors also enjoy the farmyard and adventure playground and the 1000 acre park is open every day.

www.chatsworth.org

The Harley Gallery

The Harley Gallery is where old and new come together. It has a national reputation for excellence and innovation, aiming to widen participation and develop understanding of the work of practicing artists and makers. Situated on the ducal estate of Welbeck in North Nottinghamshire, the gallery is easily accessible from both the A1 and M1. The three gallery spaces show exhibitions of contemporary visual art and craft which change 5 times a year, alongside a gallery shop, recognized by the Crafts Council as a quality retail outlet. In 2016, The Harley will open a further exhibition space dedicated to showing objects from The Portland Collection of fine and decorative arts built up by the Dukes of Portland and their families who have lived at Welbeck for over 400 years.

www.harleygallery.co.uk

Arts Council England

Arts Council England champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2015 and 2018, we plan to invest £1.1 billion of public money from government and an estimated £700 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country.

www.artscouncil.org.uk

Experience Nottinghamshire

Experience Nottinghamshire is the destination management organisation responsible for driving leisure and business visitors to the county. It also manages the city's gold award-winning tourism centre. Tourism in Nottinghamshire is estimated to be worth around £1.55 billion to the local economy and supports 51,500 jobs. Experience Nottinghamshire is led and funded by the private sector with support from Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. It also works in partnership with VisitEngland and

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VisitBritain. Nottinghamshire is a leading tourism destination with a world-class record for sport, science, heritage, creativity and culture.

www.experiencenottinghamshire.com

Visit Peak District and Derbyshire

Visit Peak District & Derbyshire - the area's official tourist board - works with VisitBritain, VisitEngland, all local authorities in the Peak District and Derbyshire, business and commercial partners and surrounding tourism organisations that share the Peak District. It is committed to the successful and sustainable development of tourism, which is worth more than £1.9 billion to the local and regional economy and supports more than 27,700 jobs.

www.visitpeakdistrict.com

VisitEngland

VisitEngland is the country's national tourist board. They work in partnership with the industry to develop the visitor experience across England, plan national tourism strategy, grow the value of tourism in England and provide advocacy for the industry and our visitors. Their work is underpinned by robust research and customer insights. You can access the latest in-depth market intelligence and statistics on www.visitengland.org/insight-statistics. England is a unique destination and a real powerhouse in global tourism. It represents 84 per cent of the total UK visitor economy, is worth £106 billion, and supports 2.6 million jobs.

www.visitengland.com

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