

Joseph Wright paintings return home

Two paintings by Joseph Wright of Derby are coming home after a nail-biting win at auction in New York.

The companion pictures, which depict the iconic mills and Willersley Castle mansion founded by Sir Richard Arkwright at Cromford, in Derbyshire, were painted very late in Wright's career, and may be among his last works. Both paintings are thought to have been commissioned by the revolutionary mill owner, Arkwright, but had disappeared into the Art Market by the 1950s, where they passed through numerous hands before being purchased by a healthcare foundation in the United States. They were offered at auction at Christie's in New York, on 13th April this year.

After being alerted to their availability, staff at Derby Museums moved quickly to secure the funds to buy the pictures.

Tony Butler, Executive Director at Derby Museums said:

"We first got wind of the sale, nine days before the auction via a tip-off from our Patron, the Duke of Devonshire. Our team quickly went into action to raise the money for the purchase - a tremendous achievement which went down to the wire. These scenes are of a landscape so familiar to Derbyshire people and are so pleased to be bringing the paintings home."

Lucy Bamford, Senior Curator of Art at Derby Museums, said:

"We were thrilled at the opportunity to acquire the pictures. Bizarrely, whilst Derby Museums holds the world's largest collection of Wright's work, it does not contain any examples of his pure depictions of Derbyshire landscape; a subject he came to favour increasingly as he got older. These two paintings nicely fill that gap. We were also drawn to their historical significance, being depictions of a key area within the UNESCO Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, and the link to the Arkwright family; Wright's portraits of whom, along with associated objects, are in the Derby Museums collection."

Jonathan Wallis, Head of Museums at Derby Museums, said:

"The chance to enrich this story of world-changing history further left us in little doubt that we wanted to go for them. Thanks to The Heritage Lottery Fund, Art Fund, the V&A Purchase Grant Fund, and the Friends of Derby Museums, we had the funds, but we still needed to secure them. On the evening, there was one other bidder, but in the end we managed to get them well below their lower estimate of \$300,000. We're absolutely thrilled."

director, said:

“We are so pleased to have helped Derby Museums in such a crucial auction for them. It would have been disappointing not to have secured works with such strong local links as these, beautifully enhancing their renowned holdings by Wright of Derby.”

The paintings were purchased with funds solely from The Heritage Lottery Fund, Art Fund, the V&A Purchase Grant Fund, and the Friends of Derby Museums. The table below breaks down the costs of the paintings against the funds raised.

Funder		Purchase cost	
The Heritage Lottery Fund	£148,551	Purchase	£233,107
The Art Fund	£94,091	Display and activity programme	£43,301
V&A Purchase Grant Fund	£25,560		
Friends of Derby Museums	£5,000		
Private donors	£3,206		
TOTAL	£276,408		£276,408
			£0.00

The paintings will now go on display in the Joseph Wright Gallery, at the Museum and Art Gallery in Derby, where the public can see them from 21st June. An array of events both in Derby and at Cromford, over the summer and into autumn, will celebrate their homecoming. Look out for details on the Derby Museums website and July-October What’s On brochure.

For images, please go to: <http://bit.ly/DerbyWrights>

ENDS

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.

[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/>

The Heritage Lottery Fund

From the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife, we use National Lottery players' money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about. www.hlf.org.uk.

For more information please contact Katie Owen, HLF Press Office, on 020 75916036/ 07973 613820.

Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. In the past five years alone Art Fund has given £34 million to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections. It also helps museums share their collections with wider audiences by supporting a range of tours and exhibitions, including ARTIST ROOMS and the 2013-18 Aspire tour of Tate's Salisbury Cathedral from



THE SUMMER PROGRAMME FROM DERBY MUSEUMS | SOMEWHERE EVERYONE CAN PARTICIPATE



the Meadows by John Constable, and makes additional grants to support the training and professional development of curators. Art Fund is independently funded, with the core of its income provided by 122,000 members who receive the National Art Pass and enjoy free entry to over 230 museums, galleries and historic places across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions. In addition to grant-giving, Art Fund's support for museums includes the annual Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year (won by The Whitworth, Manchester, in 2015), a publications programme and a range of digital platforms.

Find out more about Art Fund and the National Art Pass at www.artfund.org

For further information please contact:

Madeline Adeane on madeane@artfund.org or call 020 7522 4804

V&A

- The Arts Council England/Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund is a government fund that helps regional museums, record offices and specialist libraries in England and Wales to acquire objects relating to the arts, literature and history.
- It was established at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in 1881 and continues to be part of its nationwide work.
- The annual grants budget, currently £750,000, is provided by Arts Council England (ACE).
- Each year, the Purchase Grant Fund considers some 200 applications and awards grants to around 100 organisations, enabling acquisitions of over £3 million to go ahead.
- Visit the website: www.vam.ac.uk/purchasegrantfund

The Friends of Derby Museums

Founded in 1969, Derby Museum Friends work closely with the Museums Trust. They help the museum by volunteering at events, supporting museum staff with projects and by organising fundraising events. They raise money through subscriptions and at fundraising events. This is used to help the museum make new acquisitions and to contribute to their restoration and conservation work.

For images, press visits and any other information, please contact

Emma Hallam, Marketing Coordinator at Derby Museums on emma@derbymuseums.org 01332 641925