

The story of the British Collection at Dulwich Picture Gallery

Best of British

8 July – 27 September

To complement its new and recently published Catalogue of British pictures, the Gallery will be exhibiting the best of its British paintings this summer in a fascinating and free exhibition.

Sarah Moulden,
Curatorial Assistant

Masterpieces from the original bequests will be displayed alongside lesser-known paintings bequeathed by collectors other than the Gallery's founders, including a significant group of actors' portraits from the time of Shakespeare. This is the first time that many of these pictures have been shown together in the same room and will include several usually hidden from the public eye. Following a chronological sequence the exhibition will chart the bequests by important collectors – namely Alelyn, Cartwright, Bourgeois, Linley, Fairfax Murray and later acquisitions – from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, offering fascinating insights into British notions of taste and the fashion to collect.

Accompanying the show is the new British Catalogue by leading art historian John Ingamells, part of Dulwich's ambitious plan to produce three comprehensive catalogues covering the European schools in their entirety. This publication, a landmark for the Gallery, represents the very latest research on over 250 British works in the Dulwich collection. The Dutch and Flemish catalogue, in preparation by Michiel Jonker and Paul Matthews, will be published in 2010, followed by a third and final volume

in production by Dulwich Picture Gallery's Arturo and Holly Melosi Chief Curator, Xavier Salomon.

Until now, England's oldest public art gallery has lacked full scholarly catalogues of its collection. With no real catalogue existing when Dulwich Picture Gallery was founded in 1811, successive curators of the Gallery produced a total of seven 'catalogues' over the next 180 years. Many of these were selective and partially documented, however, and it was not until 1998 that Richard Beresford, curator of the Gallery at the time, wrote his *Complete Illustrated Catalogue*, to date the key text for anyone wanting information on any of the 656 paintings at Dulwich.

The Beresford catalogue must be viewed as a key stage in the journey towards the meticulously detailed set of catalogues we are now producing. Best of British is two-fold in its objectives: it will look at the meaning of 'British' in relation to collecting art and will also launch Ingamells's volume as both an exhibition catalogue and an important publication in its own right.

This exhibition is generously supported by the Friends of Dulwich Picture Gallery



Directors lecture

Thursday 16 July
12.30/Linbury Room
Free, no booking

*The British Catalogue is available in the Gallery shop for £24.95
10% discount for Friends*

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