



AUCKLAND CASTLE

HOME OF THE PRINCE BISHOPS

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 09 NOVEMBER 2015

Major New Destination for the Study and Display of Spanish Art to Open at Auckland Castle in County Durham



- A major new destination for the study and display of Spanish and Hispanic Art is to be developed by the Auckland Castle Trust in County Durham, enhancing understanding of masterpieces of Spanish art from the late Medieval period to the late 20th century
- Due to open in Summer 2018, the new Spanish galleries are designed by Stirling Prize winning architects Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios
- The collection will be based around a core of Golden Age masterpieces by artists including El Greco, Ribera, Velázquez and Zurbarán, forming the heart of the collection
- The Art Fund have awarded a substantial grant of over £350,000 to support the project with the purchase of a major El Greco work
- For more information please contact fiona.russell@flint-pr.com (0) 203 463 2083

Ambitious £5.5m plans have been unveiled for a pioneering new gallery dedicated to the display and research of Spanish art to be created in County Durham as part of the Auckland Castle restoration and redevelopment project. Monumental works from some of the most significant artists of the 16th and 17th centuries, including El Greco, Ribera, Velázquez and Zurbarán, are among a collection spanning Spanish and Hispanic art history from the Medieval period to the late 20th Century in the groundbreaking new development opening in 2018.



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This internationally significant new gallery is expected to bring academics and tourists to Bishop Auckland, acting as a catalyst for the regeneration of the area. Dedicated to the study and appreciation of Spain's Golden Age, the gallery and institute mark a major development in a number of cultural schemes led by the Auckland Castle Trust.

The Spanish galleries are inspired by a series of religious paintings by the great Spanish Baroque artist, Francisco de Zurbarán, that currently hang in nearby Auckland Castle, and will involve the transformation of two disused buildings in Bishop Auckland Market Place. Stirling Prize-winning architects Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios have designed the dramatic new gallery spaces over three floors created within the existing façade of a former bank, connecting to a former school with a striking double-height atrium space to display larger works. The gallery will also include a centre for study, an art history library, café and gift shop, creating a destination for both academics and the general public to enjoy.

Among the works due to feature in the inaugural exhibition will be El Greco's remarkable depiction of *Christ on the Cross*, recently purchased by Auckland Castle for £2.5m with the help of a £377,348 grant from the Art Fund. Other significant pieces also bought by Auckland Castle include a 17th century still life by Juan de Arellano, a sculpture of the Crucified Christ by Luisa Roldán and a separate 13th century Catalanian statue of Jesus.

In addition to the artworks on display, an expert team of curators will join Auckland Castle in this major new venture, including a senior curator supported by a joint post with the nearby Bowes Museum funded by the John Ellerman Foundation, and an assistant curator appointed through the National Gallery Curatorial Traineeship Programme supported by the Art Fund with the assistance of the Vivmar Foundation.

Over time it is hoped the gallery and institute will become the nucleus for the study and appreciation of Spanish art in the UK, and will go on to include annual festivals celebrating Spanish culture, expanding its role within the international art historical community. The public will also play a major part in the new gallery, with education programmes planned to encourage visitors to explore and understand the role of Spanish artwork in European art history.

While the central theme of the new gallery will be the Spanish Golden Age which gave the world El Greco, Velázquez, Ribera and Zurbarán, Dr Christopher Ferguson, Curatorial Director, plans to showcase works from the late medieval period to the early 20th century in order to illustrate Spanish art's development and significance in the canon of Western art history.



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Dr. Christopher Ferguson, Auckland Castle's Curatorial Director, said:

"We are delighted to announce the development of the new Spanish gallery here in Bishop Auckland. The gallery and research centre represent an unparalleled concentration of Hispanic art and expertise in the United Kingdom. The Spanish gallery will be a gem in the UK's cultural landscape, showing a limited number of great works of art that are rarely seen by lovers of Spanish culture, especially in this country.

"For many it will be an introduction to the treasures of Spain, and we believe that with a mixture of loans from internationally famous museums and Auckland Castle's own collection, it will be possible to achieve this. The works on display at the Spanish gallery will stand up against those in any museum in the world. It will be a chance for people to view pieces by some of the best-known artistic names to come out of Spain's Golden Age here in County Durham on the walls of what will be a major new venue and research centre.

We are very grateful for the support and generosity shown to us by the Art Fund, and we are thrilled that come 2018 we will be able to share El Greco's Christ on the Cross by placing it on public display. Alongside our other acquisitions and the works set to come to Bishop Auckland in the future, it will also help put in context other outstanding collections of Spanish art held in County Durham at Bowes Museum and Durham Cathedral."

Stephen Deuchar, Director of the Art Fund, said:

"The acquisition of a major El Greco is always an important event, and the Art Fund is delighted that this powerful - indeed monumental - painting will now be housed permanently in Britain and on public display at Auckland Castle, where it will make important contribution to our understanding of the golden age of Spanish art."

Gabriele Finaldi, Director of The National Gallery said:

"We are delighted to support a curatorial traineeship between the National Gallery and Auckland Castle, where over the next two years our trainee will be part of a fascinating project preparing for the launch of a new gallery of national and international significance. This is a wonderful opportunity to share our expertise in the pursuit of a greater public and academic engagement with Spanish art."

Matthew Morrish, Architect, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios said:

"This exciting project brings Auckland Castle's extraordinary and internationally important collection into the town of Bishop Auckland.

Our designs accommodate the long-term use and development of the new institute, while remaining sensitive to the history and role of the buildings within the community. The existing Backhouse building will be extended to create a



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new space to accommodate large altar pieces, paintings and sculptures in a gallery sensitive to the scale and preservation of the world-class artworks. We look forward to completing the project and following its progress as an international destination for the study and display of Spanish art, and its on-going impact on the surrounding community.”

- ENDS -

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

- **For all Press enquiries please contact, Fiona Russell at Flint PR on +44 0203 463 2083 or fiona.russell@flint-pr.com**
- Auckland Castle, Bishop Auckland, County Durham, DL14 7NR, 01388 743 750, aucklandcastle.org
- Auckland Castle is open every day except Tuesday 10am until 5pm, last admission 4pm.
- Admission: Adults, £6; Concessions, £5; Under-16s free; Annual pass offering unlimited visits, £15; Concessions, £14.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Auckland Castle - Auckland Castle is one of the most important episcopal palaces in Europe, and the magnificent home of the Prince Bishops of Durham. Between 1832 and 2011, the castle was the official residence of the Bishops of Durham, and the Bishop of Durham still works there today. After Vatican City and Avignon, Auckland is described as the best working medieval Episcopal complex in Europe. Its Grade I listed architectural structures and features tell the history of our nation, in a building that has been created and recreated over the centuries by some of the leading architects of each age, including James Wyatt, architect to George III. No architectural work has been done on the castle since the 1790s, and it is expected that careful conservation work should reveal its hidden past. Together, the buildings and landscape form a nationally significant heritage site, with highest Grade 1 level. Auckland Castle is also home to one of the most significant treasures of European religious art: in 1756 the then Bishop of Durham bought 13 paintings by Francisco de Zurbarán (1598-1664), depicting Jacob and his 12 sons, representing the 12 tribes of Israel.

The Auckland Castle Capital Project - The Auckland Castle Trust was established in the summer of 2012. The castle itself, with its deer park, derelict walled garden and paintings, including the internationally famous works of



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Jacob and his 12 Sons by the Spanish master Francisco de Zurbarán, formed the nucleus of the original holding.

The restoration of Auckland Castle will create a major new art and heritage destination in the North East of England and for the UK and an important culture-led social economic regeneration initiative for the North East of England. The Castle will be the setting for a nationally significant permanent exhibition of religious art in Britain with an extensive collection that includes one of the most important treasures of European religious art. A permanent collection of key works from the Spanish Golden Age will be supplemented with loans from the UK's leading institutions to create an exhibitions programme of genuine international significance.

About the Art Fund

The Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. In the past five years the Art Fund has given £34 million to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections. The Art Fund 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 Meadows* by John Constable, and makes additional grants to support the training and professional development of curators.

The Art Fund is independently funded, with the core of its income provided by 117,000 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 exhibition. In addition to grant-giving, the Art Fund's support for museums includes the annual Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year, a publications programme and a range of digital platforms.

Find out more about the Art Fund and the National Art Pass at www.artfund.org
For further information please contact Madeline Adeane, Press Relations Manager, madeane@artfund.org / 0207 225 4804

The National Gallery Curatorial Traineeship

The National Gallery's curatorial traineeship programme, supported by the Art Fund with the assistance of the Vivmar Foundation, was initiated in 2011. The programme provides practical curatorial training alongside collections-based and specialist research skills. The trainee's time is allocated between the National Gallery and the partner museum during the 22-month appointment. After an initial training period of six months at the National Gallery, with trips to the partner organisation to discuss the project to be undertaken, the trainees move to the partner organisation to deliver the project.

Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios



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Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios have experience in designing for education, housing, masterplanning and urban design as well as places for art and the creative reuse of historic buildings.

The company started over 35 years ago and, in spite of their growth to around 180 staff, they continue to be committed to social and humanistic values in our work. We are proud to have won the RIBA Stirling Prize for Accordia, a scheme which is widely regarded as setting a new benchmark for housing in the UK. They are the top RIBA National Award winning practice of the last decade. With their strong track record, Feilden Clegg Bradley are well placed to face the challenges of the future: growing & fractured cities; climate change; massive shifts in the delivery of education; increased localism; embracing the pace of technological change. The face of architecture is changing and Feilden Clegg Bradley continue to pioneer imaginative and inclusive ways to create exceptional buildings.

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