

PRESS RELEASE

THE NATIONAL GALLERY SEEKS DESIGN TEAM FOR NG200 PROJECTS

The National Gallery has today (16 February 2021) announced it is seeking a multi-disciplinary design team to work with it on a suite of capital projects to mark its bicentenary, with an initial phase to be opened in 2024.

To celebrate 200 years since its foundation in 1824, the National Gallery is planning a programme of inspirational exhibitions and outreach around the country and around the world, under the banner *NG200*. This will also include the completion of an initial phase of works to its Trafalgar Square buildings in order to improve the 'welcome' it provides to the millions of visitors it receives each year.



An open, two-stage selection process, run by Malcolm Reading Consultants, is being undertaken to identify a team who can work with the Gallery and its advisers to develop an architectural vision and conceptual approach to a phased five-year programme of works.

The first stage is an open, international call for architect-led, multi-disciplinary design teams to register their interest and demonstrate their relevant skills and experience. A shortlist of up to five teams will then be asked to submit details of their approach to the design and delivery of the project and will be interviewed by a selection panel. No design work is required and some expenses will be paid to the shortlisted teams. An appointment is expected to be made in July 2021.

Commenting on the launch of the selection process, Director of the National Gallery, Dr Gabriele Finaldi, said:

'The capital projects are a hugely important part not just of our bicentenary celebrations but of our vision for the National Gallery of the future.'

We are extremely fortunate to have a superb building and a modern classic in the Sainsbury Wing; one that has more than met its original brief, notably in the practically perfect picture galleries. The dual challenge of a huge increase in visitor numbers and the changing expectations and needs of those visitors over the last 30 years, means we do need to look again at the spaces we have, and in particular the ground floor entrances and amenities.

We recognise, of course, that we are all currently experiencing an unprecedented time of crisis, with an impact felt by every sector in every part of our country and across the globe. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a catastrophic effect on visitor numbers to all cultural and arts institutions, the National Gallery included, and it will take time for these to return to 2019 levels.

But there is hope on the horizon and art and culture have a vital role to play in the healing of our country. The National Gallery was the first major museum to open after lockdown restrictions were lifted in July 2020, demonstrating its commitment to be part of the nation's recovery story. As the nation's gallery, we want to play a full part in this in the future, and to do so, we need to start planning now.'

The overall brief for the project includes sensitive interventions to the Grade I listed Sainsbury Wing, including remodelling the front gates and ground floor entrance sequence; interior works to the lobby and first floor spaces and upgrading visitor amenities; in particular orientation and information; retail and security. As the main entrance to the National Gallery, the Sainsbury Wing requires inspiring spaces that meet the expectations of 21st-century visitors, befitting a world-class institution housing an outstanding collection of art.

The creation of a new Research Centre, likely to be housed in the west wing of the Wilkins Building adjacent to the Sainsbury Wing, will form part of a phase of work. It will support the Gallery's vision of becoming a world leader in research into historic painting and communicate its work as a global thought leader by creating a powerful resource for studies into art history, digital humanities, conservation, and heritage science. It will be a resource for everyone interested in studying art, from students to international academics.

The design brief also allows scope for the reimagining of the relationship between the Gallery and the public realm immediately, from the loggia of the Sainsbury Wing, across Jubilee Walk and along the northern edge of Trafalgar Square to the front of the Wilkins Building. Although limited, the refocusing and strengthening of these spaces would provide greater visibility and presence for the Gallery on Trafalgar Square, while creating a more attractive and enjoyable setting for visitors and the public.

Underpinning the brief is the desire to create healthy, sustainable, and accessible spaces and an environment that is open and inclusive where visitors can relax and reflect as they plan their visit to one of the world's finest art collections. Following a year of unprecedented challenges due to Covid-19, the National Gallery wants to build on its strength, inventiveness and relevance to play a vital role in the nation's recovery story.

Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden, said:

'The National Gallery has been inspiring visitors for almost 200 years, and this innovative project will welcome a new generation of art lovers to its halls. Culture is going to play a central role in the nation's recovery, with global icons like the National Gallery helping us build back better from the pandemic.'

Paul Gray, the Chief Operating Officer at the National Gallery, is leading the selection process. He added:

'We are looking for a team that can demonstrate exceptional design talent and creative flair. Sensitivity to the heritage of the existing building and its context will be crucial as will the ability to design and deliver complex projects working in collaboration with the client and wider team.'

'Most importantly, we want to identify people and organisations that excite and inspire us and can open our eyes to the potential of the spaces within the Sainsbury Wing and the public.'

Malcolm Reading, Search Director, and Chairman, Malcolm Reading Consultants, said:

'The process chosen by the National Gallery is not a conventional design competition seeking design concepts but instead creates the opportunity for much more interaction – something the Gallery values and we know architects appreciate. We welcome both national and international teams. They will need to be exceptional and the international teams will require a UK partner for stage two.'

The deadline for first stage responses is: 2pm GMT Thursday 18 March 2021. Details of how to enter are available at: <https://competitions.malcolmreading.com/nationalgallery>

This selection process is being run under the Competitive Procedure with Negotiation in accordance with UK procurement regulations.

NOTES TO EDITORS

The National Gallery is one of the greatest art galleries in the world. Founded by Parliament in 1824, the Gallery houses the nation's collection of paintings in the Western European tradition from the late 13th to the early 20th century. The

collection includes works by Bellini, Cézanne, Degas, Leonardo, Monet, Raphael, Rembrandt, Renoir, Rubens, Titian, Turner, Van Dyck, Van Gogh and Velázquez. The Gallery's key objectives are to enhance the collection, care for the collection and provide the best possible access to visitors. Admission free. More at www.nationalgallery.org.uk

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Malcolm Reading Consultants (MRC) is a strategic architectural consultancy that helps clients to imagine and define contemporary environments; MRC is the leading specialist in devising and managing global searches for design teams. Since 1996, we have developed an extensive network of contacts, an outstanding portfolio of completed projects, and an international reputation for fairness and transparency. MRC believes in the power of design to act as an inspiration. malcolmreading.com

Publicity images can be obtained from <https://press.nationalgallery.org.uk/>

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