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## Yale Center Offers Unprecedented Access to Largest Collection of British Art Outside the UK through New Online Catalogue

- *Redesigned website—[britishart.yale.edu](http://britishart.yale.edu)—features an online catalogue of the Center’s holdings, allowing seamless searching across the art collections and related library materials.*
- *Publication-quality images of all art objects in the public domain available for free downloading.*
- *An associated exhibition, “Connections” (May 20–September 11, 2011), including more than two hundred objects from the Center’s collections, demonstrating the value of being able to search across the institution’s rich holdings of paintings, sculpture, prints, drawings, rare books, and manuscripts.*



NEW HAVEN—Beginning May 20, the Yale Center for British Art, which houses the largest and most comprehensive collection of British art outside of the United Kingdom, will share its extraordinary holdings with the world through a new online catalogue. For the first time, visitors to the museum’s redesigned and expanded website—[britishart.yale.edu](http://britishart.yale.edu)—will have the ability to search across the Center’s entire collection of paintings, sculpture, prints, drawings, rare books, manuscripts, and works in the Reference Library. In addition, they will be able to download high-resolution images of objects in the public domain, free of charge. This new policy should transform scholarship in the field of British art by allowing universal access to the Center’s unparalleled collection. The launch of the Center’s online catalogue dovetails with Yale University’s recently announced “Open Access” policy, which will make high-quality digital images of Yale’s vast cultural heritage collections in the public domain openly and freely available.



“The new site provides the foundation for the Center’s ongoing commitment to the development of an online research environment for the history of British art, and offers broad, international public access to our magnificent collections for study and pleasure in the most open of ways,” says Amy Meyers, director of the Yale Center for British Art. “We are especially delighted that scholarly publication on our holdings will be enhanced by our policy to make high-quality digital images of all works in the public domain available free-of-charge—a policy that corresponds with that of the university at large. When our institution’s founder, Paul Mellon (Yale College Class of 1929), enabled all visitors to enjoy our collections and programs free-of-charge, in perpetuity, he set a precedent for the generosity of spirit that drives our current project.”



Paul Mellon with portrait bust by Joseph Wilton of Thomas, 1st Baron Dartrey, photo by William B. Carter, Yale Department of Information; George Stubbs, *Zebra* (detail), 1762–63, oil on canvas, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection; Thomas Rowlandson, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, her sister Harriet, Viscountess Duncannon (later the Countess of Bessborough), and a Musician, 1790, pen and watercolor over graphite, on laid paper, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

In late 2008, the Center created the Department of Collections Information and Access to begin the process of developing an online catalogue of its art collections, comprising approximately 2,000 paintings; 200 hundred sculptures; 20,000 drawings and watercolors; and 31,000 prints. In addition, the Center houses 35,000 rare books and manuscripts and an Archive and Reference Library with more than 40,000 volumes. The vast majority of the institution's holdings were the gift of Paul Mellon, who was the greatest single collector of British art of the twentieth century. Splendid gifts from the Center's Friends, Members, and supporters enhance the institution's collections in important ways.



When the Center's site is launched it will include basic "tombstone" information for the complete paintings and sculpture collection, as well as drawings and prints by key artists, including George Stubbs, Paul Sandby, Thomas Rowlandson, William Blake, Thomas Girtin, J.M.W. Turner, John Constable, and Samuel Palmer. The online collection will be updated regularly until the entire prints and drawings collection is represented, and it will be augmented by records on new acquisitions. Most of the holdings in the Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts and the Center's Reference Library are available through Orbis, Yale's online library catalogue system, as well, and new records are added on a regular basis.



The next major release of data on the website is planned for the autumn of 2011 and will include the drawings of many other major artists in the collection, a few discrete sections of the print collection, and parts of the Center's historic frame collection. Over the coming years, full provenance, bibliography, and exhibition history will be added to the online catalogue.

Ultimately, the Center plans to marry its online holdings with those of institutions beyond Yale University, enabling users to engage in searches across the topic of British art internationally. The Center's sister institution, the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art in London, has funded the cataloguing of some of the most important collections of British art at a number of museums in the United Kingdom, including the British Museum, the Royal Academy, and Sir John Soane's Museum, establishing a platform for such collaborations.



The launch of the Center's cross-collections searching initiative is auspicious at Yale, since the university is committed to making all of its collections, from its many libraries through its massive museum holdings, cross-searchable. This university-wide program has been underwritten in part by planning grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, a source of funding that also is allowing the Center to examine new ways of approaching online resources.

In addition to the online catalogue, the redesigned website will feature a user-friendly online calendar that meshes with Yale University's events calendar. It will allow visitors to view a comprehensive list of programs at the Center by day, week, or month, as well as filter results by categories. The site also will include practical resources for planning a visit and the ability to use sharing features such as RSS feeds, email subscriptions, Facebook, and calendar notifications. The website will continue to be amplified; future developments include an expanded conservation section showing before-and-after treatments of artworks and highlights in technical art history. Additionally, the site will feature a program of online publications and educator resources.



#### RELATED EXHIBITION

The launch of the website will be complemented by the exhibition *Connections*. On view May 20–September 11, 2011, the exhibition will mirror the experience of the new online catalogue by drawing from across the Center's extraordinary collections. *Connections* will include more than two hundred paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings, rare books, and manuscripts that will be installed on the third floor in ten thematic, period, and monographic bays ranging from the early seventeenth to the early twentieth century. Subjects will include British Art in the 1630s; Hogarth and History; Paul Sandby; Sporting Art; George Stubbs; Thomas Gainsborough; The Academy and the Body; Egypt; Samuel Palmer; and British Modernism in the 1930s.



As an example of cross-collection research, the bay devoted to George Stubbs (1724–1806) will feature examples of the artist's paintings in oil on canvas, copper, and earthenware; Wedgwood plaques and enamels; a selection of his innovative prints and drawings; anatomical studies; and books and manuscripts on midwifery and anatomy. Additional major works by Stubbs can be seen in the permanent collection galleries, and secondary sources, such as books and articles devoted to all facets of Stubbs' life and work, are available in the Reference Library. Together the works represent the depth and breadth of material available in the Center's physical collections, which now will be available in a single, searchable catalogue.

*Connections* has been organized by Matthew Hargraves, Associate Curator and Head of Collections Information and Access, and Imogen Hart, Assistant Curator, Exhibitions and Publications, Yale Center for British Art.

#### ONLINE CATALOGUE CREDITS

The Center's online cataloguing project is a team endeavor of Matthew Hargraves, Associate Curator and Head of Collections Information and Access; Lec Maj, Manager



of Computing for Collections and Research; Emmanuelle Delmas-Glass, Collections Information Specialist; David Parsell, Systems Manager, Collections Information and Access; Elena Grossman, Graphic Designer; and Melissa Fournier, Associate Registrar and Manager of Imaging Services, in concert with the Center's curatorial departments. The group is advised by Kenneth Hamma, a consultant in cultural heritage and information technology, and is supported by the staff of Yale's Office of Digital Assets and Infrastructure and Office of Public Affairs and Communications. The overarching project to catalogue and digitize the Center's collections has been overseen by Scott Wilcox, the Center's Chief Curator of Art Collections.

#### WEBSITE CREDITS

The website redesign of **britishart.yale.edu** involved nearly every department at the Center and was led by an in-house team drawn from curatorial; Collections Information and Access; and Advancement and External Affairs staff, working with Kenneth Hamma and Yale's Office of Public Affairs and Communications. The site will be managed using a highly collaborative approach that allows staff members across the Center to enter text and images; vet content; and customize workflows to ensure accuracy.

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