

The temporary exhibition galleries in the Sainsbury Wing, National Gallery:  
commission, design and outcome

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Sainsbury Wing, the National Gallery's new extension, opened in July 1991. It had the primary aim of providing new galleries for the Early Renaissance collection. It was also intended to give a new outward-looking face for the Gallery with expanded public facilities, including a larger temporary exhibition space. However, this space has been much criticised for its basement location and resulting lack of natural light. The rooms are limited in size and some are irregular in shape which make it difficult to install larger works and to provide enough viewing space for visitors to popular shows.

This thesis investigates why the Gallery decided to build this space, why the design was developed and what were the consequences. It looks at the history of temporary exhibitions - the spaces they need in London and abroad. Using archive material and conversations with participants, it pieces together the convoluted story of the building of the temporary exhibition galleries in the Sainsbury Wing. It examines the many briefs, the involvement of the architects, Venturi Scott Brown, and explains how the resulting design developed. It then relates how the Gallery used the space for its expanded exhibitions programme and considers its advantages and disadvantages. In the conclusion, it makes some recommendations for the best way to create new exhibition galleries for the future.

The thesis sheds new light on an aspect of institutional history of the Gallery. It provides an original analysis of an area of the Sainsbury Wing which has been little discussed. As a case study for the design of facilities for temporary exhibitions, it underlines the importance of these spaces and analyses the specific needs and requirements.

## INTRODUCTION

In July 1990, I came to the National Gallery as Exhibitions Officer, to help set up the exhibitions department and organise the shows planned for the new temporary exhibition space in the Sainsbury Wing.<sup>1</sup> This new building would also contain galleries to display the Early Renaissance collection and up-to-date public facilities (Figure 1a).

On my first day, I was shown around by Michael Wilson, Head of Exhibitions and Displays. The paintings were yet to be installed. We started on the top floor with the large light-filled main galleries. We then proceeded down each level and I began to wonder where the temporary exhibition galleries would be. I found them in the basement, a rather small suite of strangely shaped rooms without access to natural light. It was to become clear to me, and to my colleagues and outside critics, that these rooms posed problems for many of our planned exhibitions.<sup>2</sup> I wondered how the Gallery came to build a temporary exhibition space that is not entirely suitable for its function.

### Context

Museums in the early 1980s were expected to accommodate large numbers of visitors and provide modern amenities such as cafes and shops. Yet, many of these institutions such as the National Gallery were housed in nineteenth-century buildings which did not have the capacity within them to expand. The most obvious solution was to create a new wing. This ‘frenzy of growth’ was particularly apparent in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Victoria Newhouse

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<sup>1</sup> I had previously worked at the V&A on the installation of *The Splendours of the Gonzaga* exhibition in 1981, as exhibitions assistant at the Crafts Council then based in Lower Regent Street, and as administrator in a contemporary art gallery in a warehouse in Clerkenwell. I had experience of different exhibitions and exhibition spaces. National Gallery house style is used throughout.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the exhibitions are based around Old Master paintings covering a similar period to the Gallery’s collection from the thirteenth to the early twentieth century. There have been a few contemporary art exhibitions responding to the collection such as *Bill Viola: The Passions* in 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Goldberger quoted in Victoria Newhouse, *Towards a New Museum*, Monacelli Press, New York 1998, revised 2006, p.139.

examined this phenomenon in her book *Towards a New Museum* in the chapter entitled 'Wings that don't fly (and some that do)'.<sup>4</sup> She was particularly critical of the lack of architectural integrity of the expansion plans of New York museums such as the Metropolitan and the Guggenheim. She did support the Sainsbury Wing, which has a façade that complements rather than contrasts with the main building, and the Early Renaissance galleries that provide a fitting context for the collection. However, she barely mentions one of the main reasons for creating these new wings: the growing popularity of temporary exhibitions and the need to provide adequate spaces with the latest environmental controls to house them.<sup>5</sup>

Temporary exhibitions are now an integral part of the museum experience.<sup>6</sup> They can demonstrate the range of a great artist's work, bringing together pictures that have been separated for centuries. They can cover a period or a theme, putting together works in unusual and thought-provoking juxtapositions. Peter Vergo has described how the story of an object can be told in many different ways, following the paths of style, creation, personal and social history and technique.<sup>7</sup> An exhibition can take one or more of these approaches. Neil MacGregor, former director of the National Gallery, said that there is no 'one truth' about a picture and we should allow our visitors access to different meanings and truths: physical, aesthetic, contextual and moral.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Newhouse 2006, pp.138–9.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2008. 'The Blockbuster Era', pp.210–17. I will discuss this subject in Chapter One. Victoria Newhouse discusses temporary exhibition spaces in more detail in *Art and the Power of Placement*, Monacelli Press, New York 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Barry Lord and Gail Dexter Lord, 'Planning and Managing temporary exhibitions', *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions*, Altamira Press, Oxford 2001, pp.276–87.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Vergo, 'The rhetoric of display' in Roger Miles and Lauro Zavala (eds), *Towards the Museum of the Future: New European Perspectives*, Routledge, London 1994, pp.149–51.

<sup>8</sup> Neil MacGregor, 'A Pentecost at Trafalgar Square' in James Cuno (ed.), *Whose Muse? Art Museums and public trust*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2004, p.40.

The temporary nature of exhibitions encourages a wide range of viewers, ensuring the return of regular visitors and attracting new ones, including cultural tourists. All can experience enjoyment and excitement and take advantage of the opportunity to learn and be challenged. Exhibitions encourage experts to bring together works from different collections and test their theories, which are published in the exhibition catalogue, the long-term legacy of a show. Popular shows attract sponsorship and publicity and enable an institution to make money from admission charges, shops, restaurants and membership.<sup>9</sup>

Curators, designers, exhibitions organisers and educators collaborate to construct the exhibition concept and display the works in a meaningful context that enhances their visual appeal. Vergo explains that the physical juxtaposition of objects is crucial for an effective exhibition: an object can look striking from one point of view and tell its story, but remain taciturn in another situation.<sup>10</sup> While the curator decides which objects need to be shown next to each other, it is the work of the exhibition designer to transform a group of objects into a special experience.<sup>11</sup>

As temporary exhibitions grew in size and required more complex environmental controls, it made sense to provide dedicated areas for this activity. In addition to the exhibition galleries, a capacious front-of-house area is required for visitor reception, ticket sales and shop, and a back-of-house space to accommodate large transport trucks.<sup>12</sup> All these

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<sup>9</sup> Exhibitions can be extremely expensive to mount. Costs can include freelance curator fee, transport, installation, graphics, film and education programme.

<sup>10</sup> Vergo 1994, p.151.

<sup>11</sup> Philip Hughes, *Exhibition Design*, Laurence King Publishing Ltd, London 2010, p.19, describes the exhibition designer's job of orchestrating an environment. Margaret Hall, *On Display: A Design Grammar for Museum Exhibitions*, Lund Humphries, London 1987, pp.13–19, gives a history of exhibition making.

<sup>12</sup> Front-of-house facilities include reception desk, ticket sales, areas for queues, shop and access to cafe, toilets, cloakroom. Back-of-house includes loading bay, packing rooms, lift and access to exhibition galleries.

facilities are necessary for the efficient management of exhibition installation and visitor movement yet together they demand a significant commitment for space within a building.

Reesa Greenberg argues that the location and type of architectural space in which an exhibition is held are crucial to its experience.<sup>13</sup> A large open area, often with access to natural light, was regarded as the typical, fully flexible exhibition space.<sup>14</sup> Mike Sixsmith explains that, unlike a museum display of the collection where a space can be designed to house a particular work or groups of art, an exhibition gallery must be adaptable and accommodate many different types and sizes of objects as each show will vary in size, character and physical requirements.<sup>15</sup> Exhibitions are always moving and changing. The challenge is to create a space that best meets the needs of the institution. Whether the National Gallery arrived at this goal and whether the resulting space in the Sainsbury Wing has matched up to the institution's needs is the subject of this thesis.

### The thesis

It has been said that the Sainsbury Wing temporary exhibition galleries were an afterthought, using left-over space in the basement, and were not intended for larger exhibitions.<sup>16</sup> Such statements contain an element of truth, but are not wholly correct. The aim of my research is to uncover and examine the events that led to the creation of the new

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<sup>13</sup> Reesa Greenberg discusses exhibitions of contemporary art in 'The Exhibition Space Redistributed: A case for reassessing space' in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, Sandy Nairne (eds), *Thinking about Exhibitions*, Routledge, London and New York 1996, pp.349–67. Kali Tzortzi, *Museum Space: Where Architecture meets Museology*, Ashgate, Surrey 2015, provides a useful summary of the different architectural and museological approaches to this subject: Introduction pp.1–49.

<sup>14</sup> Detlef Mertins, 'Mies's New Gallery: Empty and Full' in P. Marincola (ed.), *What Makes a Great Exhibition*, Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative 2006, pp.76–85, discusses the problems of working in this large open space.

<sup>15</sup> Mike Sixsmith, *Designing galleries: the complete guide to developing and designing spaces and services for temporary exhibition galleries*, Arts Council, London 1999, pp.160–5.

<sup>16</sup> Caryl Hubbard interviewed by Mary Hersov on 22 September 2012. Hubbard was a Gallery Trustee and part of the committee involved with the development of the new wing.



exhibition galleries so that the real story can be revealed, replacing the half-truths that now abound.

This story has not been told. Accounts of the Sainsbury Wing usually focus on architectural features, such as the design of the façade, the main painting galleries and the intentions of the architects, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown.<sup>17</sup> In the literature there have been few comments on the temporary exhibition space.<sup>18</sup> I will be considering how the latter was shaped by the Gallery's institutional culture.<sup>19</sup> This account will be a contribution to the history of the National Gallery seen through the lens of temporary exhibitions and the spaces to house them. It will also be a case study in how decisions are made in commissioning new buildings or extensions.

My research is based on books on the subject and papers drawn from the National Gallery's archives.<sup>20</sup> It involved sifting through minutes of the Board of Trustees and committee meetings and papers presented to them, and reading annual reports and press cuttings in search of references to temporary exhibitions and exhibition venues. To supplement the

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<sup>17</sup> David B. Brownlee, 'Form and Content' in D.B. Brownlee, D.G. DeLong, K.B. Kiesinger (eds), *Out of the Ordinary: Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Associates: Architecture/Urbanism/Design*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001, pp.2–89; Stanislaus Moos, *Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates: Buildings and projects 1986–98*, Monacelli Press, New York 1999, pp.122–4; Newhouse 2006, pp.182–5. The project was awarded to VRSB (Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown); after Rauch left in 1989, the firm became VSB (Venturi, Scott Brown Associates).

<sup>18</sup> Barnabas Calder, "'Never So Serious": Venturi's Sainsbury Wing at the National Gallery, London' in Anthony Alofsin (ed.), *A Modernist Museum in Perspective: The East Building, National Gallery of Art*, National Gallery of Art, Washington 2009, notes on p.195: 'With some reservations about the lack of natural light in the deep basement (the gallery's decision), the Sainsbury Wing has worked well and aged gracefully.'

<sup>19</sup> Eric M. Wolf, *American Art Museum Architecture: Documents and Design*, W.W. Norton and Company Inc., New York and London 2010, p.IX. He describes how institutional history can influence and even overrule clients and architects in the planning of a new building.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Conlin's *The Nation's Mantelpiece: A History of the National Gallery*, Pallas Athene Ltd, London 2006, and Charles Saumarez Smith's *The National Gallery: A Short History*, Frances Lincoln Ltd, London 2009, have been important source books on the National Gallery. Colin Amery, *A Celebration of Art and Architecture: The National Gallery Sainsbury Wing*, National Gallery, London 1991; Michael Wilson, *A Guide to the Sainsbury Wing at the National Gallery*, National Gallery, London 1991, and Samantha Wyndham, *A History of the Hampton Site*, private publication supported by The Linbury Trust, 2015, are key source books about the development of the Sainsbury Wing. The National Gallery archives consulted are listed in the Bibliography.

official record, I had extensive interviews with a number of those involved in the conception and execution of the plans. The experience of working with three very different directors was invaluable.

I examine the Gallery's relationship with other London museums and exhibition venues, with reference to developments abroad when relevant.<sup>21</sup> This material gives a context for the development of the Sainsbury Wing which will provide a case study in the design of facilities for temporary exhibition galleries within established art galleries and museums.

The thesis is divided into an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion with a postscript. Chapter One provides an overview of the founding of national museums with a focus on the National Gallery, founded in 1824 and housed in the Wilkins building in Trafalgar Square from 1838 (Figure 1b). It shows that temporary exhibitions, initially considered commercial ventures, became a staple activity for art museums in the twentieth century. The National Gallery was obliged to introduce temporary exhibitions as part of its policy to modernise and attract larger audiences. A small room in the Gallery was dedicated to exhibitions in 1975, and in 1984 the larger Sunley Room opened.

Chapter Two charts the troubled history of the Hampton site up to the collapse of the public-private partnership scheme in 1984. The Gallery then decided to build a wing dedicated to its own use with funding from the Sainsbury brothers. I examine the various briefs drawn up for the public facilities in the new wing and note how the temporary exhibition space was low on the list of priorities at first, but grew in importance as the

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<sup>21</sup> Suzanne MacLeod, *Museum Architecture: A New Biography*, Routledge, London and New York 2013. Her approach to looking at the building of architecture from multiple different ways discussed in her last chapter, 'The social architecture of museums', pp.176–86, has been very useful.

Gallery developed its ambitions to match the leading international museums which had temporary exhibitions as an important part of their activities.

Chapter Three describes the selection of Robert Venturi of Venturi, Rauch, Scott Brown (VRSB) as the architect, and considers his initial plans for the temporary exhibition galleries. I will follow through the design of this space and explain how it was moved to the basement and reduced in size and form from the original brief.

Chapter Four discusses the consequences of these decisions and how this compromise worked in practice. The Gallery was criticised particularly for its lack of space for blockbuster exhibitions and found its reputation as a world-class international museum at stake.

The conclusion draws together the main themes of the thesis and ends with a final assessment of the temporary exhibition galleries in the Sainsbury Wing. A postscript contains some recommendations for the future.

## **CHAPTER ONE: THE NATIONAL GALLERY AND TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS**

### **BEFORE THE OPENING OF THE SAINSBURY WING**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines the history of the National Gallery's approach to temporary exhibitions before the opening of the Sainsbury Wing in 1984. Part One gives an overview of the background to the foundation of the National Gallery in 1824. It considers the Gallery's activities in the nineteenth century and its relationship to the wide range of temporary exhibitions being held elsewhere during this period. Part Two explores the growth of exhibitions, in particular of Old Masters, and explains why Kenneth Clark, the new Director of the Gallery in 1934, introduced temporary exhibitions. Part Three describes the spread of temporary exhibitions in post-war London, the popularity of contemporary art, the development of the Hayward Gallery and the response of the national museums. Finally, Part Four concentrates on the National Gallery and its slow adaptation to the changing scene. It will become clear that despite the creation of its first two exhibition spaces, the Gallery remained ambivalent about temporary exhibitions.

#### **Part One: The National Gallery in the nineteenth century**

##### **Early museums**

In the late eighteenth century public art museums, such as those at Dresden, Kassel and Vienna, were created from princely collections.<sup>22</sup> In Paris, the Luxembourg Palace containing

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<sup>22</sup> Carole Paul (ed.), *The first modern museums of art: the birth of an institution in 18th and early 19th century Europe*, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles 2012. The essays discuss these museums, starting with the Capitoline in Rome in 1733.

Old Master paintings was opened by Louis XV in 1750.<sup>23</sup> The aim was to foster an appreciation of the arts among an educated elite, and to encourage artists to learn from the great masters of the past.<sup>24</sup> This changed with the French Revolution and the opening in 1793 of the Louvre as a public museum, free to all citizens.<sup>25</sup> Renamed the Musée Napoléon in 1803, with paintings purloined from collections in Italy, Germany and elsewhere, the Louvre became one of the great centres of art in the nineteenth century and was particularly popular with British visitors.

Temporary exhibitions played no part in these museums at this time. In Italy such shows were undertaken by artist academies, such as the Accademia del Disegno in Florence, and were often held in church cloisters.<sup>26</sup> Churches in seventeenth-century Rome were used as venues by Roman nobleman and collectors to exhibit their Old Master collections for public celebrations. For example, the wealthy noble Rospigliosi family exhibited their paintings by Titian, Correggio, Carracci and Domenichino in the church of S. Giovanni Decollato in Rome in 1668.<sup>27</sup>

London's first public museum was the British Museum, created by Act of Parliament in 1753 to preserve and maintain the collection of Sir Hans Sloane for the learned and curious but also for the general benefit of the public. It was housed in Montagu House, a seventeenth-century mansion in Bloomsbury, which was open to the public through a free ticket system.

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<sup>23</sup> From 1674 the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris held its recent graduate shows in the Salon Carrée in the Louvre, and after 1737 these annual exhibitions were open to the public. After the palace became a public museum, the shows continued here until the mid-nineteenth century.

<sup>24</sup> The Royal collection displayed at Windsor Castle and Hampton Court which were open to visits on request.

<sup>25</sup> Certain areas of the palace such as the Grande Galerie were used.

<sup>26</sup> Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2000, p.12.

<sup>27</sup> Haskell 2000, p.9, says that they used these displays to promote their wealth and importance.

The museum had a wide range of objects but few paintings.<sup>28</sup> There had been many calls for the creation of a national gallery of art to show paintings, but without success. The radical member of Parliament John Wilkes made an impassioned plea in 1777 for the state to purchase the Walpole collection at Houghton Hall, later bought by Catherine the Great of Russia. The picture collection formed by the dealers Noel Desenfans and Francis Bourgeois was also rejected. It was left to Dulwich College and in 1814 housed in Sir John Soane's purpose-built gallery in Dulwich. However, Dulwich was on the outskirts of London and attracted only a limited number of visitors.

As London emerged as an important centre for artists and art sales there was a huge increase in temporary exhibitions and in the opening of private collections to the public.<sup>29</sup> In 1760, the Society for Artists in Britain organised the first public art exhibition at its premises on the Strand.<sup>30</sup> Thereafter artists' group exhibitions were a regular occurrence, culminating in the Royal Academy summer shows in Somerset House.<sup>31</sup> Artists could also present their more dramatic works in solo exhibitions, such as John Singleton Copley's display of his huge painting *The Floating Batteries of Gibraltar* in a tent in Hyde Park in 1791. Bullock's Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, opened in 1809, provided a commercial venue for attractions such as General Tom Thumb. Large-scale paintings were also exhibited in the hall, often with

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<sup>28</sup> The collection comprised natural history objects, prints, drawings, coins, books and manuscripts. In 1805 the Townley collection of classical antiquities was added, and in 1816 the Elgin Marbles were purchased and installed in 'the temporary Elgin gallery'.

<sup>29</sup> Brandon Taylor, *Art for the Nation: Exhibitions and the London Public 1747–2000*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1999, pp.1–28.

<sup>30</sup> Kenneth Luckhurst, *The Story of Exhibitions*, The Studio Publications, London and New York 1951, p.16. This book describes the intense exhibition activity in London from this period onwards.

<sup>31</sup> The Royal Academy was founded in 1768 under the patronage of George III. In 1769–9 exhibitions were held in temporary rooms in Pall Mall, and in 1780 It moved to purpose-built rooms in Somerset House.

dramatic lighting and sound; the aim was to amaze and entertain as much as to sell the work.<sup>32</sup>

From the late seventeenth century, the British aristocracy had been purchasing art on their Grand Tours and then displaying these works in their stately homes, such as Holkham Hall in Norfolk, the home of the Earl of Leicester, where the public could visit.<sup>33</sup> The art market had developed in London with the showrooms of the auction houses of Sotheby's and Christie's, and the French Revolution led to an influx of great art for sale in London, including the prestigious collection of the Duke of Orléans. These pictures were put on public display in London and though the primary aim was to sell the works, the public were allowed in on payment of a shilling.<sup>34</sup> In 1798, Michael Bryan, a picture dealer, showed the most famous part of the Orléans Collection, the Italian and French paintings, which were purchased by a consortium of aristocrats.<sup>35</sup> Francis Haskell commented that these exhibitions were the greatest public display of art since the sale of Charles I's collection.<sup>36</sup> Some of the distinguished paintings, including the Titian '*poesie*', passed by descent to the Marquis of Stafford, who opened his collection in Cleveland House, London, in 1806 for public viewing in a new gallery.<sup>37</sup>

In 1805, many of these aristocratic collectors and connoisseurs set up the British Institution to promote fine arts in the United Kingdom.<sup>38</sup> They took over an existing exhibition space in

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<sup>32</sup> Richard Altick, *The Shows of London: a panoramic history of exhibitions 1600–1862*, The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, and London 1978, p.409.

<sup>33</sup> The Palladian-style house, designed by William Kent, was created by the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Leicester to house his art collection purchased during his Grand Tour. It was finally opened to the public in 1764, five years after his death.

<sup>34</sup> The pictures were shown in halls in Pall Mall in Michael Bryan's gallery and a hall in the Lyceum on the Strand.

<sup>35</sup> The Duke of Bridgewater, Lord Carlisle and Lord Gower.

<sup>36</sup> Haskell 2000, p.25

<sup>37</sup> Other noblemen would follow suit, notably Lord Grosvenor at Grosvenor House, 1825.

<sup>38</sup> Haskell 2000, pp.46–63.

Pall Mall to provide the first temporary exhibitions of Old Master paintings in London.<sup>39</sup> The building had an enfilade of three rectangular rooms with minimal architectural decoration, linked by open arches and lit by a large skylight.<sup>40</sup> While the aim was to exhibit contemporary artists, the Institution began to show regular loan exhibitions of Old Master paintings both for the general public and for artists to study. The 1815 exhibition of *Pictures by Rubens, Rembrandt, Van Dyck and other artists of the Dutch and Flemish school* was drawn from mainly aristocratic private collections.

### The Foundation of the National Gallery

With this burgeoning display of art in London, the Government could afford to ignore calls for a national gallery, particularly during the Napoleonic war years at a time of economic difficulties.<sup>41</sup> With the revival of the economy in the 1820s and more interest and sympathy among parliamentarians, the time was ripe for a new approach.<sup>42</sup> The Government was aware of the success of the Louvre, and the founding of other national museums.<sup>43</sup> Sir George Beaumont, a collector and a member of the British Institution, was prepared to offer key works to form a national collection to improve public taste and inspire artists, provided that the collection of John Julius Angerstein, with its many important sixteenth- and seventeenth-century paintings, could be purchased.<sup>44</sup> Funds became available when the Government received an unexpected repayment of a war debt from Austria. Both Whigs and Tories supported the initiative. The Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer, Frederick

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<sup>39</sup> George Dance the Younger had designed this building, which had housed Shakespeare's Gallery from 1788.

<sup>40</sup> Giles Waterfield, *Palaces of Art: Art Galleries in Britain 1790–1900*, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London 1991, p.130. He explained that the design of these rooms influenced the development of later art galleries such as Dulwich Picture Gallery and the Royal Academy.

<sup>41</sup> Brandon Taylor, in 'National Gallery, London: "for all ranks and degrees of men"' in Paul (ed.) 2012, p.30, makes this argument.

<sup>42</sup> Taylor 1999, 'Publics for Trafalgar Square: the National Gallery', pp.38–66. Conlin 2006, pp.3–67.

<sup>43</sup> Brussels Royal Museum in 1803; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, in 1808; Pinacoteca, Vatican, Rome, in 1816; Accademia, Venice, in 1817; Brera, Milan, in 1818; Prado, Madrid, in 1819.

<sup>44</sup> Italian, French, Flemish and Dutch paintings and some major British artists such as Hogarth and Reynolds. Angerstein's collection was created on the advice of the artist Sir Thomas Lawrence.



Robinson, stated that the war loans funds could be used for ‘the establishment of a splendid gallery of works of art, worthy of the nation’.<sup>45</sup> The young Whig politician Agar Ellis said that ‘frequent viewing’ of fine pictures would improve ‘the general taste of the public’. The paintings’ moral and aesthetic qualities would have ‘an immediate effect on the mind’. He continued: ‘It must be situated in the very gang-way of London’ ... ‘accessible to all ranks and degrees of men.’<sup>46</sup> On 2 April 1824, The House of Commons voted to grant £60,000 for the purchase of the painting collection and home of the late John Julius Angerstein. The desire for an art gallery with great paintings to promote national prestige, combined with the educational aim of making these pictures available to everyone in the centre of London, has remained at the core of the National Gallery’s ethos.

#### The National Gallery’s new building and its relationship with the Royal Academy

The National Gallery was initially housed in Angerstein’s house at 100 Pall Mall. It soon became clear, however, that these premises provided inadequate space and were unworthy of a great national institution.<sup>47</sup> Plans were drawn up for a new gallery in the area north of Charing Cross, which would come to be known as Trafalgar Square.<sup>48</sup> The Royal Mews would be removed, and a new building erected. A competition for the design of the new gallery was won by William Wilkins, who designed a long and low symmetrical building in the Greek Revival style (Figure 1b). It opened in 1838 but was immediately much criticised, especially for the deficiencies of its rooms.<sup>49</sup> Because of new acquisitions the pictures were just as

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<sup>45</sup> Conlin 2006, p.52.

<sup>46</sup> Taylor in Paul (ed.) 2012, p.36.

<sup>47</sup> Taylor 1999, p.267. A comparison with the great palace of the Louvre was made in Hullmandel’s lithograph of c.1830.

<sup>48</sup> Saumarez Smith 2009, p.40. It was officially named Trafalgar Square in 1830. This was part of John Nash’s plans for the redevelopment of streets from Charing Cross to the north of Regent’s Park.

<sup>49</sup> Saumarez Smith 2009, p.50

crowded in the five new rooms as they were in Angerstein's house.<sup>50</sup> The walls were dark olive with top lighting and the pictures were displayed in a traditional dense multi-tiered hang. The gallery compared unfavourably with the fine well-proportioned rooms of Schinkel's Altes Museum in Berlin, opened in 1830, and Klenze's Alte Pinakothek in Munich, opened in 1836.

The building was shared with the Royal Academy of Arts, which was accommodated in a suite of five rooms on the east side where the Summer Exhibitions were held. In theory, the National Gallery had an adjacent temporary exhibition space. The great Old Master paintings were to be hung next to the major training school for artists, with the outlet of the annual Summer Exhibition for artists' work. Charles Eastlake, who was both President of the Royal Academy (1850–65) and Director of the National Gallery (1855–65), seems to have regarded both institutions as equal and interdependent.<sup>51</sup> In practice, however, they were under completely different management. The Gallery was directly funded by the Government while the Royal Academy, keen to keep its independence from the state, was supported by private subscription and had its own system of governance. They carried out their activities separately, with both institutions frustrated by lack of space.<sup>52</sup>

#### Temporary exhibition activity in Britain

With its limited space, the Gallery focused on the display of the permanent collection.

Temporary exhibitions happened elsewhere. The Great Exhibition of 1851 at Crystal Palace was held to celebrate Britain's industrial technology and design, but it did not show fine art,

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<sup>50</sup> Charlotte Klonk, *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800–2000*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2009, p.28.

<sup>51</sup> Susanna Avery-Quash and Julia Sheldon, *Art for the Nation: The Eastlakes and the Victorian Art World*, National Gallery, London 2011, p.98. Eastlake had been Keeper at the Gallery from 1843 to 1847.

<sup>52</sup> The Royal Academy obtained Burlington House in 1867 but moved into it in 1869.

unlike some of the exhibitions that followed.<sup>53</sup> In the summer of 1857, the exhibition 'Art Treasures of the United Kingdom' opened in Manchester; it was the largest temporary display of art yet held in Britain with 16,000 exhibits, including 1,173 Old Masters.<sup>54</sup> The loans were drawn from many private lenders, including the Royal Collection.<sup>55</sup> A large, three-aisled structure of iron and glass, with ample wall space and top lighting, was erected on Manchester's cricket ground (now Old Trafford), far from the commercial centre. The exhibition contained an extraordinary range of Old Masters, among them a Madonna newly attributed to Michelangelo.<sup>56</sup> There were 1.3 million visitors during its five-month run. Their experience was very different from that of visitors to a traditional museum, as refreshments were offered and the Hallé Orchestra performed regularly in the exhibition hall.

In 1869, the Royal Academy moved to new premises designed by Sydney Smirke in Burlington House in Piccadilly, behind which the Academy built new rooms. Richard Redgrave RA said that the artist's work should not be subservient to the architecture and argued for well-proportioned rooms, simple architectural details and top lighting.<sup>57</sup> The new galleries consisted of a large suite of rooms suitable for the Royal Academy exhibitions, providing considerably more hanging space. These rooms also provided space for the winter exhibitions of Old Master paintings, such as the one in 1870 that contained works by Raphael, Botticelli and Bellini. These were mounted by the newly founded Burlington Fine Arts Club, which had inherited the traditions of the British Institution after its lease on the

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<sup>53</sup> The Great Exhibition's formal theme was 'work of industry for all nations'. Exhibitions that followed it included the Royal Dublin Society Great Exhibition in 1853, the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1855.

<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth Pergam, *The Manchester Art Treasures exhibition of 1857: Entrepreneurs, Connoisseurs and the public*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Aldershot 2011, p.1. The exhibition included Old Master paintings, modern paintings (mainly British) and other objects. Manchester was primarily known as a manufacturing town. The Royal Manchester Institute, founded 1823, had regular art exhibitions. The organisers, led by Thomas Fairbairn, were keen to rehabilitate Manchester's reputation as a place of culture and education.

<sup>55</sup> Prince Albert was patron of the event.

<sup>56</sup> Now known as the *Manchester Madonna*. It was later purchased by the National Gallery.

<sup>57</sup> Waterfield 1991, p.126

Pall Mall premises expired in 1867. The combination of Old Master exhibitions and the popular summer show were to make the Royal Academy the premier space for temporary shows in London.<sup>58</sup>

### The National Gallery and its collection

Charles Eastlake became the first Director of the National Gallery in 1855.<sup>59</sup> Painter and scholar, he brought a new professionalism to the Gallery and its display and a new focus on research and conservation.<sup>60</sup> Among his first purchases were Veronese's *Family of Darius* and Bellini's *Doge Loredan*. The Gallery was popular with the general public and between 1841 and 1881 visitor attendance never dropped below a figure equivalent to 20 per cent of the London population, achieving almost one million visitors in 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition.<sup>61</sup> Visitors ranged from regular gallery-goers and artists to visitors from the countryside and abroad.<sup>62</sup> Eastlake wanted to display the collection in a chronological hang, school by school, an aim finally achieved by his nephew, Charles Locke Eastlake, who was Keeper from 1878, and made possible by the new, more lavishly decorated galleries by E.M. Barry opened in 1876 (see Figure 2). However, despite the new galleries, there was still insufficient space for all the British paintings, which were housed elsewhere.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> These were charging exhibitions. Dealers continued to create exhibitions of Old Master paintings from private collections, such as the loan of 300 Venetian paintings at the New Gallery in 1895.

<sup>59</sup> There had been the post of Keeper since 1824, but the Gallery's purchases were mainly agreed by the aristocratic Trustees.

<sup>60</sup> S. Avery-Quash and J. Sheldon 2011: for a full description of his achievements as Director, see Chapter Four, 'Director of the National Gallery', pp. 134–81. Klonk 2009, Chapter One, 'The National Gallery, London', pp.19–47.

<sup>61</sup> Conlin 2006, p.211.

<sup>62</sup> Taylor 1999, pp.51–61. The Gallery was subject to several government select committees between 1835 and 1853. The 1850 Report contains the Keeper Thomas Uwins' description of country people having a picnic in the galleries.

<sup>63</sup> They were shown at Marlborough House, and then in the South Kensington Gallery until the founding of the Tate in 1897.

In 1856, an Act of Parliament gave the Trustees and Director more powers.<sup>64</sup> This meant that the Gallery could lend works at its discretion; Garofalo's *Allegory of Love*, for example, was put on long-term loan to the National Gallery of Scotland soon after its purchase in 1860. However, the Gallery declined to lend works by Turner to the Art Treasures exhibition in Manchester despite a plea by the Chairman to Prime Minister Lord Palmerston. While no reason was given at the time, a discussion at a later meeting of the Board of Trustees revealed that they were concerned about the safety of the paintings if they were loaned to exhibitions.<sup>65</sup> After the National Gallery Loan Act of 1883, there was a slightly more open attitude and Turner sketches were circulated to regional venues with suitable viewing conditions.<sup>66</sup> But the Gallery continued to be reluctant to loan oil paintings.

In his book *The People's Galleries: Art Museums and Exhibitions in Britain 1800–1914*, Giles Waterfield observed that temporary exhibitions were often commercial ventures, and although their temporary nature encouraged visits and publicity, they sometimes developed into vehicles for mass entertainment and spectacle, whereas the 'high art' museums, like the British Museum and the National Gallery, were dedicated to the preservation and display of art for serious viewing.<sup>67</sup> The National Gallery saw no need, and indeed had no desire, to become involved in temporary exhibitions.

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<sup>64</sup> Act of 23 June 1856.

<sup>65</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 8 February 1867: 'inconsistent with the discharge of trust represented in them to the proposed removal of National pictures from their control.'

<sup>66</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1 July 1887.

<sup>67</sup> Giles Waterfield, *The People's Galleries: Art Museums and Exhibitions in Britain 1800–1914*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2015, 'The Temporary Exhibition: Nest or Cuckoo?', pp.175–95.

## Part Two: Changes in the twentieth century

### The growth of temporary exhibitions

By the end of the nineteenth century, the National Gallery, together with the British Museum, was no longer the only free national art museum. A new area for museums had opened in the congenial setting of South Kensington.<sup>68</sup> The Museums Act of 1845 enabled local government to fund public museum buildings, and major museums were established in cities such as Nottingham in 1876, Liverpool in 1877 and Leeds in 1888.<sup>69</sup> The sugar magnate Sir Henry Tate provided funds for a new building to house his collection of British Art and the British paintings that the National Gallery had been unable (or unwilling) to display, and the Tate Gallery opened at Millbank in 1897. It held a series of loan exhibitions from 1911, and the Keeper argued that these would provide new interest in the permanent collection.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, this was one of the main reasons why museums adopted this policy.

The South Kensington Museum, renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1899, had its origins in a temporary exhibition, the Great Exhibition of 1851.<sup>71</sup> Opened in 1857, it housed a collection of applied and decorative arts created to educate public taste and show the work of British designers and manufacturers. Sir Henry Cole, its first director, cultivated a different ethos to that of the National Gallery. Since he wanted to attract the widest possible audience, gas lighting was provided so that working people could visit in the evenings, and there was a lecture theatre and a refreshment room.<sup>72</sup> Temporary exhibitions

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<sup>68</sup> The South Kensington Museum (renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1899) and the Science Museum in 1857, the Natural History Museum in 1881.

<sup>69</sup> The Museums and Libraries Act of 1850 followed. Waterfield 2015, pp.178–81, explains how many regional museums developed from artist exhibition societies. For example, York City Art Gallery (opened in 1892) and Kelvingrove Art Gallery (opened in 1902) were both accommodated in exhibition halls.

<sup>70</sup> Frances Spalding, *The Tate: A History*, Tate Gallery Publishing, London 1998, p.21. These first exhibitions included works by Alfred Stevens and the Pre-Raphaelites.

<sup>71</sup> Anthony Burton, *Vision and Accident: The Story of the Victoria and Albert Museum*, V&A Publishing, London 1999. Chapter 4, 'The Supremacy of Henry Cole', pp.74–92, gives a full account of his achievements.

<sup>72</sup> Francis Fowke's new wing was completed in 1869.

were a fundamental part of the programme: in 1862, the South Court opened and housed loan exhibitions, such as *Ornamental Art* in 1862, *Portrait Miniatures* in 1865 and a series of shows of *National Portraits* from 1866 to 1868.<sup>73</sup> As the museum expanded it gained a grand façade and entrance hall. As a result of its outgoing attitude, and following a particularly successful exhibition of Franco-British textiles in 1921, the V&A became the nation's favourite public museum.<sup>74</sup> In 1924, it achieved its top attendance figure of 1,318,049. The National Gallery's yearly attendance was only about 750,000.

Haskell has argued that the influence of nationalism became increasingly obvious in European art exhibitions towards the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>75</sup> He considers that the first major international loan exhibition was the Dresden Picture Gallery's display of the two versions of Holbein's *The Virgin with the Family of Jacob Meyer* in 1871.<sup>76</sup> The exhibition included the loan of pictures, drawings and engravings by Holbein and his circle from other collections in Europe, and by bringing in other loans for comparison it provided a wider context for works in the collection, creating a prototype for the future. The great Rembrandt exhibition of 1898 was held in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and was described by Haskell as the first 'modern blockbuster' due to its size, popularity and international press coverage.<sup>77</sup> The Prado, Madrid, celebrated the Spanish painters Velázquez, Goya and El Greco in 1899, 1900 and 1902, and the Louvre hosted an exhibition of early French painters in 1904.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> The National Portrait Gallery was founded in 1857 but housed in a series of buildings before its permanent home on St Martin's Place, designed by Ewan Christian, was opened in 1896.

<sup>74</sup> Burton 1999, p.178.

<sup>75</sup> Haskell 2000, Chapter Six, 'Patriotism and the Art Exhibition', pp.98–106.

<sup>76</sup> Haskell 2000, pp.90 and 98. Dresden's own version was displayed together with the version belonging to the Grand Duke of Hesse. Queen Victoria lent some works.

<sup>77</sup> Haskell 2000, pp.102–4. I will return to the 'blockbuster' later in this section.

<sup>78</sup> Exhibitions in museums were displayed in a similar way to the collection. However, Klonk 2009 has images of two shows at the Nationalgalerie in Berlin which reveal a new interest in creative installations: *Gustav*

After the First World War, the winter Old Master exhibitions at the Royal Academy were on a more ambitious scale, and included loans from abroad as countries started to promote exhibitions of their great national artists.<sup>79</sup> The first was an exhibition of Spanish paintings in 1920–1, with loans from major British private lenders together with significant help from Spain. The most spectacular international loan exhibition was *Italian Art 1200–1900*, held in 1930 and seen by over half a million visitors. The committee, which included the young Kenneth Clark, later director of the National Gallery, was led by the wife of the foreign minister. Her contacts with the Italian Government of Mussolini meant that the organisers were able to obtain an extraordinary range of loans, including Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, Giorgione's *Tempesta* and portraits by Raphael and Titian.

#### The National Gallery's continued resistance to exhibitions

From the 1880s, the Gallery's growth in terms of acquisitions and visitor numbers began to decline. It continued to expand its display area (see Figure 2).<sup>80</sup> However, the Gallery was finding it difficult to purchase major paintings. American collectors had entered the market and raised prices. With the aid of the newly set up National Art Collections Fund, major fundraising campaigns were launched to acquire Velázquez's *Rokeby Venus* in 1906 and Holbein's *Christina of Denmark* in 1909. The Gallery's directors were often held back by the Trustees who controlled and limited their activities.<sup>81</sup> The Gallery became inward-looking and less appealing to the public and Conlin argues that there was 'a broader loss of faith' in

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*Richter* in 1884 (p.51) and *The Centenary Exhibition of German Art* 1906, the latter with an impressive interior design by Peter Behrens, pp.80–1.

<sup>79</sup> Haskell 2000, p.107. This was a form of diplomacy.

<sup>80</sup> Barry Rooms 1876, entrance vestibule and central hall 1887, Rooms 5, 9–12 1911, Mond Room 1928, Duveen Room 1929.

<sup>81</sup> Conlin 2006, p.95.



the Gallery's social mission.<sup>82</sup> It rejected artificial lighting which would have enabled evening openings, a facility that an increasing number of other museums were now offering.

The Gallery continued to limit the loan of paintings and did not hold temporary exhibitions. After much debate, the Trustees had decided not to lend their paintings to the great Italian art show at the Royal Academy in 1930.<sup>83</sup> The Chairman of the Trustees, Lord Crawford, did not want the Gallery to become involved with an essentially political activity. He was also against loans on account of the dangers of travel and because admission charges might be levied to see paintings shown free at the Gallery. Both these considerations would continue to play a part in the Gallery's opposition to temporary exhibitions.

The Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries was set up to examine the state of museums and make major recommendations for change.<sup>84</sup> It advocated more public facilities including evening openings, restaurants, shops and temporary exhibitions.<sup>85</sup> It also recommended that the Gallery lend paintings abroad. Although recognising the concern about the safety of the pictures, the Commission argued that there would be great advantages to furthering the spirit of international co-operation. Despite resistance from the Trustees, in April 1935 the National Gallery Loan Act was enacted, but with an amendment that only allowed loans of British works painted after 1600.

As a small concession to supporting exhibitions elsewhere, in 1929 a selection of the Gallery's Dutch paintings were shown in Room 28 to coincide with the major exhibition of

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<sup>82</sup> Conlin 2006, p.473.

<sup>83</sup> Haskell 2000, pp.116–17.

<sup>84</sup> Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries, Final Report, Part I, General conclusions and recommendations, 20 September 1929.

<sup>85</sup> Final Report, Part II, 1 January 1930.

Dutch paintings at the Royal Academy.<sup>86</sup> A changing display of Gallery paintings to coincide with Royal Academy exhibitions continued until 1936.

### A new director

In January 1934 Kenneth Clark was appointed Director of the National Gallery at the age of 31. He was wealthy and at home in the highest circles.<sup>87</sup> He had the confidence to make radical changes and was able to handle the aristocratic trustees who had tended to treat previous directors as 'lackeys'.<sup>88</sup> In 1935, he introduced electric lighting, which made evening openings possible three nights a week. He introduced a dedicated lecture room to increase the public lecture programme. Alive to the benefits of publicity, Clark held the first press view in 1935, and worked with the London Passenger Transport Board to install posters advertising the Gallery on the tube.<sup>89</sup> A PR agency advised him to create more publicity around new acquisitions, and encouraged the introduction of the picture of the week – an event developed at the V&A – and of temporary exhibitions.

Clark, who had been on the organising committee of the Royal Academy's Italian show, had a natural affinity with temporary exhibitions and recognised their importance. He explained to the Trustees in 1935 that he felt that the current policy of not holding loan exhibitions was impoverishing the Gallery.<sup>90</sup> In 1938, he organised the exhibition of eighteenth and nineteenth century British Art at the Louvre.<sup>91</sup> This included major British works, such as

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<sup>86</sup> This is now Room 5.

<sup>87</sup> He had been a student of Berenson's at I Tatti and was Keeper at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Kenneth Clark, *Another part of the Wood: A Self Portrait*, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1976, 'The Great Clark boom', p.211.

<sup>88</sup> Conlin 2006, p.155.

<sup>89</sup> Conlin 2006, p.250. This poster campaign started in 1910, but Clark expanded the programme and encouraged the use of reproduction of images.

<sup>90</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 29 October 1935, p.199.

<sup>91</sup> Clark 1976, pp.266–7. In his role as Director of the National Gallery, London, he was asked to organise and install this exhibition.

Constable's *Hay Wain*, which would not normally have been loaned abroad. This exhibition, however, had strong government support.

On 8 April of that year, he wrote a piece for *The Times* to celebrate the centenary of the National Gallery in the Wilkins building.<sup>92</sup> Here he announced the opening of a new room, Room 32, for changing exhibitions based on the collection.<sup>93</sup> In practice, only two small exhibitions were arranged, *Classical Antiquity in Renaissance Paintings* in 1938 and *Portraiture* in 1939, which contained paintings selected from the collection but no external loans.<sup>94</sup> Clark soon began to develop more ambitious ideas, such as a Rubens exhibition with works from the Gallery and from other British collections to celebrate the tercentenary of the artist's death.<sup>95</sup> However, with the outbreak of the Second World War, all plans were put on hold.

By the time war was declared most of the Gallery's paintings had been evacuated, but Clark was determined to keep the Gallery open. He set up a series of concerts by the pianist Myra Hess from October 1939 and arranged for a temporary canteen to be opened, the first of its kind at the Gallery. Clark and the Trustees were encouraged by the success of the concerts and decided to develop more cultural activities, namely temporary loan exhibitions. The first one was *British Art since Whistler* in 1940.<sup>96</sup> Clark became chairman of the War Artists Advisory Committee in 1939 and the Gallery hosted several war artist exhibitions between 1940 and 1945. Some non-art exhibitions were also shown, including *Design at Home* in

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<sup>92</sup> Kenneth Clark, 'The National Gallery', *The Times*, 8 April 1938. The Wilkins building opened on 9 April 1838.

<sup>93</sup> This is now Room 14 (Figure 2).

<sup>94</sup> Some loans from the Gulbenkian collection were included but these were already on show in the collection. Two booklets were produced. Fritz Saxl wrote the introduction for the first booklet, Clark for the second. There was some press coverage. See 'New Light on Old Masters', *News Chronicle*, London, 8 May 1939.

<sup>95</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 12 July 1939.

<sup>96</sup> Organised by Lillian Browse, a gallery owner and collector.

1945 organised by the Council for Education in Music and Arts (CEMA), forerunner of the Arts Council, which was set up in early 1940 to organise cultural activities around Britain.

Following the success of the display of its new acquisition, Rembrandt's *Margaretha de Geer*, in 1942 the Gallery began to bring paintings back to London on a regular basis. The first was Titian's *Noli me Tangere*. Known as 'Picture of the Month', these exhibitions were shown on the main floor landing and included display panels with technical information by the scientific adviser, Ian Rawlins (Figures 3a and 3b).<sup>97</sup> In the past, temporary exhibitions had provided only basic information about the paintings on labels and in catalogues.<sup>98</sup>

Alfred Barr, first Director of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, had used didactic graphic panels to promote his view of the development in modern art in his exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* in 1936 and this use of information panels became a notable feature of MoMA exhibitions.<sup>99</sup> The Gallery had adopted graphic panels but used them to make scientific analysis available to the public for the first time. These shows were the prototype of the in-focus displays that the Gallery would make its trademark in future years. In total, forty-three National Gallery paintings were brought back between 1942 and 1945. The success of these exhibitions was extremely important for the Gallery. As the *Observer* noted, 'The National Gallery is far more genuinely a national possession than ever before.'<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Suzanne Bosman, *The National Gallery in Wartime*, National Gallery, London 2008, pp.98–9. Conlin 2006, pp.161–2, for the popularity of the displays and the wide cross-section of society who came to see them.

<sup>98</sup> Hall 1987. The background section gives the history of museum display, pp.13–19

<sup>99</sup> Klonk 2009, p.138. Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, MIT Press, 1999.

<sup>100</sup> Saumarez Smith 2009, p.131.

### **Part Three : New challenges and the development of temporary exhibitions**

#### Post-war London

The Arts Council of Great Britain, created in 1946, was charged with the task of increasing the knowledge, understanding and accessibility of the arts. It arranged an extraordinary series of temporary exhibitions which were shown in the half-empty spaces of the national museums before their collections were reinstalled. These exhibitions were intended to express international collaboration and reconciliation. In 1945 the V&A hosted the very successful *Picasso-Matisse* exhibition to celebrate Anglo-French relations.<sup>101</sup> There were 220,000 visitors, a record attendance for the V&A, and there was much public discussion and debate.<sup>102</sup> That same year the National Gallery provided the venue for a loan exhibition of Paul Klee organised by the Tate Gallery, but from 1950 onwards the National Gallery concentrated on a major reconstruction programme and it did not return to small temporary exhibitions until 1961. Meanwhile there were important developments in the visual arts in London which coincided with the significant social and economic changes in post-war Britain.

In the catalogue of the *Art Treasures from Vienna* exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1949, Philip James wrote that this use of space in empty national museums was only a temporary solution, and that there was a great need for a national building to host important temporary exhibitions in central London similar to other venues in Europe.<sup>103</sup> This suggestion had already been raised in the *Visual Arts* report of 1946 and supported by a

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<sup>101</sup> Taylor 1999, pp.178–9. The exhibition continued to Manchester and Glasgow. Since the 1930s British exhibitions abroad had been organised by the Board of Trade. The British Council took over this role. Philip Hendy, Director of the National Gallery from 1946, was a member of its Advisory Committee on Fine Art.

<sup>102</sup> Taylor 1999, 'Scandal at the V&A', pp.176–85.

<sup>103</sup> The Arts Council of Great Britain, *Art Treasures from Vienna*, an exhibition held at the Tate Gallery, 1959; see Philip James's Introduction, p.7. There was an admission charge. Other major exhibition venues in European capital cities included the Grand Palais, Paris, and the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome.

letter to *The Times* on 10 August 1949, signed by the chairmen of the Trustees of the Tate and the National Gallery.<sup>104</sup> No mention was made of the Royal Academy, presumably because it was a private organisation. Because of its central location, the South Bank, the site for the Festival of Britain in 1951, was considered a desirable place for the new temporary exhibition space for the Arts Council.<sup>105</sup> This proposal took many years of planning before it came to fruition in the Hayward Gallery in 1968.

London was becoming a centre for the display of modern art. The Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) was founded in 1946. The aim was to set up an institute to represent all the art forms, including the visual and performing arts, architecture and broadcasting.<sup>106</sup> In 1948 they showed *40,000 Years of Modern Art: A Comparison of Primitive and Modern*, which included one of Picasso's most influential works, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* from MoMA.<sup>107</sup> The ICA influenced the Whitechapel Art Gallery where Bryan Robertson, Director from 1952, was developing an ambitious programme with the first major shows in Britain of the American artists Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Robert Rauschenberg.<sup>108</sup> He also championed British artists with shows such as the exhibition of Anthony Caro's sculpture in 1964.

From the 1950s, the Arts Council had a wide-ranging programme of temporary exhibitions, which included Ingres drawings and the arts of the Ming Dynasty.<sup>109</sup> These were displayed at its premises in St James's Square, but increasingly important exhibitions of modern and

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<sup>104</sup> The *Visual Arts* report was commissioned by the Government. See Taylor 1999, pp.174, 206.

<sup>105</sup> Taylor 1999, p.211. This site was proposed in the *Housing the Arts in Great Britain* report of 1959.

<sup>106</sup> Taylor 1999, p.278. 'The Institute of Contemporary Arts: A Statement of Policy and Aims of the Proposed Institute by Members of the Organising Committee', 1947. The founding members were Roland Penrose, Herbert Read and E.L.T Mesens.

<sup>107</sup> The ICA's first premises was the basement of the Academy Cinema, 165 Oxford Street. It moved to 17 Dover Street in 1950 and to Nash House, its current building, in 1968.

<sup>108</sup> Jackson Pollock in 1958, Mark Rothko in 1961 and Robert Rauschenberg in 1964.

<sup>109</sup> Taylor 1999, p.212, drawn from the Arts Council Report 1959.

contemporary art were shown at the Tate. In 1960, their most ambitious event was the *Picasso* exhibition, which showed the largest collection of his work seen in this country. There were almost 500,000 visitors in June and July. *Tatler* magazine called it ‘an art blockbuster’.<sup>110</sup> This was one of the early uses of a term which had first been applied to popular films in the 1950s.<sup>111</sup> Subsequent exhibitions at the Tate maintained a lively and varied programme with an emphasis on modern art. The 1964 *Painting and Sculpture of a Decade 1954–1964* was their largest exhibition, filling the Duveen central gallery and many side galleries.<sup>112</sup>

By 1966 London had become a hive of cultural activity and was called ‘Swinging London’ by *Time* to describe the unprecedented combination of fashion designers, photographers, film makers and artists working in the capital.<sup>113</sup> Youth culture and disposable income were dominant factors, with contemporary artists at the centre of activity.<sup>114</sup> In 1962, young artists had appeared in the BBC programme ‘Pop goes the Easel’.<sup>115</sup> In 1967, Peter Blake designed the cover of the Beatles album *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

There was a major shift in the Labour Government’s attitude towards the arts, marked by the creation of the new post of Minister for the Arts, held by Jennie Lee from 1964 to 1970. In February 1965 she published the first White Paper on cultural funding, *A Policy for the Arts*, which supported increased funding that included providing the Arts Council with money for capital projects. The document described the great cultural change that had taken place and expressed a desire to attract more ‘working people’ to interact with the

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<sup>110</sup> See Tim Adams, ‘Picasso, Tate 1960’, *The Observer*, 29 October 2012.

<sup>111</sup> Giles Waterfield, ‘Blockbusters: too big to fail?’ *The Art Newspaper* no 224, May 2011.

<sup>112</sup> Spalding 1998, p.142. However, these shows could not be considered ‘blockbusters’.

<sup>113</sup> *Time Magazine*, 15 April 1966.

<sup>114</sup> Robert Hewison, *Culture and Consensus: England, art and politics since 1940*, Methuen, London 1955, p.127. Taylor 1999, p.214.

<sup>115</sup> A Ken Russell film featuring various pop artists including Peter Blake, BBC 1962.

arts, bridging the gap between ‘high’ art and popular forms such as the music hall and pop groups.<sup>116</sup>

### The Hayward Gallery

The long-awaited space for temporary exhibitions, the Hayward Gallery, finally opened in July 1968. This was the first national gallery for temporary exhibitions to be opened in London, and its first major art venue since the war.<sup>117</sup> The Arts Council Annual Report of 1967–8 singled out the temporary exhibition gallery at the Kunsthaus, Zurich, as a major influence.<sup>118</sup> That gallery was part of a new wing built of reinforced concrete, painted white, containing the facilities of a modern museum. It had two floors, the ground floor with public facilities such as lecture theatre and restaurant. The exhibition galleries were situated on the first floor and consisted of a long rectangular modern box. The space could be subdivided by a system of temporary screens which could be adapted to suit each exhibition.<sup>119</sup> Alfred Barr, Director of MoMA, had introduced this type of space in MoMA’s new building which opened in 1939 and it became the standard for the post-war museum.<sup>120</sup> These spaces were called ‘white cubes’, but at first glance it might be difficult to see any link between the white cube room of the Kunsthaus, which had top lighting, and the Hayward Gallery.<sup>121</sup> The latter was designed by London County Council’s architecture department and was built in concrete in the so-called Brutalist style, with a series of boxes

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<sup>116</sup> Hewison, p.121.

<sup>117</sup> Taylor 1999, p.203.

<sup>118</sup> Michael Brawne, *The New Museum: Architecture and Display*, The Architectural Press, London 1965, pp.125–6. This gallery was part of a new wing designed by Hans and Kurt Pfister in 1955. The original building was designed by Karl Moser in 1910.

<sup>119</sup> Klonk 2009, p.39. This type of space had been created by MoMA, which had opened as a temporary exhibition venue in rented office space on Fifth Avenue, New York, in 1929 and had to use temporary screens to create the display area.

<sup>120</sup> Klonk 2009, pp.122, 145–7, shows the influence of Bauhaus and the modern German museums on Barr during his trips to Germany in the early 1930s.

<sup>121</sup> Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1999. Klonk 2009, p.145, notes that Barr was dismayed at the lack of top lighting at MoMA.



on different levels.<sup>122</sup> Unlike the white-painted façade of the Kunsthaus extension, the concrete of the Hayward Gallery was left bare. The Hayward's technical brochure outlined the brief, which called for galleries that could be used separately or together for one or more exhibitions.<sup>123</sup> Access to the galleries was by a central staircase and lift, and on the ground floor the various spaces were linked by ramps and stairs. The lighting and air-conditioning systems were installed so that the environmental conditions would meet those required for the loan of temporary exhibitions. In addition, the upper galleries had access to natural light, as insisted upon by Henry Moore, a member of the Arts Council's art panel.<sup>124</sup> The galleries initially contained a feature common to other modern exhibition spaces, the use of flexible display screens which could be fixed from the ceiling to the floor.<sup>125</sup>

There was much criticism of the external architecture. The *Daily Mail* called it 'the biggest architectural bloomer of our times... a squashed hat-box of concrete'.<sup>126</sup> The opening exhibition was a major retrospective of Matisse displayed on white-painted walls.<sup>127</sup>

Although the Matisse family were happy with the display, some critics found the utilitarian design of the galleries unsympathetic, one complaining that it was 'difficult to feel the effect of the paintings' and that that the lighting resembled street lighting.<sup>128</sup> Another observed that the space resembled a National Health Service hospital.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Architects included Dennis Compton, Warren Clark and Ron Herron.

<sup>123</sup> South Bank Centre Technical brochure designed by the London County Council, 1968. It asked for five internal galleries of 16,000 square feet (1,486 square metres) and three external sculpture courts.

<sup>124</sup> See the Arts Council of Great Britain Annual Report 1967–8.

<sup>125</sup> The ground floor had a pre-cast tile floor (technical brochure) for heavy sculpture. The upper gallery had a maple-strip floor.

<sup>126</sup> Taylor 1999, p.218.

<sup>127</sup> *Matisse 1869–1954: a retrospective exhibition*, 11 July – 8 September 1968.

<sup>128</sup> Arts Council of Great Britain Annual Report 1967–8.

<sup>129</sup> Taylor 1999, p.282. Guy Brett, 'Lessons of our New Gallery', *Saturday Review*, 27 July 1968. J. Gainsborough, 'London's New Public Gallery', *Arts Review*, 11 November 1967.

The Arts Council's ambitious exhibition programme was designed to cover the art of all periods and types. In 1969 it held an exhibition of the paintings of Claude Lorrain, followed by a display of Anthony Caro's sculptures. The latter show was well received and the rather functional space praised for its suitability for modern sculpture.<sup>130</sup> Indeed, an Arts Council curator said: 'we wanted a flexible space... it's been expressly designed for contemporary life and art.' In the 1970s, the Hayward Gallery took its place as an important venue for large-scale modern and contemporary art displays with *The New Art* exhibition in 1972, and in 1978 one of its most ambitious and popular shows, Dawn Ades's *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*.

#### The challenge to museums in London

Museums with historic collections were faced with a challenge. They needed to modernise and they needed more space. Temporary exhibitions were used to update and promote them. Roy Strong, Assistant Keeper at the National Portrait Gallery from 1959, became its youngest director in 1968. A brilliant scholar, Strong was a dynamic and flamboyant character with a flair for personal publicity and a determination to bring the extremely conservative National Portrait Gallery to public prominence.<sup>131</sup> He enjoyed the challenge of holding innovative temporary exhibitions. He persuaded Cecil Beaton to show his portraits in 1968, and invited Richard Buckle, a theatre designer, to design the show. By this time, most major exhibitions had a designer but they were usually from an architectural or design background. Using a theatre designer was a new approach for a national museum.<sup>132</sup> The

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<sup>130</sup> Taylor 1990, p.226.

<sup>131</sup> He was an expert in Elizabethan Court Pageantry. Although there was a history of temporary exhibitions at the National Portrait Gallery, Strong transformed them. There was no dedicated space, so exhibitions were housed in different galleries on the ground and first floors.

<sup>132</sup> Hall 1987, pp.18–20, on the history of design in museum displays.

combination of Beaton's photographs and Buckle's dazzling design was hugely successful.<sup>133</sup>

Strong revelled in the fact that at weekends queues stretched around the corner into Trafalgar Square, under the nose of the National Gallery. His success in promoting the National Portrait Gallery through his exhibitions, redisplay and recent commissions – as his successor John Hayes said, 'he made the Gallery news'<sup>134</sup> – encouraged the Treasury to increase its annual purchase grant from £8,000 to £40,000 in 1980.<sup>135</sup>

In 1974, Strong took his special qualities of scholarship and showmanship to the V&A, where he was Director until 1987.<sup>136</sup> This museum had a long tradition of temporary exhibitions and, unlike the National Portrait Gallery, had a large dedicated area for them.<sup>137</sup> Once again Strong brought a creative and newsworthy element to the exhibition programme. *The Destruction of the Country House: 1875–1975* had a contemporary relevance and its extraordinary installation by Robin Wade was highly praised. The show was promoted on television, and visitors queued to get in at weekends.<sup>138</sup> The catalogue sold out.<sup>139</sup> Other exhibitions, such as *Princely Magnificence: Court Jewels of the Renaissance* and *The Splendours of the Gonzaga*, were magnificent spectacles; the latter was given added glamour by the attendance of the Prince and Princess of Wales at the opening, which generated further publicity.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Susan Martin, 'Representations of fame: the National Portrait Gallery in post-war Britain', Institute of Historical Research Issue 8 Autumn/Winter 2010, pp.10-11. The exhibition was launched by *Vogue* magazine.

<sup>134</sup> Roy Strong, *The Roy Strong Diaries 1967–1987*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1997, p.129, a quote from the National Portrait Gallery Annual Review 1976.

<sup>135</sup> Martin 2010, p.11.

<sup>136</sup> Strong 1997, p.135. He argued that the V&A had been a dynamic museum, responding to innovations from the USA, but by 1974 it was living off its past.

<sup>137</sup> Burton 1999, p.212, Room 45 was used until 1983.

<sup>138</sup> Strong 1997, p.140. *Going Going Gone: the Fate of the Country House* was shown on BBC Two in 1975.

<sup>139</sup> Strong 1997, p.233. He considered this one of his three great didactic polemical exhibitions, along with *Change and Decay*, on the state of churches, and *The Garden*.

<sup>140</sup> *Princely Magnificence* was shown from 1980 to 1981 and *Splendours of the Gonzaga* from 1981 to 1982.

The British Museum had a more conservative attitude to temporary exhibitions. Small displays were shown in different rooms, with a few larger loan shows, such as *Swedish Gold* in 1966, installed in a section of the Edward VII Gallery. But the museum burst into the world of the blockbuster with *Treasures of Tutankhamun* in 1972, organised with the help of the Department of Antiquities of the Arab Republic of Egypt to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb.<sup>141</sup> David Wilson noted that this exhibition was a triumph for the museum, the result of the expertise of I.E.S Edwards, Keeper of Egyptian Antiquities.<sup>142</sup> He also noted that a key figure in the negotiations was Sir Denis Hamilton, Editor-in-Chief of Times Newspapers and a Trustee with political connections with Egypt. Commercial sponsorship and publicity partnership were provided, for the first time, by *The Times* and the *Sunday Times*.

Fortunately, the museum could find 1,114 square metres to accommodate the show.<sup>143</sup> Its own in-house design department created an installation that evoked the atmosphere of the discovery of the tomb and the iconic image of Tutankhamun's golden mask helped to generate massive publicity, but the exhibition was not created for commercial gain.<sup>144</sup>

Although visitors were charged an admission fee, an unusual event at the British Museum, the profits were given to the Unesco Fund for the preservation of the temples of Philae.<sup>145</sup>

The exhibition was attended by some 1.6 million visitors and later reconstructed for a highly successful tour of museums in America.

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<sup>141</sup> Emma Barker, 'Exhibiting the Canon: The blockbuster show' in E. Barker (ed.), *Contemporary Cultures of Display*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1999, p.128. She described this collaboration as a form of cultural diplomacy.

<sup>142</sup> David Wilson, *The British Museum: A History*, The British Museum Press, London 2002, p.284. He was a former director of the museum.

<sup>143</sup> Metres have been used throughout the thesis.

<sup>144</sup> The British Museum: Report of the Trustees 1969–72, p.17.

<sup>145</sup> Wilson 2002, p.254.

The Hayward was the national exhibition venue. It had the space, at 1,486 square metres, and should have been the obvious location for the Tutankhamun exhibition. It had displayed *Frescoes from Florence* to great acclaim in 1969.<sup>146</sup> But the Tutankhamun experience showed that a museum could successfully host a ‘blockbuster’ temporary exhibition. The British Museum continued to hold large and successful loan exhibitions, including *Vikings* in 1980, and it realised, for the first time, that it needed a dedicated temporary exhibition space. This was now included in the plans for the museum’s extension.<sup>147</sup>

#### **Part Four: The National Gallery and temporary exhibitions**

##### Rebuilding the museum

Kenneth Clark resigned as director in 1945 and was succeeded by Philip Hendy.<sup>148</sup> Hendy concentrated on the reconstruction of the gallery rooms, and the introduction of the environmental and lighting systems that were now required. The flat illuminated ceilings (lay-lights) often blocked the high arched ceilings and many UK museums adopted this approach. It was claimed that these adaptations would make museums more welcoming.<sup>149</sup>

The Gallery did not show any temporary exhibitions after 1949 and Hendy made it clear that he would not hold such events unless the right accommodation could be found.<sup>150</sup> His priority was to develop more display space for the permanent collection.<sup>151</sup> From 1961, the architects of the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works worked on a project to build along

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<sup>146</sup> The Arts Council organised this show following the disastrous floods in Florence. It was supported by Olivetti. A later version was shown at the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

<sup>147</sup> The British Museum Report of the Trustees 1969–72, p.17, said that this new extension would provide three galleries for special exhibitions of 7,220 square feet (c.670 square metres). This size was later reduced.

<sup>148</sup> Conlin 2006, p.173. Hendy was Director of Leeds Art Gallery, and formerly a curator at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, thus having valuable experience in a US museum.

<sup>149</sup> Conlin 2006, p.409.

<sup>150</sup> The National Gallery Report 1938–1954, p.41.

<sup>151</sup> The Gallery collection was c.2,000 works, extremely small in comparison with other national museums. However, the Gallery wanted to show as many works as possible. The best works were hung on the main floor and the reserve collection in the lower galleries. Hendy’s spacious hang of single works demanded more space.

the back of the Gallery in Orange Street. No formal plans were produced for the contents of this extension but it was hoped that some space could be set aside for temporary exhibitions.<sup>152</sup> While the Gallery awaited this new scheme, enough space was found to house temporary loan displays of two important collections, *From Van Eyck to Tiepolo*, with paintings from the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection, and *Masterpieces of French Painting from the Bührle Collection*.<sup>153</sup> Hendy was particularly eager to show the Bührle exhibition as it supported his argument that the Gallery needed a much wider representation of nineteenth-century French paintings, in particular Cézanne.<sup>154</sup>

As the Annual Report of 1963–6 noted, these larger shows were rare: ‘The ratio of pictures to wall-space at the National Gallery can scarcely be said to call for an active policy of loan exhibitions.’<sup>155</sup> In 1964, the Gallery was offered a loan of German paintings from the Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>156</sup> The Assistant Keeper Michael Levey, author of the 1959 *German School* catalogue, was enthusiastic but explained that the Gallery could not host this exhibition until more space was available; although the Gallery did have major expansion plans, there was no room for temporary exhibitions.<sup>157</sup> However, the real reason for the lack of enthusiasm for the temporary exhibition programme was made clear in the Annual Report: ‘The National Gallery exists primarily for the display of its permanent collection (which) is the basic attraction for the Gallery.’<sup>158</sup> The Report does admit however that ‘it has been found of great interest and also attractive to the public to hold small

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<sup>152</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 2 July 1964. William Kendall, the architect, made this comment.

<sup>153</sup> These two larger shows were organised by the Arts Council. Until Room One opened in 1964, all exhibitions were placed in collection galleries.

<sup>154</sup> The National Gallery Report, January 1960 – May 1962, p.40.

<sup>155</sup> The National Gallery Report, January 1963 – December 1966, pp.48–56.

<sup>156</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 7 January 1965. The Germans had rejected the Royal Academy as a venue due to inadequate climate control.

<sup>157</sup> Amery 1991, pp.42–3. He describes the expansion plans.

<sup>158</sup> The National Gallery Report 1967–1968, p.31.

temporary exhibitions.’ The venue for these small exhibitions was the Board Room situated in an accessible location on the main floor by the entrance foyer (Figure 4a). Opened in 1964 for the monthly meetings of the Board of Trustees, this room could display a limited number of pictures but was not particularly suitable as a temporary exhibition space as it had to be closed to the public during meetings. It was also a small space at 62 square metres and had no natural light.

The Gallery displayed a series of small shows in the Board Room focused on pictures in the collection and inspired by the success of the *Picture of the Month* exhibitions shown during the war. Most of these pictures, like the Rembrandt *Self Portrait at the Age of 34* and Veronese’s *Consecration of Saint Nicholas*, had been recently treated in the Conservation Department and were accompanied by didactic panels with technical material. On occasion, loans were brought in. The Annual Report explained that these exhibitions gave the public the opportunity to study a single great painting and learn about the process of its making.<sup>159</sup>

#### Temporary exhibitions in European museums

After the war, the great European museums looked ‘careworn, bedraggled and dowdy’.<sup>160</sup>

The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, which was reconstructed after 1945, was determined to return to its public activities, including temporary exhibitions. In 1955, it hosted *The Triumph of Mannerism from Michelangelo to El Greco*, and in 1956, it held the first great post-war Rembrandt exhibition.<sup>161</sup> It continued with a regular programme of large-scale shows, including the 300th anniversary exhibition for Rembrandt in 1969. The Rijksmuseum

<sup>159</sup> The National Gallery Report 1965–1966, p.49. The exhibitions were shown in 1965.

<sup>160</sup> Karsten Schubert, *The Curator’s Egg: The Evolution of the museum concept from the French Revolution to the present day*, third edition, London 1999, p.53.

<sup>161</sup> The Mannerism show was a Council of Europe exhibition, held every year in a European capital to increase knowledge and recognition of European culture and art throughout the continent.

always considered temporary exhibitions to be an important part of its programme and its engagement with the public.<sup>162</sup>

The Louvre had a longer period of reconstruction. In 1960, it redisplayed its painting collections and held a major Poussin exhibition, which provided an opportunity to see international works by this artist, brought together for the first time.<sup>163</sup> In 1968, it showed the Council of Europe exhibition on Gothic Art.<sup>164</sup> However, exhibitions of the major French artists, such as the Le Nain brothers in 1978, were generally shown at the Grand Palais, organised by the Réunion des Musées Nationaux (RMN), the governing body for national museums in France.<sup>165</sup> In 1971, the Department of Paintings and Drawings at the Louvre organised an exhibition around Ingres's *Bain Turc* which included preparatory drawings, related works and source engravings.<sup>166</sup> This exhibition was the first in a series of dossier exhibitions based around its important paintings. They bear some resemblance to the in-focus shows at the National Gallery, but were considerably larger: in 1975, *Le Studiolo d'Isabelle d'Este* exhibition had 135 paintings, drawings, etchings and sculpture.

### Temporary exhibitions in the United States

Temporary exhibitions had always played a regular part in American museums. The Art Institute of Chicago held frequent temporary exhibitions after its move into the building designed for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1892–3.<sup>167</sup> The Metropolitan Museum of

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<sup>162</sup> Their exhibitions had a wide range and could cover subjects such as sculpture, costume and the Far East.

<sup>163</sup> The exhibition was curated by Anthony Blunt. As a result of seeing pictures together for the first time, his attributions and dating were much criticised by Denis Mahon. Miranda Carter, *Anthony Blunt: His Lives*, Macmillan, London 2001, pp.420–35.

<sup>164</sup> Exhibitions covered the range of the Louvre's collection, including sculpture and antiquities.

<sup>165</sup> Anne Gombault, 'Organisational Saga of a Superstar Museum: The Louvre', *International Journal of Arts Management*, Spring 2002, pp.72–84.

<sup>166</sup> This was shown in new galleries in the Aile de Flore: *The Burlington Magazine*, July 1917, p.422.

<sup>167</sup> The Art Institute developed from the Chicago Academy of Design founded in 1866.



Art had held temporary exhibitions since the early 1900s.<sup>168</sup> MoMA's reputation was based on a wide range of temporary shows, including the very popular Van Gogh exhibition in 1935, which toured the country, drawing huge crowds.<sup>169</sup>

In the post-war period, American museums did not have the rebuilding problems of their European counterparts but they did have to contend with a rapidly changing social, political and economic situation. They also had to compete with the rival attractions of the modern world such as Disneyland.<sup>170</sup> Due to these different circumstances, American museums turned to marketing and high-profile programmes to attract visitors and raise revenue.<sup>171</sup>

Thomas Hoving, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1967 to 1977, took up this challenge. His aim was to invigorate and bring new visitors to the museum by making it a 'living forum for communication, teaching, education and celebration'.<sup>172</sup> To achieve this, he became an exhibition impresario, creating shows ranging from the controversial *Harlem on my mind* in 1969 to the extravagant exhibitions of 1970, accompanied by glamorous receptions, to celebrate the Met's centenary.<sup>173</sup>

Hoving and John Carter Brown, Director of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, had a well-documented rivalry over their temporary exhibition programmes. Hoving complained that the National Gallery of Art had the support of the White House which is why it was were the first American venue for the successful *Treasures of Tutankhamun* exhibition in

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<sup>168</sup> Such as the Dutch rooms in the Hudson-Fulton exhibition 1909.

<sup>169</sup> McClellan 2007, p.212. The Van Gogh exhibition at MoMA was promoted by a large banner on the façade, merchandise sales and extensive press coverage.

<sup>170</sup> Founded in 1955.

<sup>171</sup> McClellan 2007, pp.183–92; 'The Blockbuster Era', pp.210–17. He said that from the 1970s the blockbuster became a way of life for museums aiming for audience enhancement and revenue growth.

<sup>172</sup> Thomas Hoving, *Making the Mummies Dance: Inside the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Simon & Schuster, New York and London 1993, p.64.

<sup>173</sup> The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, opened on 13 April 1870.

1976.<sup>174</sup> This show toured America, attracting huge crowds that included many first-time visitors, and paved the way for future blockbusters. New Federal insurance was provided to help this and future international exhibitions.<sup>175</sup> The success of the merchandise sales set new standards. The oil giant Exxon provided financial support as part of the funding package, and multinationals such as IBM and Mobil Oil got involved in future projects.<sup>176</sup>

### The North Galleries

The National Gallery was aware of the developments abroad. It had lent paintings to the Poussin and Le Nain exhibitions in Paris and to the 1969 Rembrandt exhibition in Amsterdam, but during the 1960s it was reluctant to display these types of exhibitions itself.<sup>177</sup>

In Britain, the cultural politics of the post-war period had changed significantly by the early 1970s. Jenny Lee wanted to open museums to younger and more varied audiences. The Gallery was aware of the publicity created by Roy Strong and had witnessed the huge numbers of visitors in Trafalgar Square queuing to see the Beaton portraits. It was difficult for Martin Davies, director since 1968, to compete with Strong. Davies was already 60, a

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<sup>174</sup> Meredith Hindley, 'King Tut: A classic blockbuster museum exhibition that began as a diplomatic gesture', *Humanities*, September/October 2015, vol. 36, no. 5. This show was part of a political agreement between the US and Egypt. It contained 55 exhibits so was not large in size. The project was supported by gifts from Exxon Corporation and the Roberts Wood Johnson Jr. Charitable Trust with grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

<sup>175</sup> The new Arts and Artifacts Indemnification Act, effective 19 January 1976. This indemnity helped to avoid the immense insurance costs for these projects.

<sup>176</sup> Brian Wallis, 'The Art of Big Business', *Art in America*, June 1986, pp.28–33.

<sup>177</sup> NG 62 Poussin, *A Bacchanalian Revel before a Term of Pan*; NG 1425 Le Nain, *A Woman and Five Children*; NG 54 Rembrandt, *A Woman bathing in a Stream*. The National Gallery Report January 1955-June 1956, pp.59-60. The National Gallery and Tate Gallery Act of 1954 gave the Trustees power to lend to public exhibitions abroad. But they could use their discretion to lend to limit the loans to art historical shows where the National Gallery paintings would be essential.

traditional figure who had been a curator since 1932.<sup>178</sup> Nevertheless, the Gallery slowly began to change its attitude.

In 1967, it decided to go ahead with plans for the first stage of its development of the North Galleries along Orange Street at the back of the Gallery (Figure 4).<sup>179</sup> The ground floor would provide a large space with movable screens for the reserve collection of paintings. The levels above would be available for seminars and offices while the top floor would contain the Scientific Department and a Conservation Studio. The main purpose of the extension, however, was to provide nine large air-conditioned and top-lit galleries on the main floor, three smaller cabinet rooms and the Special Exhibitions Room, the first purpose-built space of its kind in the Gallery's history.<sup>180</sup> The location of the new Special Exhibitions Room would mean that visitors would need to walk through the collection to find it. As the Annual Report explained, the Board Room was not suitable for exhibitions because it was closed to the public during Board meetings. However, the Report continued, it was also too accessible to the public, who could come into the building, visit the exhibition and leave again without seeing the rest of the collection. This Report emphasises again that the display of the collection is the primary function of the Gallery.

The North Galleries opened on 9 June 1975. They were the first large post-war addition to the Gallery. After a period of prosperity, the 1970s brought more difficult economic times. It was the Government's responsibility to maintain and pay for new extensions to its national

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<sup>178</sup> Davies was a fine and dedicated scholar who had created many new Schools catalogues.

<sup>179</sup>The National Gallery Report, January 1967 – December 1968, p.15.

<sup>180</sup> The new building consisted of 3,000 square metres of display space and 800 square metres of other facilities, the lecture room, smoking room, reading room, seminar room, entrance hall and cloakroom.

museums. But one result of this was that the Gallery had to use Ministry architects, who produced a mediocre design. *The Architects' Journal* called it 'worthy but timid'.<sup>181</sup>

The interior design was typical of the modern art gallery.<sup>182</sup> There were no cornices, door frames or skirtings as the rooms were split up by partitions. The wall colours were neutral, the floors were carpeted and modern leather seating was provided. These rooms were a direct contrast to the existing galleries, as Homan Potterton, the Assistant Keeper, pointed out in his guide to the Gallery.<sup>183</sup> He described them as 'a model of discretion and reticence in comparison to the grandeur of the Victorian interiors'. Great technical efforts were made to enable natural light to wash the walls. This light was controlled by a system of louvres supplemented by fluorescent lights. Some critics described the rooms as open and airy with floating walls infused with light, but others called them narrow and boxlike with a confusing layout.<sup>184</sup> The new Special Exhibitions Room was placed at the back of the suite of rooms, a simple and practical space with top lighting and walls that could be repainted or adapted to suit the needs of each exhibition. At 97 square metres, it was slightly larger than the Board Room at 62 square metres and more suited to changing exhibitions (Figure 4).

### The Tate Gallery's new extension

It is interesting to compare this extension with a similar development taking place at the Tate, which was also frustrated by its lack of display space and had been considering expansion plans since the late 1960s. It managed to bypass the usual government architects

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<sup>181</sup> Amery 1991, p.42. It was designed by George Pearce and R.I.O. Greatrex of the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works.

<sup>182</sup> Brawne 1965, Introduction, pp.7–16.

<sup>183</sup> Homan Potterton, *Concise Room by Room Guide to the National Gallery*, National Gallery, London 1976, p.14.

<sup>184</sup> Conlin 2006, p.418, and Amery 1991, p.180.

and was able, by special arrangement, to choose its own architect, Richard Llewellyn-Davies.<sup>185</sup>

The plan eventually agreed involved the redevelopment of the north-east quadrant area of the site. Opening on 24 May 1979, this new wing contained more gallery space of around 2,400 square metres in addition to a new conservation studio and service areas below ground.<sup>186</sup> The project was government funded with a donation from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. The brief called for rooms that would meet modern lighting and environment requirements but let in natural light when possible.<sup>187</sup> A system of temporary display walls was provided by movable screens, creating box-like rooms of varying sizes giving the ‘cool, airy and neutral setting’ that the brief had requested.

Although this space had been designed to house the twentieth-century collection, a significant part of it was, and still is, used for temporary exhibitions. The Tate has always had a strong programme of temporary exhibitions and continued to do so even after the Arts Council’s move to the Hayward Gallery in 1968. Michael Compton, Keeper of the Exhibitions and Education Departments in the 1970s, said that the aim of the temporary exhibitions was to promote, enrich or extend some aspect of the Tate’s collection, a not dissimilar aim to the National Gallery’s, but on a larger and more ambitious scale.<sup>188</sup>

The Tate had mounted a series of exhibitions devoted to major contemporary artists in the 1960s and ’70s, and some thematic historical shows, for example, Roy Strong’s spectacular

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<sup>185</sup> Spalding 1998, p.160. The eventual project was designed by Llewellyn-Davies, Weeks, Forestier-Walker and Bor in association with the Property Services Agency of the Department of the Environment.

<sup>186</sup> Workshops, photographic studio, handling facility for temporary exhibitions.

<sup>187</sup> The Tate Gallery Illustrated Biennial Report 1978–80, p.7. Spalding 1998, pp.164–5. The ceiling contained cell-like structure of 21 modules. The movable screens were fixed to these ceiling modules and to the floor. Above them was a pyramid of glazing and movable louvres.

<sup>188</sup> Spalding 1998, pp.170–80.

*The Elizabethan Image*, in 1969. However, there was no dedicated exhibition area and designers had to convert the Duveen Galleries. The new, fully flexible extension was well suited to the Tate's needs. The space dedicated to temporary exhibitions was up to 1,000 square metres, whereas the Special Exhibitions Room provided by the National Gallery within a development of a similar size was only 97 square metres. This demonstrates, once again, the Gallery's unwillingness to commit more space and resources to temporary exhibitions beyond what was necessary for small in-focus shows.

#### The new director and a new exhibitions programme

Michael Levey was appointed Director of the National Gallery in 1974 and was in post when the North Galleries opened in 1975.<sup>189</sup> He had been a Keeper at the Gallery since 1951 and was devoted to the collection, but he recognised that the National Gallery needed to embrace the contemporary world, a world in which he felt at home.<sup>190</sup> The Deputy Keeper Alistair Smith, who had become Head of Education and Exhibitions in the mid-1970s, had greatly expanded the educational activities for adults and families and in 1975 developed the *Picture in Focus* series, for which the Special Exhibitions Room provided the venue. The first exhibition, *Delaroche and Gautier*, was prompted by the conservation of Delaroche's painting of the death of Lady Jane Grey. Smith also organised the series *A Month in London*, in which a major painting from a regional museum was put on display. The first was Gentileschi's *The Rest on the Flight*, from Birmingham, shown in 1978.

In 1977 Robin Cole Hamilton became the Gallery's first in-house designer. Responsible for many of the shows in the Special Exhibitions Room, he maintained that the space could be

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<sup>189</sup> Martin Davies retired in April 1973.

<sup>190</sup> Saumarez Smith 2009, pp.146–7, describes Levey as a 'figure of the 1960s, highly sociable, extremely democratic, a vegetarian with a taste for purple corduroy'. He was married to the writer Bridget Brophy. *The National Gallery Annual Review* 1986, pp.2-5, outlines Levey's achievements as Director including greatly expanding the temporary exhibition programme.

adapted for the needs of each exhibition and that extra screens could be provided to form an entrance area if required.<sup>191</sup> He also created some new installation features, designing a ruined façade and arches for Claude's *Enchanted Castle* in the *Acquisition in Focus* series in 1982, and in 1983 recreating the fireplace over which another new acquisition, Rubens's *Samson and Delilah*, had originally been placed in 1609–10 (Figure 5).

The Gallery was proud of these exhibitions. The National Gallery Report of 1978–9 noted that other galleries had begun to follow the Gallery's example and mount small exhibitions around their own paintings.<sup>192</sup> Alistair Smith presented the concept of these shows at a special seminar in the Royal Scottish Museum in 1978, where he argued that these smaller shows were often more successful in creating an appreciation of art than the international blockbuster.

Another new series initiated by Smith was *The Artist's Eye*. Levey and Smith were concerned about the difficulties of attracting visitors to a collection that ended at 1900, and one of their ventures was to engage with contemporary artists.<sup>193</sup> In 1977 Anthony Caro was invited to make a selection of works from the collection and these were exhibited with his own *Orangerie*.<sup>194</sup> This venture had a huge impact. A film about the project was shown in the Aquarius series on London Weekend Television in which Caro discussed the work of great paintings of the past and their relevance to him. Such a level of publicity ensured a high attendance of 130,169 visitors.<sup>195</sup> Another series was the artist-in-residence scheme, supported by the Arts Council. The artists finished their residency at the Gallery with an

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<sup>191</sup> Robin Cole Hamilton, interviewed by Mary Hersov, 24 October 2013. Cole Hamilton was designer at the Gallery from 1977 to November 1984.

<sup>192</sup> The National Gallery Report 1978–9.

<sup>193</sup> Levey tried to extend this range with purchases within the twentieth century by artists such as Klimt (1976), Redon (1977) and Picasso (1979).

<sup>194</sup> The series was shown in the Board Room and the Special Exhibitions Room.

<sup>195</sup> The National Gallery Report, July 1975 – December 1977, pp.46–53.

exhibition of their own work in their studio. Both these ventures were major innovations for a museum with an historic collection.

#### Larger exhibitions at the National Gallery

Now fully aware of the success of temporary exhibition programmes at other national museums, the Gallery decided to celebrate its past and to promote the new extension with larger exhibitions. Two major exhibitions were mounted in 1974 and 1975.<sup>196</sup> This was a complete change in direction for the Gallery.

The 150th anniversary exhibition of 1974, *The Working of the National Gallery*, was shown in the Central Hall, then occupied by the shop. It was split into nine specially created rooms outlining the history of the Gallery, its present-day activities and its plans for the future. The exhibition was designed by Christopher Dean, the first time that the Gallery had used an external designer.<sup>197</sup>

The second major exhibition was held in 1975 at the opening of the North Galleries. It is not clear why it was decided to launch the North Galleries, built to house the collection, with a temporary exhibition. Perhaps the idea was to celebrate the Royal opening of the new extension with an impressive event. The first proposal, to have a loan exhibition of German art, had long been discussed but eventually came to nothing. The new North Galleries would have been an ideal location as they were fully air-conditioned. However, at the last minute, negotiations broke down over insurance costs.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> The National Gallery Report 1975, p.33.

<sup>197</sup> The National Gallery Report, January 1973 – June 1975, Director's Report, pp.36–9. The design firm was Castle, Park, Dean and Hook.

<sup>198</sup> The National Gallery Report January 1993 – June 1995, Director's Report, p.33. British Government Indemnity was introduced in 1980.



Instead, Cecil Gould and Alistair Smith devised *Rival of Nature: Renaissance Painting in its context* (Figure 6).<sup>199</sup> Renaissance paintings from North and South Europe were presented in a series of thematic groups, including objects such as medals, ivories, sculpture and ceramics. As the preface to the catalogue explained, the exhibition provided a fresh context in which to see the Gallery's paintings and drew on public and private collections from around Britain.<sup>200</sup> The 235 exhibits filled the North Galleries. Hanging banners and room panels were used to make the space look completely different from the permanent displays.<sup>201</sup> Launched by HM the Queen on 9 June 1975, the exhibition ran until 28 September and attracted some 350,000 visitors.<sup>202</sup>

After this success, Levey proposed that the Gallery should hold a series of large-scale loan exhibitions to cover the different national schools of painting.<sup>203</sup> They were designed specifically for the National Gallery, with free admission, and were not international touring exhibitions. *Art in Seventeenth Century Holland* in 1976 was devised by Christopher Brown and consisted of 130 paintings, drawn from the collection, from major UK lenders and from Dutch museums.<sup>204</sup> As Brown explained in the catalogue, this was the first exhibition held in London 'to attempt to give an idea of the range and achievement of this extraordinary period'. The prospect of seeing eleven great Rembrandts excited great interest and the exhibition was deemed a notable success. It was attended by around half a million visitors and any other institution would have hailed this as a triumph, but not the National Gallery.

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<sup>199</sup> Cecil Gould, Keeper of Italian paintings, and Alistair Smith, Deputy Keeper of Northern paintings.

<sup>200</sup> The preface was written by Michael Levey. There was one foreign loan.

<sup>201</sup> The exhibition was designed by architects from the Department of the Environment.

<sup>202</sup> As it was a free admission exhibition, the attendance figure must be considered to be approximate.

<sup>203</sup> Michael Levey, Foreword to Allan Braham, *El Greco to Goya: The Taste for Spanish Paintings in Britain and Ireland*, National Gallery, London 1981.

<sup>204</sup> Christopher Brown, *Art in Seventeenth Century Holland*, National Gallery, London 1976, Introduction, p.1. Brown was Assistant Keeper, Dutch and Flemish Seventeenth Century Paintings. The exhibition was shown in the North Galleries and Rooms 25–28.

The National Gallery Report explained that exhibitions were created to increase the enjoyment and understanding of the collection and attendance figures were not its prime concern.<sup>205</sup> However, the Report did concede that the extremely high visitor attendance enabled the Gallery to reach its highest number of annual visitors at over two and a half million.

It seemed that the Gallery had found a successful formula. Unfortunately, however, it was too demanding to keep decanting the permanent collection to make way for temporary exhibitions, and after 1977 the North Galleries were devoted solely to the permanent collection.<sup>206</sup> The Gallery tried to find other locations for larger exhibitions. The central area of the lower floor galleries which housed the reserve collection was considered as a possible space as it had screens which could be arranged and painted to serve temporary exhibitions. *Venetian Seventeenth Century Painting* was shown there in 1979.<sup>207</sup> It was the first exhibition of its kind in England to focus on these lesser known works. No formal attendance figures are recorded, but perhaps because of its lack of well-known artists this exhibition was not popular.<sup>208</sup> Furthermore, the venue was not considered a success as it was difficult to persuade visitors to visit this lower floor area.<sup>209</sup>

The free admission series of smaller collection-based exhibitions resumed in 1981 in yet another location. *El Greco to Goya: The Taste for Spanish Paintings* opened in the current Spanish Gallery and the adjacent room.<sup>210</sup> Screens were introduced to provide more space for the 74 paintings shown together with a few objects. This was a popular show attracting

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<sup>205</sup> The National Gallery Report, July 1975 – December 1977, pp.46-53.

<sup>206</sup> The North Galleries were last used in 1977 for the exhibition *Late Gothic Art From Cologne*.

<sup>207</sup> Homan Potterton, *Venetian Seventeenth Century Painting: A loan exhibition from collections in Britain and Ireland*, National Gallery, London 1979; Foreword by Michael Levey, p.5.

<sup>208</sup> The National Gallery Report, January 1978 – December 1979, p.48.

<sup>209</sup> This area can be seen on the National Gallery floorplan, formally known as Gallery A (Figure 4b).

<sup>210</sup> Now Rooms 34 and 41.

almost half a million visitors. Levey hoped to hold similar exhibitions every two years.<sup>211</sup>

However, no more proposals were put forward. The Gallery had other concerns. It had just become involved with the development of the Hampton site and was also focusing its efforts on the development of the programme for a new temporary exhibition venue, the Sunley Room.

### The Sunley Room

Within five years of opening the Special Exhibitions Room, the Gallery was starting to plan its replacement. This room was simply too small for the exhibitions and the growing numbers of visitors, as became clear in 1983 with the exhibition *Manet at Work*, created to mark the centenary of Manet's death in 1883.<sup>212</sup> The exhibition brought together loans and didactic material to put the Gallery's own works by Manet in context and was planned to coincide with major retrospectives of the artist's work in Paris and New York.<sup>213</sup> The only celebration of the artist in Britain, the National Gallery's exhibition had almost 300,000 visitors, leading to large queues in the adjacent rooms.<sup>214</sup>

In 1980 the Gallery announced plans for the vacant area between Rooms 12 and 28 (see Figure 2) to become an exhibition space. This was a good location, off the central hall and near the main entrance, and would be purpose-built with top lighting and environmental control.<sup>215</sup> It was designed for the efficient creation of exhibition sets and the display of a wide range of art. It would be larger, at 150 square metres, and in a better location than the

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<sup>211</sup> Braham 1981; Foreword by Michael Levey, p.1.

<sup>212</sup> *Manet at Work: An exhibition to mark the centenary of the death of Edouard Manet* in the Special Exhibition Room (10 August – 9 October 1983).

<sup>213</sup> These two venues often shared exhibitions of major artists. Manet (1832–1883) shown at Galeries Nationale du Grand Palais, Paris (22 April – 8 August 1983) with 220 works, and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (10 September – 27 November 1983), with 190 works. The National Gallery lent NG 3260, Manet's *Music in the Tuileries Gardens*, to the Paris venue only.

<sup>214</sup> The National Gallery Report January 1982 – December 1984, p.41.

<sup>215</sup> The National Gallery Report January 1979–December 1980, Director's Report, p.53.

Special Exhibitions Room, which it would replace, and would enable the Gallery to mount exhibitions of greater scale and range. But it would not be able to accommodate the Gallery's larger exhibitions and would not meet the Gallery's future needs.<sup>216</sup>

Generous sponsorship was provided by the Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation, whose funds would be matched by the Government.<sup>217</sup> The room would be called the Bernard and Mary Sunley Room, known as the Sunley Room. It is interesting to note that one of the Gallery's first forays into the world of private sponsorship should involve the funding of a new temporary exhibition space.<sup>218</sup>

Robin Cole Hamilton, the Gallery's designer, was involved in the early stages.<sup>219</sup> He said that a modern space would be inserted into this former light well and that it would be completely different from the traditional gallery rooms that surrounded it. It was to be a neutral box, with free-standing movable screens which could be configured in a variety of designs and dressed up to suit each exhibition. A basic wood veneer skirting was placed around the room which otherwise lacked the traditional architectural detailing of the historic rooms in the Wilkins building. It was functional and practical but lacked finesse.<sup>220</sup>

Alistair Smith was already planning a range of stimulating projects for the room. The exhibition *Danish Painting: The Golden Age* was the first, in autumn 1984. It was followed by *Masterpieces from The National Gallery of Ireland*, which included a huge work by Luca

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<sup>216</sup> Gallery 31 adjacent to the Sunley Room was eventually turned into an exhibition space with a small cinema attached.

<sup>217</sup> The National Gallery Report January 1982 – December 1984, p.8 placed this gift in the context of the Government's statement to museums that they would have to find sponsors to pay for improvements to their buildings. The Foundation provided £1.5 million and the Government financed the rest of the scheme, which included offices in the adjoining area and the re-roofing of galleries 29 and 30.

<sup>218</sup> Joseph Duveen did pay for the creation of Gallery 30 in the 1930s.

<sup>219</sup> Robin Cole Hamilton interview with Mary Hersov, 24 October 2013.

<sup>220</sup> The architects Eric Hives and Sons were consultants to the Property Services Agency, the Government department that now managed the building.

Giordano which fortunately could be accommodated in the generous height of the room (Figure 7).<sup>221</sup>

The Sunley Room would also facilitate the expansion of the popular *Artist's Eye* series begun in 1977 with Anthony Caro. In an extraordinary coup, Smith persuaded Francis Bacon to produce his own version of the exhibition.

### **Summary**

This chapter has reviewed the Gallery's history of temporary exhibitions and the spaces to house them before the development of the Sainsbury Wing. It is clear that, from its inception in 1824, the National Gallery gave particular importance to the display of its permanent collection and that it regarded temporary exhibitions as a form of popular entertainment and an essentially commercial activity.

The Gallery's popularity waned from the late nineteenth century. Kenneth Clark, director from 1934, renovated the Gallery and wished to make it more accessible to the public. He introduced temporary exhibitions as part of his plan and mounted popular shows during the Second World War. It seemed that at last temporary exhibitions had become an integral part of the Gallery's activities.

This trend was completely reversed in the post-war period. From the 1960s, a small-scale programme of in-focus exhibitions was shown in the Board Room, intended to house meetings of the Board of Trustees. Lack of space was a genuine problem, but behind this lay the Gallery's traditional conviction that resources should be devoted to the permanent collection.

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<sup>221</sup> *Danish Painting: The Golden Age* (5 October – 20 November 1984), *Masterpieces from the National Gallery of Ireland* (27 March – 27 May 1985), *The Artist's Eye: Francis Bacon* (23 October – 15 December 1985).

The creation of the North Galleries in 1975 included the Special Exhibitions Room, the first dedicated space for temporary exhibitions. However, this space was less than one per cent of the total Gallery space, a tiny proportion.<sup>222</sup> In contrast, the Tate's new extension of roughly the same size included an area for temporary exhibitions that was ten times larger, a reflection of their different priorities.<sup>223</sup>

By the mid-1970s the Director Michael Levey and the Head of Education Alistair Smith were both eager to change the perception of the Gallery as a traditional museum. Smith produced a new range of exhibitions. A vacant area off the central hall was developed into a purpose-built and flexible exhibitions space. Known as the Sunley Room, it opened in 1984. At 150 square metres, it was larger than the previous space but not big enough to accommodate the larger exhibitions.

The Gallery had built two venues for temporary exhibitions within ten years but both were inadequate. While the lack of space within the Wilkins building was a problem from the beginning, the Gallery had always prioritised the growing permanent collection. Temporary exhibitions gradually became a recognised activity, but they remained subordinate. These tensions would continue during the development of the Hampton site.

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<sup>222</sup> The total size of 3,000 square metres included the main floor galleries and the reserve galleries.

<sup>223</sup> The space allocated to temporary exhibitions was 1,000 square metres.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE SAINSBURY WING**

### **Introduction**

Chapter Two describes how the Gallery made the decision to build the major new extension to the existing Wilkins building, ending in April 1985 with the announcement of funding from the Sainsbury brothers. The focus is on reconstructing and analysing the decision-making process behind the creation of the temporary exhibition space in the new wing. Part One reviews the background to the project, pointing to the boom in building new wings for old museums, before outlining the complicated history of the Hampton site. Part Two examines the series of briefs for the contents of the building, and looks at the way the temporary exhibition space came to be included in the brief and how its role was expanded.

### **Part One: The background**

To understand the impetus behind the development of the Hampton site, it is necessary to consider the context of museum building, and in particular the need for expansion in the post-war period. Many museums, like the Kunsthhaus, Zurich, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, for example, found that their existing buildings were overcrowded and the public facilities inadequate. A newly built wing seemed the obvious answer as it could provide additional galleries for the permanent collection, and for temporary exhibitions with modern environmental controls, as well as space for a lecture theatre, shop and restaurant. The growth of the blockbuster exhibition was also an important factor in the creation of

larger and better equipped temporary exhibition galleries. Above all, these new wings would provide more space for the visitors.<sup>224</sup>

The National Gallery had embarked on the building of new galleries behind the original Wilkins structure to house the ever-growing collection in the late nineteenth century (see Figure 2). But there was always too little space. Several other national museums in London had had plans for large developments that had not come to fruition. In the 1960s, there was an abortive scheme to redevelop the front area of the Tate Gallery with the addition of a modern façade to replace the existing steps and portico.<sup>225</sup> This plan would have provided for a restaurant, a lecture theatre and a temporary exhibition space independent of the main gallery. A model of the new annexe was put on public display in 1969, but the project was dropped after objections to the destruction of the historic façade. An extension designed by Llewellyn Davies was eventually built in 1975, and by 1980 the new Clore Gallery, designed by Stirling, Wilford Associates, was being built to house the Turner collection.<sup>226</sup> The British Museum opened a new wing in 1981, designed by Colin St John Wilson. The museum had had ambitious plans for this extension, but the project had been greatly reduced and the museum ended up with a moderate-sized temporary exhibition space of 430 square metres and a restaurant.<sup>227</sup>

More relevant and high profile were the extensions created in the United States. The Chinese-American architect I.M. Pei was hailed as the champion of a new type of museum

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<sup>224</sup> Not all museums with historic buildings chose to create new wings. The Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, has allocated a special exhibition space in the first floor picture gallery. The café and shop are situated in the ground floor domed entrance.

<sup>225</sup> Spalding 1998, pp.160–3.

<sup>226</sup> Spalding 1998, p.212, Press Announcement, 6 May 1980. It opened on 1 April 1987.

<sup>227</sup> The British Museum Annual Report 1969–72 listed a size for the new temporary exhibition space as 670.76 square metres, which was now reduced to 430 square metres. The extension included a restaurant and office space.



that focused on the public experience, putting museums at the centre of popular culture.<sup>228</sup>

The East Building of the National Gallery of Art (NGA), Washington, designed by Pei and opened in 1978, was a notable example. The NGA was housed in a traditional Beaux Arts style museum (later known as the West Building), designed by John Russell Pope in 1941 and inspired by the National Gallery in London, but by the early 1960s it was considered too small.<sup>229</sup> Ambitious plans for a new building, supervised by John Carter Brown, who became director in 1969, were supported by the funders, Paul Mellon and his family.<sup>230</sup> The redevelopment was part of a wider plan of cultural investment in the centre of Washington and reflected the desire to assert the importance of the NGA as the nation's premier art museum, based in the capital city, in opposition to the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The original project involved the creation of a research centre and space for modern art.<sup>231</sup> Carter Brown and Pei wanted to give the public a new museum experience so the building would now have a large entrance atrium, temporary exhibition galleries, an auditorium and an underground concourse containing restaurants and a shop.

Looking back at the project, Pei said that the East Building was designed to complement the West Building, to make the whole a better functioning museum.<sup>232</sup> He explained that the modern museum was more than a place for the permanent collection of masterpieces. In order to stay active and meaningful it needed to draw in a wide audience of all ages and reflect the changing times. He produced temporary galleries based around a large glass-enclosed piazza to accommodate the crowds for popular shows. The new galleries, at 1,486 square metres, were arranged on three floors around the atrium, so that the spaces could

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<sup>228</sup> Philip Jodidio, *I.M. Pei: The Complete Works*, Rizzoli, New York 2008, p.133.

<sup>229</sup> The National Gallery of Art was created in 1937 for the people of the United States of America by a joint resolution of Congress accepting the gift of the financier and art collector, Andrew W. Mellon.

<sup>230</sup> Alofsin (ed.) 2009, Introduction, p.26.

<sup>231</sup> Alofsin (ed.) 2009, p.36.

<sup>232</sup> Gero von Boehm, *Conversations with I.M. Pei: Light is the Key*, Prestel 2000, p.63.

be used for several different shows or one large exhibition.<sup>233</sup> Opening in 1978, the building was a severe modernist structure which followed the original trapezoid site. It had a mixed reception from architecture critics, but greatly increased the visitor numbers to the museum, with the help of extensive publicity generated by its prestigious opening events.<sup>234</sup>

Pei created another striking modern addition to a historic building, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, which opened in 1981. A glazed galleria was placed over a large open courtyard which contained a restaurant and shops leading to a spacious auditorium and galleries for the collection and for temporary exhibitions. The special exhibition hall, designed for popular shows, was 836 square metres in size, with a coffered roof which admitted both natural and concealed artificial light. The new wing had its own entrance and parking area so that it could open out of hours as a separate entity from the main building. Once again, Pei increased the range of facilities and generated new interest in this traditional museum.<sup>235</sup>

Pei's most radical museum extension was the Grand Louvre project in Paris. Originally a royal palace, the Louvre was by the 1980s in need of modern facilities.<sup>236</sup> In the first phase, Pei built a huge glass pyramid from which an escalator led down to a vast reception area, the Cour Napoléon. This, in turn, led to new galleries for the permanent collection and also to public amenities, including shops and restaurants in the Galeries du Carrousel area, as

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<sup>233</sup> They did not have access to natural light, though some light was available through the towers. This aspect was criticised by some critics. The exhibition design team constructed exquisite and very expensive recreations of room settings such as the gallery from the Paris Salon of 1870 for *Rodin Rediscovered* in 1981–2.

<sup>234</sup> Alofsin (ed.) 2009, pp.47–51. Amery, 'Inside the NGA', *Architectural Review*, January 1979, p.22, called the atrium 'a superluxurious transit lounge'. In 1979, attendance at the NGA was around 2.5 million visitors per year. It increased to 4.5 million visitors in 1978 after the opening of the new wing. 620,000 visited *Treasures from Dresden*, the opening exhibition. It should be noted that, unlike most American museums, the NGA has free admission to the collection and exhibitions.

<sup>235</sup> Jodidio 2009, pp.165–81.

<sup>236</sup> Geneviève Bresc-Bautier, *Le Louvre, une histoire de palais*, Musée du Louvre editions, Paris 2008, p.164. The Louvre rebuilding project was part of an ambitious programme of construction in Paris encouraged by Mitterrand, president of France in 1981. It was commissioned in 1984 and the entrance hall opened in 1989.

well as a 1,000 square metre hall for temporary exhibitions. Michel Laclotte, Director of the Louvre, explained that this new space would concentrate on exhibitions that related to the collection, but he also had more ambitious plans.<sup>237</sup>

Museums throughout the West were expanding their public facilities and particularly their spaces for temporary shows with sizeable galleries of around 1,000 square metres. The challenge for architects was to provide all the required resources but, as one planner observed of the rebuilding of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, ‘by the time you had solved all the problems, there were very few choices you could make.’<sup>238</sup> This was indeed the experience of those associated with the complicated development of the Hampton site.

### The Hampton site

The Hampton site, situated on the west side of the National Gallery, was an obvious location for expansion. However, it was a constricted and irregular space bounded to the north and west by narrow streets, and to the east by the public footpath, later renamed Jubilee Walk (Figure 8).<sup>239</sup> Originally the site of a furniture store, it had been bombed in 1940 and after the war became available for redevelopment.<sup>240</sup> But when Philip Hendy became Director in 1945, he concentrated on repairing the extensive bomb damage to the Wilkins building.<sup>241</sup> In 1955, some renovated rooms on the west side of the building were opened to the public,

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<sup>237</sup> Michel Laclotte, ‘The Louvre: scholarly programmes and cultural programmes. Scholarship in Museums’, *RSA Journal*, February 1991, p.198. This space does not have natural light. The Grand Palais would continue to show a range of large-scale exhibitions.

<sup>238</sup> This quote comes from Richard Weinstein, planner at New York City’s design and planning agency, Newhouse 2006, p.155.

<sup>239</sup> Michael Wilson, *A Guide to the Sainsbury Wing*, p.9. A list of key dates is provided (see Appendix A). This is more detailed for the period October 1984 to April 1987.

<sup>240</sup> This section is a summary of a complicated story. For more details see Amery 1991, pp.38–49, and Wyndham 2015, pp.11–87, and Crookham 2009, pp.107–19.

<sup>241</sup> The rebuilding was carried out by the Ministry of Works. Some rooms were open during this period.

but the Gallery report of 1955–6 stressed that it was clear that there would be insufficient space for the collection in future years.<sup>242</sup>

In 1955, The Canadian Government acquired the Hampton site with an interest in developing it as an annexe to Canada House.<sup>243</sup> In February 1958, the Chairman of the National Gallery Trustees, Professor Lionel Robbins, wrote to the Ministry of Works explaining that while there was no immediate need for the National Gallery to expand, such a need would arise in fifteen to twenty years' time, as the collection grew, and that the Gallery would like the Hampton site to be kept available for an eventual extension.<sup>244</sup> The Government purchased the freehold of the site in November 1958, announcing that it would be retained for further building by the National Gallery.<sup>245</sup> However, in 1961, as there was no current Government funding available, the site was leased as a car park.<sup>246</sup>

In the early 1960s, the Gallery became embroiled in a long and difficult discussion with the National Portrait Gallery. The National Gallery proposed to relinquish their claim to the Hampton site so that it could be given to the National Portrait Gallery, which would then vacate its current building. The National Gallery would be able to develop the whole area at the back of its premises, the so called 'Barrack Yard' site bounded by Orange Street, in addition to the existing building occupied by the National Portrait Gallery. This would

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<sup>242</sup> The National Gallery Report, January 1955 – December 1956, p.9. Henty wanted to display as much of the collection, around 2,000 works, as possible.

<sup>243</sup> Wyndham 2015, p.11. Hampton's held some of the site on a Crown lease and some of it on freehold. The Canadian Government bought out Hampton's and took on the Crown lease in 1955. The Canadian Embassy is opposite the site.

<sup>244</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 13 February 1958.

<sup>245</sup> Amery 1991, pp.39-42. The *Sunday Times* created a public competition for designs for the new extension in 1959.

<sup>246</sup> Wyndham 2015, p.37. The National Car Park Company took on the initial lease in December 1961.

provide significant space for the Gallery's expansion plans.<sup>247</sup> In 1964, the two institutions signed an agreement to pursue this aim, in the hope of Government funding.<sup>248</sup>

The situation changed when Roy Strong became Director of the National Portrait Gallery in 1967. Strong was very keen to preserve the Portrait Gallery's current building.<sup>249</sup> But he was eventually obliged to draw up a wish list for the facilities that the museum would require by 2000 so that a feasibility study could be made for its move to the Hampton site.<sup>250</sup> This list contained the first mention of a temporary exhibition gallery on the Hampton site, a generous space of 929 square metres. Strong's list appears to have been deliberately over-ambitious and the feasibility study showed that his plans could not possibly be realised on this site.<sup>251</sup> Meanwhile, the National Gallery constructed the North Galleries, a small part of the original scheme to build right across the back of the National Gallery building (see Figure 4a).<sup>252</sup> By the late 1970s, the National Portrait Gallery began to consider a move to another location with a new building. However, this would take many years to develop.<sup>253</sup> By 1980 they had decided to remain where they were for at least ten to fifteen years. This decision blocked any further National Gallery development along Orange Street at the back of the existing site.

### The Hampton site development

Michael Levey, Director of the National Gallery from 1974, was put in an impossible position. On 6 March 1980, he reported to the Board of Trustees that the Gallery required

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<sup>247</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 14 January 1961.

<sup>248</sup> Conlin 2006, p.413.

<sup>249</sup> Wyndham 2015, p.40.

<sup>250</sup> Conlin 2006, p.417. This study was commissioned from Casson Condor and Partners by the Ministry of Works in 1970.

<sup>251</sup> Wyndham 2015, p.11. Strong requested space for the collection, the library and archive, lecture theatre and cinema, a crèche, restaurant and roof garden.

<sup>252</sup> Amery 1991, p.43, for an illustration of the original design produced in the late 1960s.

<sup>253</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 2 November 1978. The National Portrait Gallery's long-term plans were eventually abandoned due to lack of financial support from the Government.

more space as it was continuing to purchase new acquisitions. Indeed, he pointed out that the Gallery acquired some five or six high-quality paintings each year which required display on the main floor.<sup>254</sup> In the next few months, the Trustees and Director turned their attention to the only place available for expansion, the Hampton site, currently occupied by the car park. It was clear that the Trustees needed to act immediately, otherwise there was a risk that the Government would extend the lease of the site to a commercial body for another twenty years.<sup>255</sup> Levey was presented with a quandary. He had not been enthusiastic about the Hampton site, as he thought the space would be inadequate and there might be difficulties in presenting a coherent architectural appearance in Trafalgar Square, views that would prove to be prophetic.<sup>256</sup> He much preferred the original scheme of expansion into the National Portrait Gallery but now had to accept that this was not possible.

The Gallery already had in mind three main building schemes within the existing building. These included, from 1980, a new exhibitions room, the Sunley Room, continuing air-conditioning of the East Wing, as well as the creation of other facilities, including a larger lecture theatre.<sup>257</sup> The North Galleries, which had opened in 1975, had provided air-conditioned main-floor rooms and an area for the reserve collection, and it could be argued that the National Gallery had sufficient space for its collection, but Levey, aware that the collection was growing, maintained that the Early Renaissance paintings were a priority for redisplay.<sup>258</sup> He and his colleagues believed that these paintings were the least suited to

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<sup>254</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 6 March 1980.

<sup>255</sup> Wyndham 2015, p.49. The Government was not able to sell this site, a prime location, because of the terms of the purchase of the site from Canada House.

<sup>256</sup> Wyndham 2015, p.52.

<sup>257</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1 May 1980.

<sup>258</sup> See Jules Lubbock, 'An open letter', *New Statesman*, 12 December 1982. He questions the need for more space.

the grand galleries of the existing building and he very much wanted to bring all the Renaissance paintings together, and hang the Northern Renaissance paintings alongside the Italian ones.<sup>259</sup> The area of top-lit space provided by the Hampton site was roughly equivalent to the space occupied by this collection in the existing building, and would allow for the best chronological layout. Visitors would be able to follow the development of European painting sequentially as they moved from the western to the eastern galleries.

### Funding problems

State funding for the arts had increased considerably in the 1960s and early 1970s. Despite the worsening economic situation, the Government continued to pay for repairs and for new galleries. In 1979, however, the situation completely changed with the election of the Conservative Government led by Margaret Thatcher. It was soon clear that the new Government wished to reduce public funding of the arts.<sup>260</sup> It wanted to encourage arts bodies to raise money from sponsorship and donations as well as from commercial activities. As Margaret Thatcher later recalled in her memoirs: 'I wanted to see the private sector raising more money and bringing business acumen and efficiency to bear on the administration of cultural institutions.'<sup>261</sup>

Since the end of the Second World War, the nature of the National Gallery's Board of Trustees had been changing. In a move away from the traditional appointment of aristocrats, there was an introduction of new blood. Professor Lionel Robbins, Head of

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<sup>259</sup> Hampton site development press conference, 7 December 1983.

<sup>260</sup> Hewison, 1995, p.478. Norman St John Stevas, Minister for the Arts, made an announcement in the *Observer*, 14 October 1979, that the Government would maintain the present level of support for the arts but would not increase it.

<sup>261</sup> Hewison 1995, p.478, quotes from Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, Harper Collins, London 1993. For more details about arts funding, see Rosemary Clarke, 'Government Policy and Art Museums in the United Kingdom' in Martin Feldman (ed.), *The Economics of Art Museums*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1991.

Economics at the London School of Economics, became a Trustee in 1952.<sup>262</sup> Gradually, the Gallery began to appoint Trustees from a commercial background, and in 1976 the Hon. John Sainsbury was appointed.<sup>263</sup> In 1980, Sainsbury became the chair of the Publications Committee, and this led to a re-organisation of the loss-making Gallery shop, which started to make a profit from 1984.<sup>264</sup> Another significant appointment was that in 1980 of Stuart Young, an accountant and younger brother of David Young, a businessman, a life peer from 1984 and a member of the Cabinet.<sup>265</sup>

On 4 December 1980, the Board of Trustees, under its new chairman Lord Annan, had a crucial meeting.<sup>266</sup> It was agreed that the development of the Hampton site and its use for the display of the Early Renaissance paintings was the main long-term priority. Because it was clear that there would be no Government support for future building, a sponsorship committee had been set up in May 1980 to consider other ways of raising funds.<sup>267</sup> At this time, there were only a few examples of private philanthropy for the arts in the United Kingdom. Sir Robert and Lady Sainsbury had donated their collection of world art to the University of East Anglia in 1973, and they provided the funding for the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts in Norfolk, designed by Norman Foster, which opened in 1978.<sup>268</sup> And in 1980,

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<sup>262</sup> Robbins, the son of a farmer, was Head of Economics at the LSE from 1929 to 1961. He was a Trustee of the Gallery from 1952 and acted as Chairman in 1954–9 and 1962–7.

<sup>263</sup> He was chairman of the supermarket chain Sainsbury's. He became Sir John Sainsbury in 1980 and Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover in 1989.

<sup>264</sup> Wyndham 2015, p.58.

<sup>265</sup> David Young became adviser to the Secretary of State for Industry in 1979 and later was made Baron Young of Graffham. Stuart Young became Chairman of the BBC in 1983, but died in 1986.

<sup>266</sup> Noel Annan was a writer and administrator holding many public offices, notably Vice Chancellor of the University of London (1978–81). He was a Trustee of the National Gallery from 1978 and Chairman from 1980 to 1985.

<sup>267</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1 May 1980. The committee consisted of John Sainsbury, Lord Annan and Stuart Young.

<sup>268</sup> Sir Robert Sainsbury was the uncle of John Sainsbury. For more details, see Witold Rybczynski, *The Biography of a Building: How Robert Sainsbury and Norman Foster built a Great Museum*, Thames and Hudson, London 2011.



the Clore Foundation announced that it would fund the Clore Gallery to house the Turner collection at the Tate.<sup>269</sup>

Stuart Young and his committee recognised that the development of the Hampton site was a much larger undertaking and it was unlikely that a private benefactor would be found to finance the project. The Gallery introduced the idea of a commercial partnership for discussion with the Department of the Environment.<sup>270</sup> Levey was concerned about this proposal, which he felt could be a 'dangerous compromise'. He thought that the Gallery should assert its claim to the whole site.<sup>271</sup> But after Levey's discussions with the Getty Foundation over funding met with no success in October 1981, both he and the Board felt that the commercial partnership was the only option.<sup>272</sup>

The Government was enthusiastic. In December 1981, Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for the Environment, announced a competition to select the architect and developer. The Government would grant a 125-year lease to a developer to fill the space with offices and also to provide top-lit galleries for National Gallery paintings.<sup>273</sup> The Gallery also asked for some public facilities, such as an entrance hall, a cloakroom, toilets and a coffee bar.

### The partnership scheme

The competition brief was relatively simple: the building must relate in size and scale to its neighbours, house at least 1,858.1 square metres of galleries for the Early Renaissance

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<sup>269</sup> Spalding 1998, pp.220–33. This new wing opened on 1 April 1987. The Office of Arts and Libraries gave some financial support for the new paper conservation studio and print room.

<sup>270</sup> Wyndham 2015, p.60. In January 1981, Sir John Sainsbury encouraged Lord Annan to approach Paul Channon, the Minister for the Arts. He asked if the Government would pay for development of the whole site for the Gallery, but Channon said that there was little hope of such funds being available.

<sup>271</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 2 July 1981.

<sup>272</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 1 October 1981.

<sup>273</sup> Amery 1991, p 43.

collection on the top floor, and provide some public facilities.<sup>274</sup> The rest of the space would be dedicated to commercial offices. In April 1982, seven schemes were shortlisted:<sup>275</sup>

Ahrends Burton and Koralek with Trafalgar House Developments Ltd

Arup Associates with Rosehaugh Company Ltd

Covell, Matthews, Wheatley with London and Edinburgh Investment Trust Company Ltd

Richard Rogers & Partners with Speyhawk plc

Richard Sheppard, Robson & Partners with London and Metropolitan Estates

Skidmore, Owings and Merrill with London Land Investments and Property Company Ltd

Raymond Spratley Partnership with Barratt Properties Ltd.

The competition advisers included Lord Annan and Michael Levey. An important external adviser was the architect Sir Hugh Casson, President of the Royal Academy from 1975 and a member of the Royal Fine Art Commission (1960–83).<sup>276</sup> The project would be managed by the Property Services Agency (PSA).<sup>277</sup>

The architectural models of the seven schemes were displayed in the National Gallery for two weeks in August 1982. They represented proposals that ranged from the restrained, classic design of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill to the modern box of Raymond Spratley and the high-tech design with a tower by Richard Rogers.

The whole process caught the attention of both the public and the press. When the North Galleries had opened in 1975, there had been little public comment, but the reaction to this

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<sup>274</sup> Amery 1991, pp.43-4. Public facilities included audio-visual theatre, coffee shop, entrance area with cloakroom and lavatories, plus back of house facilities such as warders changing rooms.

<sup>275</sup> Amery 1991, pp.43-9, for more details of the process including an outline of the brief. K. Powell, *Ahernds, Burton and Koralek*, RIBA Publishing, London 2012, pp.97-101.

<sup>276</sup> Others members of the committee were Leonard Barr Smith and Dan Lacey.

<sup>277</sup> The PSA was created as an autonomous agency in 1972 after the Ministry of Works had been absorbed into the Department of the Environment. It managed the maintenance and building of Government properties including the national museums.

scheme was completely different. The competition had raised people's awareness and there was exceptional interest in a new structure that would be directly adjacent to the historic building of the National Gallery and play a prominent part in London's most famous public square, Trafalgar Square.

Some 78,000 visitors came to see the display of models and around 11,000 gave their views.<sup>278</sup> Their first choice was Ahrends Burton and Korelek's elegant horseshoe-shaped building, followed by the schemes of Arup Associates and Richard Rogers. The latter's design was liked and disliked in almost equal measure. It received 29 per cent of the first-choice votes and 36 per cent of the least-popular votes.

The Trustees and the Gallery staff preferred the design of the American firm, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, particularly for its gallery plan.<sup>279</sup> However, Sir Hugh Casson expressed his dislike of the exterior designs, which he found 'dead and ponderous'.<sup>280</sup> The selection committee was more in favour of the Ahrends Burton and Korelek scheme.<sup>281</sup> Eventually a compromise was reached: in December 1982, Lord Annan announced to the press that Ahrends Burton and Korelek (ABK), with the developer Trafalgar House, were to produce a new plan.<sup>282</sup>

From January 1983, the architects and the Gallery attempted to work together on the development. It was an unhappy experience on both sides. The re-design provided more traditional rectangular rooms, but lost the larger semi-circular central court, one of the most

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<sup>278</sup> Amery 1991, p.45, explains that they used a points system for a weighted score.

<sup>279</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 21 September 1982.

<sup>280</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 2 December 1982.

<sup>281</sup> Wyndham 2015, p.73. ABK got three votes from Sir Hugh Casson, Dan Lacey and Leonard Barr Smith, against two votes for SOM from Lord Annan and Michael Levey.

<sup>282</sup> Powell 2012, p.98, says that the Minister, Michael Heseltine, made it clear to the Trustees that unless they accepted this compromise, the Gallery would not get its extension.

attractive features of the original plan.<sup>283</sup> A new addition was the glazed tower, designed to provide an entrance to the picture galleries and to make a statement. But almost immediately the Trustees raised concerns about it.<sup>284</sup> These concerns remained when the scheme was announced at the Hampton site development press conference on 7 December 1983. The press and public response, and that of Westminster City Council, was generally unfavourable.<sup>285</sup> The new Secretary of State for the Environment, Patrick Jenkin, set up a public inquiry in April 1984 and the scheme was agreed in June 1984 with some reservations about the tower.<sup>286</sup> But on 29 May 1984 The Prince of Wales's now famous speech to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) publicly condemned Ahrends Burton and Korelek's scheme with the damning words 'what is proposed is like a monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much loved and elegant friend'.<sup>287</sup> After much deliberation, on 19 September 1984, Patrick Jenkin refused planning permission and listed building consent, citing the tower as 'alien' to the character of the building and its surroundings.<sup>288</sup>

### A new scheme

The whole project was now at a critical point and the Board of Trustees held an important meeting 4 October 1984.<sup>289</sup> It was reported that although the Ahrends Burton and Korelek design had been rejected, the Secretary of State indicated that he would still support a

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<sup>283</sup> The Gallery asked for this re-design as the original proposal did not provide enough wall space for the paintings.

<sup>284</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 18 July 1983. Bridget Riley criticised the tower, with its four flagpoles. Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 7 November 1983. Lord Annan explained that the Gallery felt obliged to accept this new element otherwise the whole project could be in jeopardy.

<sup>285</sup> Wyndham 2015, p.82.

<sup>286</sup> Wyndham 2015, pp.83–7.

<sup>287</sup> A Speech by HRH the Prince of Wales Royal at the RIBA's 150th anniversary Royal Gala Evening at Hampton Court Palace, 29 May 1984.

<sup>288</sup> Powell 2012, p.100, 'alien to the character of the existing buildings in the vicinity and would constitute an unwelcome intrusion into the square.'

<sup>289</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 4 October 1984. The Key Dates (see Appendix A) are more detailed from this point.

project which would allow the developer and the National Gallery to rethink the scheme and even to find a new architect.

The Director reported that he and his staff felt that the Ahrends Burton and Korelek scheme had no future, that the mixture of clients was a doomed compromise and that the Gallery should revert to the original concept, the creation of a building entirely for its own use.

When Stuart Young reminded him that the Gallery had supported mixed development, the Director replied that the staff had found the entire process difficult, particularly the control of the architect.

At that time, the sum estimated for a whole building was in the region of £20 million and Lord Annan suggested three approaches. One was to find a single patron, probably an American. Another was to launch a public appeal, though it was felt that this was unlikely to raise sufficient funds. A third, put forward by Sir John Sainsbury even though he had retired as a Trustee in June 1983, was for the Gallery to raise a substantial amount, perhaps a quarter of the estimate, so that it would be in a stronger position when dealing with a mixed development. As a result the Chairman proposed that the first priority should be to find a sponsor for the entire extension.

There was a good reason why the Trustees felt that they could raise funds for the whole building. In May 1984, a new member had joined the board, the Hon. Jacob Rothschild, banker and supporter of the arts, who might be able to find private individuals to provide significant funding.<sup>290</sup> Sir John Sainsbury had also indicated his support. So while discussions continued with the Public Services Agency and Trafalgar House, the Gallery turned its attention to developing its own scheme for the entire Hampton site.

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<sup>290</sup> He became the 4th Baron Rothschild on 20 March 1990.

Meanwhile, Sir John Sainsbury was discussing the possibility of collaborating with his brothers Simon and Timothy to provide all the funds required to build an extension that would meet the future needs of the Gallery.<sup>291</sup> Stuart Lipton, the property developer, was working on an estimated budget. While these discussions continued, the Gallery was trying to extricate itself from the commercial partnership with Trafalgar House, a process that was made more difficult because the Government was concerned that it might have to pay compensation.<sup>292</sup> Fortunately, once Trafalgar House was aware of the Sainsbury brothers' interest, which was revealed to the Board of Trustees on 26 March 1985, they agreed to give up the project and any compensation.

On 2 April 1985, the press release announced that the Trustees had received 'the most remarkable and munificent' offer from the three brothers, John, Simon and Timothy Sainsbury.<sup>293</sup> They wished to make a gift to the nation of a new building on the Hampton site for the exclusive use of the National Gallery. In an interview on 11 April, Lord Sainsbury said that he became involved with the project 'because he could not bear the thought that the site, empty since the war, should be wasted any longer.' He thought it was a 'national disgrace', so he decided to discuss with his brothers the proposal that they should jointly fund its development.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Simon Sainsbury was a chartered accountant and a member of the Sainsbury Board until 1979. Timothy Sainsbury stepped down from the Board in 1983. He was Conservative MP for Hove (1973–97). They all had personal interests in the arts. The Linbury Trust, a charitable trust set up by Sir John Sainsbury and his wife, is a major supporter of the Royal Opera House.

<sup>292</sup> Wyndham 2015, p.92.

<sup>293</sup> 'Major sponsorship for the development of the Hampton site', National Gallery press release, 2 April 1985.

<sup>294</sup> Robin Young, *The Times*, 11 April 1985. Wyndham 2015, pp.92–3.

## **Part Two: Development of the briefs**

Back In the autumn of 1984, while the funding for the new building was being sought, the Gallery staff had to work up a brief for the contents. Given the pressure to make a decision about the partnership with Trafalgar House, the Gallery needed to develop this new brief as quickly as possible in order to attract private sponsors. There was little time for research and planning.<sup>295</sup> Instead of bringing in expertise, the Gallery chose to refer to its own earlier briefs and to projects that had not come to fruition. The 'Long-term brief for the National Gallery' (Brief 1) was prepared in 1982 in the light of developing the Hampton site and the National Portrait Gallery site.<sup>296</sup> The priority, as we have seen, was to house the growing collection. But the brief stressed that there were other needs, such as the demand for improved public facilities as visitor numbers continued to rise.

The document stated that the Education Department needed a larger lecture theatre as lectures were regarded as being at the heart of the Gallery's engagement with the public and were becoming increasingly popular. A larger theatre could also provide a venue for a wider range of activities, such as films and concerts.<sup>297</sup> In 1982 the shop was in the central hall, a prime location which the Gallery wished to return to its original function as a picture gallery (see Figure 4a). The restaurant in the south-east corner of the building was a basic canteen, now too small for the number of visitors. More toilets and cloakrooms were required. The need for more temporary exhibition space would be met by the new Sunley Room, which would open in September 1984.

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<sup>295</sup> There were seven briefs between October 1982 and March 1986.

<sup>296</sup> It was prepared by Michael Wilson, Deputy Keeper, and developed after the Hampton Site Competition announcement of December 1981 (NG36/1.3). The National Portrait Gallery was still considering moving from its current location at this point.

<sup>297</sup> The Gallery looked at other museums such as the V&A and the Metropolitan Museum, New York; their larger lecture theatres accommodated a wide range of public programmes.

The Director had explained in the Gallery Report of 1975–7 that, following the construction of the North Galleries, the Gallery had an ambitious building scheme for the East Wing.<sup>298</sup>

The main purpose was air-conditioning for the rooms, but the first stage would also include plans for an expanded lecture theatre, shop and restaurant. The Linbury Trust, one of Sir John Sainsbury's charitable trusts, had offered to contribute to the lecture theatre.<sup>299</sup>

However, this East Wing development required financial support from the Government which was not forthcoming, and therefore in autumn 1984, it had not been pursued.

Nevertheless, the Gallery still wished to proceed with it.

#### The first brief for the Hampton site

At the end of November 1984, the first brief for the Hampton site was drawn up, 'The Hampton Site; Proposals for accommodation on the site' (Brief 2).<sup>300</sup> This listed, in order of priority, the following:

1. Top-lit galleries for the Early Renaissance collection
2. A spacious entrance area with cloakroom and information desk
3. A lecture theatre to seat 300–400
4. A large restaurant
5. A large shop at pavement level
6. Temporary exhibition galleries
7. A cinema to be used in conjunction with the temporary exhibition space
8. An information room with computers providing information about the collection

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<sup>298</sup> The National Gallery Report 1 July 1975–December 1977. Director's report, p.15.

<sup>299</sup> The Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 3 May 1984, reported that the Linbury Trust had offered to contribute costs for the building of a new 220-seat lecture theatre.

<sup>300</sup> 30 November 1984. Written by Michael Wilson (NG36/2). The proposals were based on discussions between the Director, curators and other senior staff. The Building Committee did not meet between September and December 1984.



9. A Boardroom

10. A car park for staff and their visitors.

Item 6 specified a space for moderate-sized exhibitions, three times the size of the Sunley Room at 450 square metres, without day lighting but possibly with some side light. A plan (Figure 9) was produced to show where the different facilities could be placed in the building; at this point the area for exhibitions was situated in the basement, one level below ground. That this space, which would display many great works of art drawn from international collections, was so low down on the list, so limited in size and located below ground now seems extraordinary.

One reason, of course, was that in September 1984, the Gallery had only just opened the Sunley Room. However, the situation was more complicated. In the Gallery Report of 1982–4, the Director Michael Levey explained that the Sunley Room would house exhibitions of ‘intermediate size’ and was not intended to accommodate ‘the fatiguing proportions of the international blockbuster’.<sup>301</sup> Michael Wilson says that both Levey and the Keeper and Deputy Director Allan Braham felt that if the Gallery produced temporary exhibitions, they should focus primarily upon some aspect of the collection, unless they were exhibitions of contemporary artists, or shows produced by the Education Department.<sup>302</sup> Levey and Braham disliked the grand productions created by the Washington National Gallery of Art, which they considered were inappropriate for a national art collection. In an interview in January 1984, while observing that the Gallery’s scope for exhibitions would be increased with the opening of the Sunley Room, Levey said, ‘we don’t in any way wish to compete

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<sup>301</sup> The National Gallery Report, January 1982 – December 1984, p.40.

<sup>302</sup> Michael Wilson interview with Mary Hersov, 17 March 2012.

with the Royal Academy. This is basically a permanent collection and I think that the emphasis should remain on this.’<sup>303</sup>

At this time, blockbuster shows were mainly of ‘treasures’ from the distant past, like Tutankhamun, or of major nineteenth- and twentieth-century artists, such as Van Gogh or Picasso.<sup>304</sup> There were not many exhibitions of artists working before 1800 shown outside their own country.<sup>305</sup> However, this situation was beginning to change. In Spain, for instance, after the death of Franco in 1978, and the restoration of parliamentary democracy, the Prado had started to collaborate with museums abroad and became more integrated into the international art-historical community.<sup>306</sup> *European Art in the Spanish Court in the Eighteenth Century* was shown first at the Prado and then in Paris and Bordeaux in 1979 and in 1982–3, the Prado El Greco exhibition toured the United States, visiting Washington, Toledo (Ohio) and Dallas.

There were developments, too, at the Royal Academy (RA). Sir Hugh Casson, President since 1976, and his Secretary of Exhibitions, Norman Rosenthal, completely revitalised the RA’s temporary exhibition programme with contemporary art shows like *The New Spirit in Painting* of 1981. They also increased the range and ambitions of the historic shows, such as the Murillo exhibition in 1983.<sup>307</sup> *The Genius of Venice 1500–1600* of 1983 was an ambitious

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<sup>303</sup> Roger Berthoud, *Illustrated London News*, January 1984. Levey was not alone in his concerns. *Art in America*, June 1986, pp.19–27, produced a special addition about blockbusters. Museum professionals argued that the growing need to repeat blockbusters led to demands to increase visitor numbers, raise revenue and sponsorship and organise more loans of masterpieces for international shows. The shows also took up the time of specialist staff and ultimately diverted attention and resources away from the permanent collection.

<sup>304</sup> Emma Barker, ‘Exhibiting the Canon, the blockbuster show’ in Barker (ed.) 1999, pp.128–9.

<sup>305</sup> See later comment about exhibitions of Titian’s work.

<sup>306</sup> Santiago Alcolea Blanch, *The Prado*, Ediciones Poligrafa, Barcelona 1991, p.111.

<sup>307</sup> The improvements in safe movement of historic artworks were helped by the creation of specialist transport firms such as Hasenkamp, the development of stronger safer cases, and the museum professional, the Registrar. In the United States the federal indemnity programme was created in 1975, and the British Government indemnity scheme was improved in 1980. These types of programmes aided the increase in blockbusters as they saved the cost of commercial indemnity.

survey of Venetian painting, including a number of great Titians, together with sculpture, drawing and prints of the sixteenth century.<sup>308</sup> There had been many Titian exhibitions in the past but most of them were held in Italy.<sup>309</sup> In the RA show, museums such as the Accademia, Venice, and the Prado, lent their Titians, some for the first time.<sup>310</sup> The most outstanding loan was *The Flaying of Marsyas* from the archiepiscopal palace in Kromeriz in the Czech Republic. A later work by Titian which had been very difficult for scholars or the public to see, it received extensive press coverage because of its violent subject matter as well as its inaccessibility.<sup>311</sup> There was also much discussion about the painting technique of the elderly Titian, a debate that arguably should have been centred at the National Gallery, which owned another striking Titian from this period, *The Death of Actaeon*.<sup>312</sup>

In fact, the Gallery was coming under increasing pressure to lend more of its collection and it was becoming difficult to withstand these requests without causing offence to the international museum community.<sup>313</sup> If great works from abroad were to be lent, why not show them in exhibitions at the Gallery? But there was a clear division of opinion among the Gallery staff. Levey and Braham were unenthusiastic about the need for larger exhibitions, and therefore a larger exhibition space, while Wilson, Smith and Christopher Brown, Deputy Keeper of Dutch paintings, were in favour. It should be noted, however, that most of the curators, including Levey himself, had come to the Gallery straight from university and had

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<sup>308</sup> 147 paintings, 84 drawings, 63 prints, 42 sculptures and a history section of maps.

<sup>309</sup> For example, Venice in 1939 and 1971.

<sup>310</sup> For example, *Saint John the Baptist* from the Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice, and The Prado's *Entombment*.

<sup>311</sup> John Russell, *New York Times*, 17 December 1983.

<sup>312</sup> The National Gallery's only loan was Titian's *The Holy Family with a Shepherd* (NG4).

<sup>313</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, meeting of December 1984.

not worked in other museums.<sup>314</sup> The Gallery's exhibition activities were in danger of becoming too parochial.

There were, however, signs of a more experimental approach. Smith's exhibition *Danish Painting: The Golden Age*, which opened in the Sunley Room in September 1984, was a revelation to the British public and led to the Gallery buying its first Danish work for the collection, Købke's *The Northern Drawbridge to the Citadel in Copenhagen*.<sup>315</sup> Christopher Brown had the most experience of international exhibitions, having just collaborated on *Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting*, which toured to Philadelphia, Berlin and the Royal Academy in 1984 with loans from the National Gallery.<sup>316</sup> The Gallery was slowly moving into the world of major international exhibitions, and this was encouraged by some Trustees, notably Jacob Rothschild, who felt that the Gallery should aspire to the standards and activities of a world-class museum.<sup>317</sup>

### Discussion of the brief

There was much discussion about the contents of the brief and its priorities at the Building Committee meeting in December 1984.<sup>318</sup> If funding could not be found for the development of the whole site, it was agreed that the first five items on the list (galleries, entrance area, lecture theatre, restaurant and shop) were of top priority. The remaining requirements, including the temporary exhibition galleries at number 6 on the list, were less essential and dependent on the funding and availability of space.

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<sup>314</sup> Alistair Smith had worked at Manchester Art Gallery before coming to the National Gallery.

<sup>315</sup> Purchased in 1986.

<sup>316</sup> Philadelphia Museum of Art (18 March – 13 May 1984), Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin (West) (8 June – 12 August 1984), Royal Academy of Arts, London (7 September – 18 November 1984).

<sup>317</sup> Amery 1991, p.55.

<sup>318</sup> Minutes of the Building Committee meeting, 3 December 1984 (NG/36/4/3).

At this point, Bridget Riley, a member of the committee and a Trustee since 1981, tabled her paper 'An exposition on what functions the nation has a right to expect from an extension to its National Gallery'.<sup>319</sup> Riley was a stalwart opponent of the previous Hampton site scheme, particularly of its tower, and was a strong supporter of a building devoted entirely to the Gallery's needs.<sup>320</sup>

Riley used her authority, as a Trustee and one of Britain's leading contemporary artists, to emphasise the importance of the proposal for the temporary exhibition space. She maintained that the National Gallery should have a more extensive area for this purpose but that this should not necessarily mean embarking on a large exhibition programme of its own. She favoured an expansion of the Painting in Focus scheme, and of smaller international touring exhibitions related to the collection, such as the Dutch Genre exhibition which had just been seen at the Royal Academy. The latter was a high-quality but relatively small show for the Royal Academy, with 127 pictures, and Christopher Brown's involvement was a good example of the type of international collaboration with which the Gallery could engage. Riley's paper provided important support for the temporary exhibition galleries of medium size.<sup>321</sup>

The potential donors, the Sainsbury brothers, wanted more information about the possible contents of the new building and the reasons for their inclusion. A short paper, 'The National Gallery: The Development of the Hampton Site' (Brief 3), was prepared for them in

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<sup>319</sup> (NG36/4/3). Amery 1991, p.16, references this paper too.

<sup>320</sup> Notes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees, 4 October 1984.

<sup>321</sup> Michael Wilson interview with Mary Hersov, 17 March 2012. He said that the chairman, Lord Annan, valued her views. Riley's paper was tabled at the meeting of the Board of Trustees on 6 December 1984 but the minutes report does not discuss the response to it in any detail.

January 1985.<sup>322</sup> This paper outlined the Gallery's long-standing main aim, to display the collection to best advantage, but also draw attention to other needs. Since 1973, the annual attendance had doubled from some 1.5 million to 3 million, and the present facilities were quite inadequate. A new building could provide space for the lecture theatre, shop and restaurant, and for temporary exhibition galleries at 500 square metres, and these were all now included in the list of desirable facilities.<sup>323</sup>

In February 1985, the Gallery developed the proposals into a much more detailed document: 'The National Gallery: preliminary brief for the development of the Hampton site' (Brief 4).<sup>324</sup> The order of contents was the same as in Brief 2, produced in November 1984, but Brief 4 expanded the arguments for new facilities. It pointed out that visitors expected much more in the way of public amenities and information, and high standards had been set by many museums of international stature, particularly in the United States. The Gallery had grown out of the existing building and the new structure should be designed to meet its needs for the next fifty years or more. It offered the chance to rationalise the planning of the Gallery so that the facilities could be located together. Some of the key proposals are listed here:

#### The social or art centre

According to Brief 4 these expanded facilities should be grouped together in the new wing so that they would form an arts centre unique to London. With its own entrance, the

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<sup>322</sup> This was sent to 'a possible donor' on 15 January 1985 (NG36/2). By an unnamed author, it was presented to the Board of Trustees on 7 February 1985. Wilson had made a strong case for more office space in the long-term brief of 1982 (Brief 1) but that space was not included in this brief (Brief 3) as it was not considered of interest to a donor. Michael Wilson interview with Mary Hersov, 17 March 2012.

<sup>323</sup> Financial information was also included but must remain confidential.

<sup>324</sup> Presented to the Board of Trustees on 7 February 1985 (NG36/2). Though the author was unacknowledged, it was written by Michael Wilson.

extension could open in the evening when the rest of the Gallery was closed, and would appeal to an even wider audience. It could become a major attraction in the West End.

The Art Centre was essentially a post Second World War phenomenon.<sup>325</sup> One example was the South Bank Centre, which contained the Hayward Gallery, the concert halls of the Royal Festival Hall, the Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Purcell Room, and the National Theatre.

Another, more recent example was the Barbican Centre, opened in 1982, which contained a range of amenities within one building: a theatre, a concert hall, exhibition galleries of over 1,500 square metres and a public library.<sup>326</sup> The aim was to encourage people to visit a variety of artistic activities which were all located on one site, often in an area in need of regeneration.

Regeneration was also the impetus for the creation of a new building near Les Halles in Paris. The Pompidou Centre, which opened in 1977, was a radical departure both in its contents and in its architecture and was extremely popular.<sup>327</sup> The building contained the relocated Musée National d'Art Moderne, a public library, a music centre, a cinema, temporary exhibition spaces and a restaurant. The architects, Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers, had placed the services, such as the escalators, on the building's exterior in the form of brightly coloured ducts and tubes. This allowed them to create vast and flexible internal spaces which could be adapted for multiple uses. The area was well suited for new multi-disciplinary temporary exhibitions, such as the innovative *Paris–Moscow 1900–1930* of

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<sup>325</sup> Jules Lubbock, 'Notes towards the history of the arts centre', unpublished article, 2007. He notes some earlier possible precedents.

<sup>326</sup> Barbican Art Galleries. The main temporary exhibition gallery was 1,347 square metres, the Curve gallery was 836 square metres.

<sup>327</sup> Newhouse 2006, 'The Centre National d'Art et Culture Georges Pompidou', pp.193–8.

1979, which looked at how the French and Russian avant-garde had influenced one another.<sup>328</sup>

At first glance, it may seem that an art centre is a rather curious option for a national museum with a collection of Old Master paintings. Wilson had visited the Pompidou Centre, and did not consider its radical external or internal design sympathetic to the National Gallery, with its historic building and collection.<sup>329</sup> He wanted to create an overall concept for the new wing, one that sounded exciting and innovative, but he also had to justify what could be considered rather mundane items, such as a new shop and restaurant. Putting all the facilities together under the umbrella of the arts centre strengthened the proposal and the appeal to donors.<sup>330</sup>

One of the key components of the art centre would be the lecture theatre. A new, larger lecture theatre to seat around 350–400 people was now required – the V&A lecture theatre had seats for 325 and the Metropolitan Museum seats for 708. There were ambitious plans for lectures, talks, discussions, films, concerts and drama to be presented, often in the evening. Alistair Smith later described the lecture theatre as the ‘hub’ of the new building.<sup>331</sup> Enthusiastic claims were also made for a larger, purpose-built shop. It could be expanded to sell a much wider range of merchandise and had the potential to become the finest gallery shop in the country, on a par with those at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, and the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

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<sup>328</sup> In 1981, the new director Dominique Bozo brought in Gae Aulenti to create rooms to house the collection.

<sup>329</sup> Michael Wilson interview with Mary Hersov, 17 March 2012. He knew the Barbican Centre but considered it to be a much larger complex than the Hampton site.

<sup>330</sup> The Hampton Site Committee meeting on May 1985 noted that donors welcomed the ‘arts centre’ proposal that would attract visitors particularly out of hours (NG36/4/3).

<sup>331</sup> Alistair Smith, ‘Notes towards a brief for the Hampton Building: Educational Facilities’, 1 July 1985 (NG/2/47).



### The Temporary Exhibition Galleries

Brief 4 explains the purpose of these galleries in much more detail, why they were necessary and how they fitted into the overall concept of the new wing. This section seems more cautious than the ambitious claims for the lecture theatre. It points out that the Sunley Room was suitable only for medium-sized shows. There was still a lack of space for larger exhibitions, which could only be shown in the permanent collection rooms. It explains that it was not the Gallery's policy to mount loan exhibitions on the scale of the Royal Academy or the Hayward, which were purpose-built for temporary exhibitions.<sup>332</sup>

It maintains that a space larger than the Sunley Room would enable the Gallery to show a greater variety of exhibitions, some based on the collection, others borrowed. The estimated size remains at 500 square metres.<sup>333</sup> It repeated the Gallery's aim for these exhibitions: to encourage interest in the permanent collection and to attract and inform a wider public. Wilson later explained that the Government expected national museums to improve their visitor numbers and their public profile.<sup>334</sup>

The brief then describes how the Hampton site would provide the opportunity to create a larger, flexible and purpose-built temporary exhibition space. This space would not, however, be on the main floor, which had to be devoted to the permanent collection, and therefore it could not benefit from natural top lighting. It could either be on the ground floor or in the basement, thus ignoring the issue of the lack of natural light, which would become one of the most contentious aspects of the new galleries.

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<sup>332</sup> These exhibition venues had around 3,000 square metres (32,292 square feet) and could accommodate some 300 exhibits.

<sup>333</sup> This was approximately the area occupied by *El Greco to Goya*, but considerably smaller than *Art in 17th Century Holland*, which filled the North Galleries.

<sup>334</sup> Michael Wilson interview with Mary Hersov, 12 March 2012.

### Announcement of the funding

The various briefs had done their work. At an extraordinary meeting of the Board on 26 March 1985, the Sainsbury brothers' funding for the new building was announced.<sup>335</sup> The press release of 2 April outlined the purpose of the wing in the following order: in addition to the main floor devoted to the Early Renaissance collection, it would provide an area for temporary exhibitions, a lecture theatre and other educational facilities on the floors below.<sup>336</sup> A new building would also make it possible to have an improved shop and restaurant. The donors were influenced by the growth in visitor numbers and the need to provide for the future of the National Gallery so that it would continue as 'one of the great museums of the world'.

In 1986, Lord Rothschild, by then Chairman, speaking to the National Art Collections Fund, reinforced his support: 'We now have not only the opportunity to create galleries for the Early Renaissance paintings but also to put up a building which will contain those facilities which the public now expect from museums: temporary exhibition space, a lecture theatre and cinema, an information room, a gallery shop, a restaurant and generous public spaces.'<sup>337</sup>

It is important to emphasise that, by this crucial point in the history of the project, the temporary exhibitions galleries had become the second priority for the new building, at least in the public statements. This was a high watermark for these galleries.

### The initial brief for the temporary exhibition galleries

After the funding announcement in April 1985, time was spent developing all aspects of the

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<sup>335</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 26 March 1985. At this point, no actual cost was recorded.

<sup>336</sup> No figure for the funding was given in the press release of 2 April 1985.

<sup>337</sup> Amery 1991, p.55.

building brief.<sup>338</sup> Alistair Smith worked on the detailed brief for the temporary exhibition area and in July he sent Michael Wilson his 'Notes towards a Brief for the Hampton Building' (Brief 5) that included a fuller vision for the temporary exhibition space.<sup>339</sup> He claimed to be thinking ahead to the twenty-first century. His third heading was devoted to 'The Temporary Exhibition Area'.

Smith acknowledged that the Sunley Room had given the Gallery an air-conditioned modern space but reiterated that it was of limited size. The Hampton site would present the opportunity to develop a large space for temporary exhibitions. The Sunley Room would continue to house the Gallery's programme of smaller shows such as in-focus exhibitions, small monographic exhibitions, and the associate artist shows as well as didactic exhibitions developed by the Education Department.

Of the Hampton site space, he observed that 'this LARGE exhibition space should be capable of harbouring the type of exhibitions which the proportions of the Sunley Room have forced us to reject, such as *Paintings from Liechtenstein*, including eight very large paintings by Rubens, and other exhibitions of over 50 paintings.' He continued, 'it seems sad to me that, in the 1980s, London should lack a major modern exhibition space specifically designed for exhibitions in the old master's field.'

Smith felt that the two leading London temporary exhibitions spaces were inadequate. He expressed concern about the environmental controls in the Royal Academy. Although its main rooms were much admired, they lacked modern climate control.<sup>340</sup> The National Gallery Trustees had discussed this problem in December 1984 with reference to the loans

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<sup>338</sup> These briefs would be provided to Polkinghorne Redstall Associates.

<sup>339</sup> Alistair Smith, 'Notes towards a Brief for the Hampton Building: The Temporary Exhibition Area', 1 July 1985 (NG36/2/47).

<sup>340</sup> Air-conditioning was introduced in the early 1990s.

to the Dutch Genre exhibition when it was noted that ‘environmentally, [the RA] was a poor site’.<sup>341</sup> Smith also described the Hayward’s spaces as being inhospitable to older paintings. In addition, it was under threat during this period.<sup>342</sup> He saw the National Gallery as the natural home for major Old Master exhibitions.

Bearing this in mind, Smith asked for an exhibition space of at least four times the size of the Sunley Room, at 600 square metres. He argued that a larger space would provide more room for the public and alleviate the cramped and crowded conditions often experienced at popular exhibitions. In fact, Smith’s suggested size was not that large. The temporary exhibition space at the Tate was 1,000 square metres.

Ultimately, the comments on size are related to the question of what kind of exhibitions were destined for these new galleries. Paintings from Liechtenstein had been displayed in a large multimedia exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and in 1985 it was proposed that the National Gallery show a selection of them, including several large works by Rubens, but there was no suitable space.<sup>343</sup> What were the Gallery’s other aspirations for temporary exhibitions in their new space? Smith was busy creating the Sunley Room programme, in particular developing an ambitious exchange of loans with Soviet museums, but there seemed to be no other ideas for exhibitions.<sup>344</sup> Wilson says that there was no

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<sup>341</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 6 December 1984. One of the Trustees, Heather Brigstocke, maintained that the Royal Academy was ‘the main source in London of Old Master painting exhibitions’, but Smith and his colleagues wanted to change this.

<sup>342</sup> Strong 1997, pp.331–2. Strong claims that he fought off plans to transfer the Hayward Gallery to the British Film Institute in 1986; it passed to the management of the South Bank Centre with Joanna Drew as its first director. She had important links with the RMN, Paris, and co-organised blockbuster shows such as *Renoir* in 1985.

<sup>343</sup> *Liechtenstein: The Princely Collections*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 26 October 1985 – 1 May 1986. The exhibition had 214 exhibits including paintings, sculpture, porcelain, furniture and a golden carriage. It contained 19 paintings by Rubens including several huge paintings such as *The Assumption of the Virgin* (504 x 352cm) and *The Death of Decius Mus* (288 x 497cm).

<sup>344</sup> Michael Wilson interview with Mary Hersov, 12 March 2012, Alistair Smith interview with Mary Hersov, 7 October 2010.

formal process for the selection of proposals. It was very much up to curators to put forward their own ideas.

This lack of exhibition planning certainly arose in part from the attitude of the Director, with his mixed feelings about the Hampton site.<sup>345</sup> He had taken leave of absence of the summer of 1984 to care for his wife, who had multiple sclerosis, and was possibly considering his future. In January 1986, it was announced that he wished to retire the following January.<sup>346</sup> It is probable that he did not want to commit the Gallery and his successor to a major temporary exhibition programme.

### Guidelines for the Architects

On 9 October 1985, the Gallery issued the document 'National Gallery: Hampton Site Development: Guidelines for Architects' (Brief 6).<sup>347</sup> There had been much discussion about whether to provide any guideline material to the architects.<sup>348</sup> In the end, it was agreed that the guidelines would provide a provisional indication of the Gallery's requirements, and the Gallery would work with the selected architect on a comprehensive brief and the development of the designs.<sup>349</sup>

It was a concise document which provided information about the site including the possibility of developing the basement area under Jubilee Walk. The first part of the document, regarding the main floor galleries covers eight sections and specified that they should be on the same level as the galleries in the existing building.<sup>350</sup> Only one section was

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<sup>345</sup> Michael Wilson interview with Mary Hersov, 12 March 2012.

<sup>346</sup> National Gallery press release, 6 January 1986.

<sup>347</sup> It was nine pages long with a covering letter from Jacob Rothschild (NG36/2/23).

<sup>348</sup> The selection of the architects will be discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>349</sup> Notes of the meeting of the Hampton Site Committee, 29 May 1985 (NG36/3/63). There were many different examples of museum projects that did or did not ask for designs in advance of selecting the architect.

<sup>350</sup> Sections 3.1–3.8.

devoted to the temporary exhibitions galleries.<sup>351</sup> This stated that ‘An area of between 500 and 800 square metres is required for temporary exhibitions. These galleries must be fully air conditioned and have a very high standard of artificial lighting. They should also be as flexible as possible in layout and offer the possibility of dividing the space.’ The next section gave details of the facilities required to service the space, and of the audio-visual room, and was based on Alistair Smith’s document of July 1985 (Brief 5). The reference to the high standard of lighting required was significant as it makes it clear that this space was not expected to receive much, if any, natural light.

The list of requirements had reverted to the order of the November 1984 ‘Proposals’ (Brief 2) with the temporary exhibition space listed at number six. This is in contrast to the priorities suggested in April 1985 when the temporary exhibition galleries had risen to number two. It seems that in its public statements the Gallery was happy to link the temporary exhibition space with the main floor galleries as the locations where art was to be shown. At the same time, in private, its chief concern remained the main floor galleries, followed by the lecture theatre, shop and restaurant.<sup>352</sup> Architects would obviously take their cue from the Guidelines for Architects as an indication of priorities.

### The commissioned brief

Michael Wilson strongly argued that the Gallery should obtain professional advice to analyse the Gallery’s needs and the space required as this would provide a basis for ‘fruitful and informed dialogue’ with the architect.<sup>353</sup> On 20 November 1985, the Gallery commissioned a firm of brief co-ordinators and space planners, Polkinghorne, Redstall &

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<sup>351</sup> Section 3.6.1.

<sup>352</sup> Michael Wilson interview with Mary Hersov, 12 March 2012. He cannot remember why this happened and said that a list in numerical order had to be created but that did not mean that one item was more important than the other.

<sup>353</sup> Memorandum: To the Chairman from Michael Wilson, Deputy Keeper, 25 October 1985 (NG36/2).

Associates, to draw up a formal brief. The brief was put together from the various departmental papers prepared by the Gallery and was formally agreed on 7 March 1986 (Brief 7).<sup>354</sup> It was an important document because this was the first time that the Gallery had commissioned a professional brief from outside consultants (see Appendix B).

The brief co-ordinators enlisted several consultants, including Michael Preston, Head of Exhibitions at the Science Museum. They appreciated the importance of temporary exhibitions, and noted that these exhibitions would play a vital part in the life of the National Gallery and, as part of opening the extension at night, would serve an even wider public than at present.<sup>355</sup>

The section entitled 'Galleries and Related Spaces' lists specifications for the permanent picture galleries (13.0) followed by those for the temporary exhibition galleries (14.0).<sup>356</sup> This is, surely, the correct order to discuss the two spaces that would house the paintings. In all previous references to the temporary exhibition space, it had always been listed as part of the public facilities rather than linked together with the collection galleries.

Certain key points are developed from the previous documents. The most significant relates to the increase in the size of the temporary galleries. It is proposed that the exhibition space should be about 800 square metres, the largest estimate of the size range of between 500 and 800 square metres given in the 'Guidelines for Architects' (Brief 6).<sup>357</sup> It could contain up to 200 paintings and provide for a large number of visitors. The space should be divided

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<sup>354</sup> The National Gallery Extension Brief, March 1986. It had 170 pages plus appendices (NG36/1/27).

<sup>355</sup> Two pages on 'Research' outlines the institutions that they visited (Appendix B.)

<sup>356</sup> Part B – Accommodation Details. 'Galleries and Related Spaces', followed by 'Public Facilities' which included the entrance, shop, lecture theatre, restaurant.

<sup>357</sup> The following floor areas for past exhibitions were provided: 'Art in 17<sup>th</sup> century Holland': 894.48 square metres. 'Venetian Paintings': Lower Floor Galleries at 1,100 square metres. 'Spanish Exhibition': 544.05 square metres.

into four to six galleries of different shapes and sizes.<sup>358</sup> They should be substantial, well-proportioned rooms with skirtings and architraves. The rooms should be able to accommodate a wide range of works, though the majority would be Old Masters.

A generous area was given over to the entrance, including a place for ticket sales. In March 1985, the Board of Trustees had discussed whether to charge admission for exhibitions in the Sainsbury Wing. Michael Levey did not want to charge for shows based around the collection but was not against charging for loan exhibitions, as many other museums did.<sup>359</sup> No formal decision was made at this time.

The Polkinghorne brief for the temporary exhibition galleries was well devised, but in retrospect it is clear that the Gallery should have commissioned it before drawing up the guidelines for the architects, as its contents would influence the final design of the wing. The other problem was that no research had been undertaken to establish the need for a large temporary exhibition space. Furthermore, there was no future programme, no decision about admission tickets and no business plan.<sup>360</sup> These omissions would prove serious weaknesses in the future.

### **Summary**

In the second half of the twentieth century, museums in existing buildings found that they needed to expand and provide for new facilities such as restaurants, shops and greater public areas but lacked the space. Building a new wing could offer all these amenities, as well as a dedicated and environmentally controlled space for temporary exhibitions.

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<sup>358</sup> The Gallery wanted space that could be used in a variety of ways, including holding two exhibitions at the same time.

<sup>359</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 7 March 1985. The British Museum and the V&A had admission charges for exhibitions on a varied basis. The Royal Academy and the Hayward Gallery charged admission.

<sup>360</sup> Marplan's audience survey of David Hockney's *Artist's Eye* exhibition in 1981 was enclosed. This was not the type or size of exhibition intended for the Sainsbury Wing space.



The National Gallery had a long and complicated history with the Hampton site, which was the most obvious area for expansion. From September 1984, it suddenly had the opportunity to develop the whole site for its needs and rushed together a list of requirements. The main floor galleries with top lighting for the Early Renaissance paintings remained the priority. Other facilities, regarded as inadequate in the existing building, such as the lecture theatre, shop and restaurant, were also considered important, but there was much less agreement about the need for a larger temporary exhibition space. A relatively modest-sized space was included in the first brief. The temporary exhibition galleries grew in importance as the Gallery developed an argument for the opening of the wing out of hours. The Polkinghorne brief asked for a larger space of up to 800 square metres, but the key justification for the space, as well as a future programme and business plan, were still lacking.

## **CHAPTER THREE: BUILDING THE TEMPORARY EXHIBITION SPACE**

### **Introduction**

As the Gallery refined the brief for the new space, it began the process of choosing an architect. This chapter describes the selection of Robert Venturi and his associates, and his designs for the temporary exhibition galleries. It examines the development of these designs and how they were changed and modified to reach the final version in which the space was much diminished and the temporary exhibition galleries moved to their location in the basement.

### **Part One: Selecting an architect**

#### **The process**

The Gallery, the Trustees and the Sainsbury brothers wanted to avoid the many problems that had arisen from the previous development scheme for the Hampton site. They approached the selection of the architect using a different process to the open architectural competition. Following the example of the J. Paul Getty Trust, which had recently appointed Richard Meier to design its new museum in Los Angeles, a selection committee was formed to draw up a shortlist of six invited architects.<sup>361</sup>

The principal members of the committee were the donors, the Director Michael Levey, the Deputy Director Allan Braham, the Deputy Keeper Michael Wilson, the Chairman of the Trustees, and Caryl Hubbard, the Trustee representative throughout the process.<sup>362</sup> The property developer Stuart Lipton was the adviser on construction. There were two consultants with specialist architectural knowledge, Ada Louise Huxtable, former

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<sup>361</sup> Amery 1991, pp.50-65, remains the definitive description of this process.

<sup>362</sup> Lord Annan chaired the preliminary meeting. He retired as a Trustee in June 1985.

architecture critic for the *New York Times*, and Colin Amery, architectural critic for the *Financial Times*, both of whom remained throughout.

Between June and September 1985, a sub-group of the committee visited museums in the UK, Europe and the United States.<sup>363</sup> The main purpose was to find an architect who could create a façade for the new wing that would both complement the existing building and be of architectural distinction, and design galleries suitable for the Early Renaissance collection. Colin Amery says that although they looked at all aspects of the museums, he cannot remember any effort to consider temporary exhibition spaces as a separate entity, or indeed as an entity that they might learn more about.<sup>364</sup> After much discussion and consultation with a range of architects and authorities on contemporary architecture, followed by a debate about the shortlist, on 4 October 1985 the selection committee, ‘with a surprising amount of unanimity’, drew up a list of six.<sup>365</sup> On 9 October, the entrants were given the ‘National Gallery Hampton Site Development: Guidelines for Architects’ (Brief 6), with a deadline of mid-January 1986.

There were two entrants from the US: Robert Venturi of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown (VRSB),<sup>366</sup> who were currently drawing up plans for two American museums – the Seattle Art Museum and the Laguna Gloria Museum in Austin, Texas; and Henry Cobb of I.M. Pei Partnership, who had been involved in the design of the East Building at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and had designed the new Portland Museum in Oregon (1983). The four

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<sup>363</sup> Amery 1991, pp.55-57. During the trip to the US in September 1985, the group had a first meeting with Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown in New York but did not look at their work as this visit was not included in the original itinerary. See ‘Material on museum design and the design process’, a discussion with Robert Venturi, John Rauch and Denise Scott Brown, The Carlyle Hotel, New York, 24 September 1985 (NG36/1/31).

<sup>364</sup> Colin Amery interview with Mary Hersov, 25 October 2010.

<sup>365</sup> Wyndham 2015, p.100.

<sup>366</sup> John Rauch left the practice in 1989 and they became Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates Inc., known as VSBA (National Gallery press release, 8 July 1991).

other entrants were British. James Stirling of Stirling, Wilford and Associates had produced the addition to the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University (1979–84), and most notably the addition to the Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart (1977–83). Since 1978, Stirling and Wilford had worked on their masterplan for the Tate Gallery. The rest of the shortlist were: Colquhoun and Miller, Jeremy Dixon/BDP, and Piers Gough of CZWG.<sup>367</sup> *Architectural Design* published a summary of the proposals.<sup>368</sup>

While most commentators have written about the exterior and the main floor galleries, this chapter will focus attention on the plans for the temporary exhibition space. It is surprising that no one has expressed views on these before. To recap, the brief called for an area of between 500 and 800 square metres, as flexible as possible and with the potential of being divided up. All the architects designed a large open area, sometimes including structural pillars. Several, including VRSB, placed the temporary exhibition gallery space on the ground floor. Henry Cobb said that it merited both visual prominence and ease of access, and therefore he had located it at the northern end of the entrance lobby, a position which would enable it to be kept open when the permanent exhibition galleries were closed. Colquhoun and Miller situated it in the centre of the ground floor, recommending a separate entrance for the expected large number of visitors, and Jeremy Dixon also planned a separate entrance.

Piers Gough and Jeremy Dixon created large open temporary exhibition galleries on the lower ground floor. Gough noted that many such galleries had unnecessary screen systems

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<sup>367</sup> Amery 1991, p.58. Piers Gough had been the designer for the Edwin Lutyens exhibition at the Hayward Gallery (1981–2), Jeremy Dixon had been involved with the redevelopment of the Royal Opera House, and Colquhoun and Miller had redesigned the interior of the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

<sup>368</sup> 'The National Gallery', *Architectural Design*, vol. 56, no. 1–2, 1986.

on a rigid grid, which were subsequently ignored by the exhibition designers, who preferred the freedom to erect walls of different shapes and sizes to suit the particular show.<sup>369</sup>

James Stirling produced the most ambitious proposal.<sup>370</sup> He put forward two different plans for the temporary exhibition gallery, one on the ground floor, and one on the lower ground floor, which he preferred as it provided more space and height. Stirling was the one of the few architects to place a banner adjacent to the external façade to advertise the Gallery and exhibition activities.

After interviews in January 1986 and much debate, the committee produced a shortlist of two: Stirling and Venturi. Both these architects had enjoyed distinguished careers.<sup>371</sup> James Stirling had designed a series of dynamic modern university buildings in Britain, including the Department of Engineering at the University of Leicester in 1963, the History Faculty Library at the University of Cambridge in 1968, and the Florey building at the University of Oxford in 1971.<sup>372</sup> But unfortunately, technical problems with these buildings had tarnished his reputation in Britain.<sup>373</sup> Stirling and Wilford had subsequently expanded into Europe and the United States. Their striking addition to the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart opened in 1983. Here Stirling created a spectacular new wing in harmony with the nineteenth-century main building.<sup>374</sup> The exterior of sandstone and travertine is punctuated by bright green metal strips and pink and blue steel handrails. It is based around a central open courtyard which contains slipped stones, possibly a reference to Giulio Romano's Palazzo del Te in Mantua.

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<sup>369</sup> *Architectural Design*, vol. 56, no. 1–2, 1986, p.34.

<sup>370</sup> Stirling Wilford Associates, 'National Gallery Extension', 17 January 1986 (NG36/1/33).

<sup>371</sup> Both architects have been hailed as major proponents of postmodernism, although Colin Amery does not use this term in his book about the Sainsbury Wing. Barnabas Calder noted that in the 1980s Venturi was keen to distinguish his work from other postmodern classicists. Calder 2009, p.189.

<sup>372</sup> The building at the University of Leicester was built in collaboration with James Gowan, the buildings at Oxford and Cambridge with Michael Wilford.

<sup>373</sup> Andrew Saint, 'James Stirling, the architect who divides opinion', *The Guardian*, 2 April 2011.

<sup>374</sup> Newhouse 2006, pp.179–81.

The interior layout, however, is traditional, following Schinkel's Altes Museum in Berlin, with rectangular top-lit galleries set around the circular centre. On the ground floor is the temporary exhibition gallery, a large open space with mushroom-coloured pillars.<sup>375</sup>

In 1954, the American architect Robert Venturi was awarded a Rome prize fellowship which enabled him to spend two years at the American Academy in Rome, where he immersed himself in Renaissance and Baroque Italy.<sup>376</sup> On his return, he worked for Eero Saarinen and Louis Kahn. Venturi also had an eminent teaching career at the University of Pennsylvania and at Yale.<sup>377</sup> His book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* was published in 1966. Venturi called it 'a gentle manifesto' and in it sought to counter the limitations of orthodox modern architecture with an examination of the variety and hybrid nature of architecture of the past, including the changing aspects of the classical tradition. The publication was considered one of the most important contributions to architecture of its time.<sup>378</sup>

In 1964, Venturi formed a partnership with John Rauch. Venturi's wife, Denise Scott Brown, an architect with a particular interest in urban planning, joined in 1967.<sup>379</sup> Their most recent work included the Gordon Wu Hall in Princeton University, which opened in 1983. This handsome structure with patterned brickwork fitted in well with the campus of neo-Gothic

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<sup>375</sup> The partnership designed the Clore Gallery for the Turner Collection in 1987. They subsequently converted the warehouse space for Tate Liverpool in 1989.

<sup>376</sup> Amery 1991, pp.66–83.

<sup>377</sup> Professor of architecture at the University of Pennsylvania (1957–65) and at Yale University (1966–70).

<sup>378</sup> *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, Chicago 1966. In the Introduction, p.9, Victor Scully observed that 'it is probably the most important writing on the making of architecture since Le Corbusier's *Vers une Architecture* of 1923'.

<sup>379</sup> Venturi and Scott Brown wrote many things together, including *Learning from Las Vegas*, MIT Press, 1977, written with Steven Izenour.

buildings. The Gordon Wu Hall contained some references to classical architecture, with the inclusion of a thermal window and a decorative façade above the entrance.<sup>380</sup>

The firm also had some museum experience. In 1976 it completed an addition to the Allen Memorial Art Museum in Oberlin, Ohio, and in 1981 it produced a masterplan for the Philadelphia Art Museum, whose director, Jean Sutherland Boggs, later became an adviser for the new national Gallery of Art in Canada. Boggs sent a letter of support for Venturi, praising his understanding of the nature of old buildings and his ability to make an extension that would be both sympathetic and original.<sup>381</sup> In 1984, the architects were working on the new art museum for Seattle, on designs for the Laguna Gloria Museum in Austin, Texas, and on the Contemporary Art Museum at La Jolla, California. Over the past ten years, they had also designed six exhibitions for various venues in the United States.

It is interesting to compare the different approaches of Venturi and Stirling in their plans for the new wing. Stirling, using his considerable experience in designing museums, presented the Gallery with two different proposals (Schemes A and B).<sup>382</sup> He preferred Scheme A as it was more spacious (Figures 10a and b). The main entrance was placed to the side of the main façade through raised steps. This meant that there were greater ceiling heights for all levels. The raised ground floor contained the main entrance, a restaurant and a loading bay.<sup>383</sup> The lower floor had an entrance area for the lecture theatre and a lofty rectangular temporary exhibition space supported by pillars, similar to the space at Stuttgart.<sup>384</sup> The top floor was for the Early Renaissance collection. The levels were linked by lifts and one central

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<sup>380</sup> Amery 1991, pp.68–9, David G. De Long, 2001, pp.63–108. Long makes a reference to a design for a rusticated gate by Sebastiano Serlio (c.1537).

<sup>381</sup> Amery 1991, p.67.

<sup>382</sup> ‘The National Gallery’, *Architectural Design*, 56, 1/2, 1986, pp.70–81.

<sup>383</sup> Other facilities were fitted into different sections.

<sup>384</sup> The size of the exhibition space and store is given as 1,010 square metres. It is difficult to establish the exact size of the area for display.

staircase. This scheme was intended to be 'flexible and dynamic', and would presumably provide some illumination to all levels of the building, including the lower floor. It drew on Stirling's considerable experience in designing museums.

Venturi's plan was relatively simple (Figures 11a and b). The ground floor, at street level, contained the shop, temporary exhibition space and loading bay. An upper mezzanine floor housed the restaurant and meeting rooms, while the lecture theatre was situated on the lower ground floor. The top-floor rooms had tall ceilings but Venturi struggled to provide such height for the other levels. This can be seen on the transverse section design where some height is given to the temporary exhibition space on the ground floor, but other sections are divided up to provide more space for facilities. Lifts linked all levels, but Venturi split up the staircases. A large, light-filled staircase linked the ground floor to the collection galleries, while a smaller flight of stairs led down to the lecture theatre. Another major difference was the design of the galleries for the collection. Stirling created a suite of symmetrical, evenly shaped rooms, while Venturi followed the footprint of the Hampton site and designed a range of irregularly shaped rooms at the front of the building.<sup>385</sup>

Stirling tried to give equal height to all levels, whereas Venturi's design favoured the collection galleries and the monumental staircase. The Gallery staff supported Stirling's internal layout as it managed to fit all the facilities into the limited space in a satisfactory way.<sup>386</sup> There were, however, some concerns about working with Stirling as he had a reputation for being difficult.<sup>387</sup> Levey tactfully put these issues to the Board of Trustees, saying that it was evident that dialogue would be much less easy with Stirling and it would

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<sup>385</sup> This point will be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>386</sup> Director's report to the Board of Trustees, 23 January 1986.

<sup>387</sup> Rowan Moore, 'James Stirling: visionary architect, and a very naughty boy', *The Guardian*, 20 March 2011. He comments on Stirling's arrogant and sometimes boorish character.



be unwise to choose him if they wanted to alter his plans.<sup>388</sup> Moreover, his design for the exterior, a strong temple-like form, was less appealing to the committee than Venturi's more subtle and allusive façade.<sup>389</sup> The Sainsbury brothers favoured Venturi and his partnership was selected.<sup>390</sup>

### The next stage

This decision was announced at a press conference on 24 January 1986.<sup>391</sup> The Chairman said that the Gallery was delighted to have the services of such a distinguished architect as Robert Venturi. It was stressed that both the donors and the Trustees wanted a building that would relate sympathetically to the present one, be of architectural distinction and have an interior of the highest standard. Venturi responded enthusiastically: 'You are looking at the happiest architect in the world ... and the most privileged. I [will] be involved with two of my great loves – Italian painting and English architecture.'<sup>392</sup> Michael Wilson says that the Trustees and donors were struck by Venturi's concern for context, in this case the difficult and demanding setting of Trafalgar Square, and by his wish that 'the galleries should be rooms for looking at paintings in, not contraptions for containing them.'<sup>393</sup>

The Gallery had learnt a number of lessons from its previous experience of working with architects and developers. The main problem had been that it had not been clear who was the client: the developer, the Public Services Agency or the Gallery. This time, in order to avoid possible conflict, a new management structure was created.<sup>394</sup> On 13 February 1986,

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<sup>388</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 23 January 1986.

<sup>389</sup> Amery 1991, p.63.

<sup>390</sup> Wyndham 2015, p.103. A small group visited the architects' offices in Philadelphia and viewed some of their buildings, such as the Gordon Wu Hall in Princeton.

<sup>391</sup> National Gallery press release, 24 January 1986.

<sup>392</sup> Wyndham 2015, p.104.

<sup>393</sup> Wilson 1991, p.12. The quote is taken from Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, 'A proposed extension to the National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London', 17 January 1986, p.5 (NG36/1/33).

<sup>394</sup> Amery 1991, p.73; Wyndham 2015, pp.105–6.

a charitable body, The Hampton Site Company, was established to receive the funds, develop the site and administer the project; members included the Sainsbury brothers and Jacob Rothschild. A subsidiary company, N.G. Services Ltd, was set up to control and deliver the project on a day-to-day basis through a project manager. The Hampton Site Steering Committee, chaired by Simon Sainsbury, was the client and consisted of the donors, selected Trustees, and Michael Levey, Allan Braham and Michael Wilson.<sup>395</sup> The Trustees were kept informed of its activities. The architects carried out the design work in their Philadelphia offices, but attended regular meetings of the Hampton Site Committee.<sup>396</sup> Venturi said that the plan required ‘the skills and refinement of a Swiss watchmaker’.<sup>397</sup> Compromises would be inevitable.

## **Part Two: Development of the designs for the temporary exhibition galleries**

### Initial designs

It is useful here to return to the proposal VRSB presented to the selection committee in January 1986. Two aspects were to affect the future design of the temporary exhibition galleries. Firstly, VRSB followed the original ground plan of the Hampton site more meticulously than the other architects. Venturi looked back to his book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, particularly to section 7, ‘Contradiction adapted’, where he described how ‘the interior rectangles of Palladio’s palace plans are frequently distorted into nonrectangular configurations in order to adjust to the Vincenza street patterns. The resultant tensions give a vitality to the buildings.’<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> This committee in effect took over from the Hampton Site Committee which had been set up primarily to find the architect for the project.

<sup>396</sup> The associate architectural office in London was Sheppard Robson, and Sir Robert McAlpine Construction Management Ltd co-ordinated the trade contractors.

<sup>397</sup> Robert Venturi, Cubitt Lecture, Royal Society of Arts, 8 April 1987(NG36/1/34).

<sup>398</sup> Venturi 1966, p.45.

He returned to these awkward configurations when considering the Hampton site.<sup>399</sup> He explained that 'owing to the irregular site, some galleries are not precisely rectangular. We have not sought to disguise this phenomenon, which is a traditional form of urban accommodation, found in many London plans and Italian palaces. It results in spatial tensions that enliven the interior and establish an interesting balance between the consistency of organisation and the variety of experience.'<sup>400</sup>

This approach would have far-reaching consequences for the design of the spaces within the new wing.

The architects wanted to make a distinction between the main floor galleries and the temporary exhibition space. In the section 'The Design Rationale' of their proposal for the Sainsbury Wing, they referred to the tradition of showing paintings in palace rooms with an explicit architectural context, as in the Pitti Palace in Florence, as opposed to the neutral and flexible spaces of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York.<sup>401</sup> They argued that a series of defined rooms was more suitable for a collection of Early Renaissance paintings. They admired the distinctive features of Soane's rooms in Dulwich Picture Gallery, and combined them with an entrance which had the proportions of an Early Renaissance, Brunelleschian portal (Figure 12).<sup>402</sup> At the same time, they appreciated how the free-

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<sup>399</sup> Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, 'A proposed extension to the National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London', p.7 (NG36/1/33).

<sup>400</sup> 'A proposed extension to the National Gallery', p.7.

<sup>401</sup> 'A proposed extension to the National Gallery', p.5. VRSB's approach lies between these two extremes.

<sup>402</sup> 'A proposed extension to the National Gallery', p.5. The proposal makes it clear that they are not seeking to replicate the original location in which the paintings were hung.

flowing, adaptable space of MoMA was suitable for travelling exhibitions, and this is the type of design that they would propose for the exhibition galleries.<sup>403</sup>

In section four, 'Functional organisation of the building', the architects describe their reasons for the location and design of the temporary exhibition space (Figure 11a).<sup>404</sup> They explained that they had placed it on the ground floor adjacent to the entrance area because, on entering the wing, the public would immediately have a glimpse of artwork before they were directed by the grand main staircase to the collection on the main floor. They argued that this entrance area location was very practical as it would provide a space for receptions and would accommodate the crowds. It would also place the exhibition gallery next to service areas such as the loading bay.

Their design for the temporary exhibition gallery was a simple, nearly rectangular space of about 530 square metres, at the lower end of the size indicated by the Guidelines for Architects (Brief 6).<sup>405</sup> Following the free-flowing example of MoMA, it was neutral in space and character, allowing an individualised arrangement for each exhibition. The architects had worked on this type of space when creating designs for their own shows, such as the installations for the exhibition *Signs of Life: Symbols in the American City* at the Smithsonian Institution in 1974.<sup>406</sup>

The architects, however, did note some problems: there was no room for the audio-visual room on the ground floor and they were concerned that the layout of the temporary

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<sup>403</sup> 'Material on museum design and the design process', a discussion with Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, The Carlyle Hotel, New York, 24 September 1985, p.4 (NG36/1/31).

<sup>404</sup> 'A proposed extension to the National Gallery', pp.17–18.

<sup>405</sup> The Guidelines for Architects gave a size range between 500 and 800 square metres.

<sup>406</sup> David Brownlee 2001, p.71. The exhibition was held at the Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, in 1976. Venturi, Scott Brown and Steven Izenour designed the elaborate staging for this show.

exhibition galleries, both in size and height, was restricted by the location. Their concerns were justified. The contents of the Polkinghorne brief, finally produced in March 1986 (Brief 7), recommended a space of 800 square metres, at the upper end of the size ranges in the Guidelines for Architects. It was unfortunate that these guidelines, produced in October 1985, did not entirely reflect the final spatial needs set out by the Polkinghorne brief, produced five months later.<sup>407</sup> However, the architects were asked to produce initial designs and informed that a detailed brief would follow. In March 1986, the Hampton Site Committee discussed the outcome of the Polkinghorne brief.<sup>408</sup> VRSB reported that there was insufficient room on the ground floor for the temporary exhibition gallery and it would need to be moved to the lower ground floor.<sup>409</sup>

There was some concern about the decision. A few months later, Michael Wilson reported that the Chairman had reservations about this location and felt that it might be underused.<sup>410</sup> Wilson, on the other hand, advanced reasons why the basement would be an advantage: there would be a place for queues separate from the visitors to the gallery, thus avoiding dead space on the ground floor when the temporary exhibitions were closed. Natural light, he claimed, was not needed for this area as it was for other facilities (presumably the shop and the restaurant). Finally, it would be virtually impossible to find enough space on the ground floor, which also had to accommodate the entrance hall, the shop and the loading bay.

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<sup>407</sup> Polkinghorne's brief worked with the total area given in the architect's brief. It recommended sizes for the facilities but did not suggest the layout.

<sup>408</sup> The Hampton Site Committee meeting, 10 March 1986 (NG36/3/63).

<sup>409</sup> Stirling had already anticipated this problem in his Scheme A, as had Piers Gough and Jeremy Dixon. Stirling had raised the ground floor level in order to accommodate a lower ground floor (Figures 10a and b).

<sup>410</sup> The Hampton Site Company meeting, 16 May 1986 (NG36/3/63). Memo from Michael Wilson to the Director, 21 May 1986 (NG36/2).

It is true that these facilities did require a large amount of space, particularly for a secure loading bay for delivery trucks.<sup>411</sup> To fit a level in between the ground floor and the main floor to host the restaurant and the computer information room, the ceiling heights would have to be lowered in the entrance hall, making the area insufficiently high for the exhibition gallery.

Wilson's most contentious argument was that the new galleries did not require natural light. This was, he maintained, because some exhibits, such as drawings, would need low light levels, and natural light could be excluded entirely.<sup>412</sup> On the Hampton site only one level, the main floor, could receive top lighting. Providing side lighting for sections below the main floor was difficult. The site was hemmed in by buildings on all sides, except for Trafalgar Square, so any side lighting, possibly at a clerestory level, would have limited practical value. However, it could have provided at least a sense of access to the outside world, a feeling that is completely lost when the galleries are deep underground, as they are now.

#### First designs for the lower floor

In April 1986 the architects produced new designs for the temporary exhibition space, now moved to the lower ground floor together with the lecture theatre.<sup>413</sup> At this point, the area consisted of the footprint of the Hampton site and the section under Jubilee Walk up to the Wilkins building. The lecture theatre and exhibition gallery were placed adjacent to one another. A plan for the expanded temporary exhibition space, now at 730 square metres,

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<sup>411</sup> Providing a secure area for large transport trucks was an important facility. The area also provided space for deliveries to the shop, restaurant and out-of-hours catering events. The Polkinghorne brief (Brief 7), 'Service entrance, loading bay', 28.0, gave deadline specifications and size. The recommended size of the loading bay was missing from the Guidelines to Architects (Brief 6).

<sup>412</sup> Lighting will be more fully discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>413</sup> The Hampton Site Committee meeting, 29 April 1986.

shows an open space with a central line of pillars, similar to the original ground-floor design (Figure 13).

Both Levey and Smith opposed this open space.<sup>414</sup> Levey objected to one large room which would have to be divided up by flexible screens, and Smith argued that such arrangements often required elaborate installations, taking time and incurring expense. Levey wanted rooms that looked more permanent, were varying in size, and perhaps with one dedicated to drawings. Smith suggested opening and closing doorways to allow different ways of moving around the different rooms and thus avoiding the monotony of a prescribed circulation. He preferred walls that were not load-bearing so that the structure could be changed.

The Gallery was also disenchanted by now with the flexible, temporary wall system that had just been installed in the Sunley Room.<sup>415</sup> Charles Saumarez Smith later observed that there was a growing shift in public taste away from the neutral style of gallery display and the modern interventions of the post-war years, towards showing pictures as they would have been seen in their original context.<sup>416</sup> Timothy Clifford promoted this type of display at Manchester Art Gallery and subsequently at the National Gallery of Scotland.<sup>417</sup> The National Gallery, too, was reconsidering its historic interiors and starting to return rooms to

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<sup>414</sup> Michael Levey letter to Allan Braham, 29 April 1986 (NG36/2); Alistair Smith letter to Michael Levey, 29 April 1986 (NG36/2); Alistair Smith, 'Some notes on the Temporary Exhibition area', 1 May 1986 (NG36/2/47).

<sup>415</sup> Michael Wilson interview with Mary Hersov, 12 March 2012. The flexible walls were proving cumbersome and there were problems with the air-conditioning system.

<sup>416</sup> Charles Saumarez Smith, 'Narratives of Display at the National Gallery, London', *Art History*, vol. 30, no. 4, September 2007, p.620. The lowered ceilings and hessian-covered walls of the Wilkins building were criticised.

<sup>417</sup> Director of Manchester Art Gallery 1978–84 and Director of the National Gallery of Scotland from 1984.

their original design.<sup>418</sup> The Barry Rooms, which were in need of renovation, were returned to their original opulent appearance and re-opened in 1987.<sup>419</sup>

While the architects worked on their designs for the new wing, the Gallery staff provided more information to justify the maximum size, 800 square metres, and proportions laid out in the Polkinghorne brief for the exhibition galleries. The Hampton Site Committee meeting in March had said that the size should not be binding but taken as a guide.<sup>420</sup> Venturi had already slightly reduced the size to 730 square metres in his April 1986 designs. On 1 May, Smith supplied comparative statistics of display areas in other galleries.<sup>421</sup> It is one of the few references in the whole process to spaces outside the National Gallery, namely the Hayward Gallery (1,635 square metres), the Royal Academy (1,572 square metres) and the Serpentine Gallery (428 square metres).<sup>422</sup> There was no consideration of any temporary exhibition spaces attached to national museums, such as the Llewellyn Davies Wing at the Tate, or to the major international temporary exhibition spaces such as the galleries in the East Building of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, or the Kunsthaus, Zurich, both of which had spaces of at least 1,000 square metres. These examples would have strengthened the case for larger dimensions at the National Gallery. This absence of extensive comparative material meant that the Gallery found it difficult to justify the maximum size for the new temporary exhibition space.

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<sup>418</sup> There was dissatisfaction with the North Galleries. Michael Wilson interview with Mary Hersov, 17 March 2012.

<sup>419</sup> The National Gallery Annual Review, 1986, p.7. Geoffrey Taunton of the Property Services Agency (PSA) discovered Barry's original drawings, the basis for the decorative renovation of the building. The rooms were repainted, regilded and the roof replaced. The PSA was abolished in 1987 and the Gallery took over the responsibility for the building. The renovation was funded by the J.Paul Getty Fund which also provided the Gallery with an endowment for picture purchases.

<sup>420</sup> Note of the Hampton Site Steering Committee meeting, 10 March 1986 (NG36/3/63).

<sup>421</sup> Alistair Smith, 'Some notes on the Temporary Exhibition area', 1 May 1986 (NG36/2/47).

<sup>422</sup> The Royal Academy main galleries are larger, at 1,913 square metres. Smith did not list the Barbican Art Gallery, which had 1,347 square metres.



The specification for the lecture theatre, considered a key facility of the new wing, was in stark contrast to the cautious attitude towards the temporary exhibition space. The Polkinghorne brief specified an increase in size from 120 seats to a capacity of 450–500.<sup>423</sup> This expanded lecture theatre would be used for conferences, performances and films and the lecture theatres at the V&A and the Metropolitan Museum had been used as a comparison and justification.<sup>424</sup>

The Gallery made a better case for keeping the ceiling height at 5.5 metres in the temporary exhibition space. This is the same height as the Sunley Room, where it is possible to display some large paintings. Wilson made a strong argument that National Gallery exhibitions would often include works of large scale and it was therefore necessary to have rooms of sufficient height to receive them.<sup>425</sup>

In May 1986, Smith also commented on the design of the temporary exhibition area, proposing one large central space, entered from the foyer, with rooms radiating off.<sup>426</sup> The architects accepted this proposal and produced new designs for the Hampton Site Steering Committee meeting in July 1986.<sup>427</sup> There were two alternatives: Series A (Figure 14) was designed for the south part of the space, with the lecture theatre in the north, while Series B (Figure 15) was designed for the north part of the space, with the lecture theatre in the south. The Series B layouts show rooms of almost regular proportions as this area lay within the most regular section of the building's footprint. The architects favoured this series because the exhibition rooms were directly next to the packing room and the goods lift.

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<sup>423</sup> 'The National Gallery Hampton Site Development Guidelines for Architects', 9 October 1985 (Brief 6), specified about 400 seats. The increase to 500 would include 50 standing places and additional wheelchair space.

<sup>424</sup> 'National Gallery: Preliminary brief for the development of the Hampton Site', February 1985 (NG36/2).

<sup>425</sup> Michael Wilson, 'Note on the height of temporary exhibitions galleries', 20 June 1986 (NG36/2/47).

<sup>426</sup> Alistair Smith, 'Some notes on the Temporary Exhibition area', 1 May 1986 (NG36/2/47).

<sup>427</sup> The Hampton Site Steering Committee, 9/10 July 1986 (NG36/3/63).

The Gallery staff, however, chose the Series A layouts.<sup>428</sup> Smith preferred the circulation of the rooms. He argued that the layout was easy to grasp and that the public would find it so. He thought that visitors should come upon the temporary exhibition galleries as soon as they reached the bottom of the stairs from the ground-floor foyer.

On 11 July, VRSB also produced a comparison of their current designs with the Polkinghorne brief.<sup>429</sup> They noted that the size of the exhibition rooms had been reduced to around 650 square metres. Due to problems with space, the cinema for exhibition films was brought within the temporary exhibition area. This had also contributed to the reduction in the size of the exhibition rooms.<sup>430</sup>

### Crisis

While the merits of the different designs for the basement were being debated, it became clear that there were serious problems with the whole development. At the August 1986 Hampton Site Committee meeting, Simon Sainsbury explained that in view of the increased costs, it was necessary for the Committee to consider ways of achieving economies.<sup>431</sup> At the Board of Trustees meeting in December, the Chairman noted that the donors were very concerned about these rising costs, now £15 million above budget. Could the expenditure be reduced by £10 million?<sup>432</sup> It is not clear why there was such an increase in costs, but it is possible that insufficient time had been spent in the early stages of developing the brief in the haste to provide the possible donors with an estimate.<sup>433</sup> The costs of the detailed

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<sup>428</sup> Alistair Smith, 'Comments on the present plans for the Sainsbury extension', 10 July 1986 (NG36/2/47). He consulted colleagues in the Education and Design departments.

<sup>429</sup> 'Response of the VRSB current design to the brief of 7 March 1986 for the National Gallery Extension', 11 July 1986 (14.10, item 14.01) (NG36/2/55).

<sup>430</sup> The Hampton Site Steering Committee meeting, 19 August 1986 (NG36/3/63).

<sup>431</sup> This was the first meeting that Neil MacGregor, the director designate, attended. He officially became director in January 1987.

<sup>432</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 17 December 1986. Wyndham 2015, pp.108–14.

<sup>433</sup> A broad estimate of around £20 million was given to the Board of Trustees in December 1984.

requirements outlined in the Polkinghorne brief, in particular the expense of excavation, had yet to be properly calculated. At the December meeting, it was proposed that *not* building the exhibition galleries underground could cut costs. It was noted, however, that this would affect the whole character of the planned development, which both the Trustees and the Gallery strongly wished to preserve. In the March 1987 Trustees meeting, when the idea of abandoning the basement galleries was raised again as a way of reducing costs, the Chairman stressed that the donors were keen to retain the new space and wanted to support the brief that included all the main elements required by the Gallery.<sup>434</sup> The temporary exhibition galleries were clearly viewed as an essential part of the project. And at the next Board meeting the Chairman could report that the donors had with extraordinary generosity agreed to increase the budget from around £20 million to £34.6 million.<sup>435</sup>

### The compromise

The lower floor level had been saved but compromised. All the facilities had to fit within the Hampton site footprint and not extend under Jubilee Walk. The lecture theatre, reduced in size from 500 to 360 seats, had to overlap the temporary galleries. This led to the reduction in height of Room 6 to 3.5 metres so that it could fit under the projection booth, but this room met the Gallery's desire for a smaller space in which to show drawings (Figure 18).<sup>436</sup>

The size of the galleries was now reduced to 460 square metres, returning to the dimensions and location given in the first brief of November 1984 (Brief 2).<sup>437</sup> The generous entrance area that was to include a space for possible ticket sales as recommended by the

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<sup>434</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 20 March 1987. Minutes of the Building Committee on 24 April 1985 (NG36/4/3). Sir John Sainsbury supported the creation of a first-class exhibition area that would help to attract yet more visitors.

<sup>435</sup> Wyndham 2015, pp.114–15.

<sup>436</sup> Agreed at the Hampton Site Steering Committee meeting, 12 January 1987 (NG36/3/63).

<sup>437</sup> Amery 1991, p.92, gives the floor area as 475 square metres. This presumably includes the store rooms adjacent to the public space.

Polkinghorne brief was also severely limited. The space was now set deep in the basement, two levels below the ground floor, in order to accommodate the lecture theatre and its entrance lobby (Figure 17).<sup>438</sup>

The smaller area for exhibitions had been squeezed into the southern part of the site, which was the most irregular in shape.<sup>439</sup> The space was divided up into a series of asymmetrical rooms which could not be changed (Figure 18). Huge concrete piles were cast deep into the London clay to form the perimeter retaining wall around the site.<sup>440</sup> Some of the piles were placed within the temporary exhibition space, making certain walls load-bearing and removing any possibility of changing the layout, against the Gallery's original wish.

Allan Braham, on behalf of the curators, had raised a concern about the irregularity of the rooms on the main floor and how this might make it difficult to install paintings.<sup>441</sup> But keeping to the original irregular footprint of the building was a fundamental tenet of the Venturi vision and they would not change this.

No one was happy with the situation, including the director designate Neil MacGregor, who began to attend Hampton Site Committee meetings from August 1986.<sup>442</sup> However, Trustees and staff were prepared to accept the compromise as the facilities placed underground had been saved and the main floor galleries, always the project's main focus, were unaffected.

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<sup>438</sup> It is 7.04 metres from the ground floor to the exhibition foyer. The deep staircase has a landing which leads to the entrance of the lecture theatre.

<sup>439</sup> The Gallery had selected this area as part of Group A designs.

<sup>440</sup> Wilson 1991, p.11. The secant pile method was used.

<sup>441</sup> 'Resumé of staff comments on the first Hampton Site scheme of Venturi', 25 April 1986 (NJG36/2). Braham noted that the 'gross irregularity in the shapes of the rooms are not in conformity with the rooms of the existing building, and inhibit freedom of hanging. There is, however, no unanimity about the degrees of regularity.'

<sup>442</sup> He became Director in January 1987.

### The designs are made public

In April 1987, the agreed plans for the new wing were unveiled to the public. The accompanying brochure stated that the Gallery's principal aim was to provide additional space for the collection, and pointed out that the new wing could also offer a range of other badly needed public facilities.<sup>443</sup> Most important of these were the auditorium, which would enable the Gallery to expand the lecture programme and hold evening events, and the temporary exhibition space. This suite of rooms, with its own foyer, would make larger and more varied temporary exhibitions possible and could be adapted to suit the character of individual shows.

The temporary exhibition galleries had risen once again in order of priority to become the third most important facility. A feature that had disappeared was the 'arts centre', which was not mentioned in the brochure, or indeed ever again. It had done its job – to persuade the donors to fund the project.<sup>444</sup> However, the pressure of the design process and the relentless schedule put great strain on the relationship between the donors, the Gallery and the architects.<sup>445</sup>

The Gallery now had a new director, Neil MacGregor. Michael Levey had announced his retirement in January 1986, the same month as the appointment of the architects, and his relationship to the project was increasingly detached. In contrast, the new building would be the focus of MacGregor's directorship. He was fully involved in the complex decision-making process and the many different committees, and aware of the disagreements about

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<sup>443</sup> The Sainsbury Wing: a presentation of designs for the National Gallery extension by the architects Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown was held from 15 April – 5 May 1987.

<sup>444</sup> Michael Wilson interview with Mary Hersov, 12 March 2012.

<sup>445</sup> There was a tough schedule to get designs agreed for the public exhibition in April 1987.

certain aspects of the design.<sup>446</sup> Some of these difficulties were reflected in the design process for the temporary exhibition space. The architects noted: ‘The main characteristic of this building is its enormous complexity... Modern museums are very complicated... they are educational spaces as well as galleries... and on this site we had to put everything on top of one another.’<sup>447</sup>

### The construction of the temporary exhibition galleries

In the years that followed the public presentation of the scheme in April 1987, more detailed work was required on the design and construction of the exhibition galleries.<sup>448</sup> There were some problems. The design of the flexible lighting track was managed by the lighting contractor for the main galleries, Fisher Marantz, an American firm.<sup>449</sup> Their principal concern was the extremely complicated and innovative system being developed for the access of natural light to the main floor galleries.<sup>450</sup> In the temporary exhibition space, a simple track lighting system was installed in the ceiling, using the same fittings as the main floor galleries, with the exception of the smallest room with its low ceiling, which required smaller fittings.<sup>451</sup> The firm was given neither the time nor the budget to research the most suitable lighting system for the basement spaces, and inadequate lighting would be one of the main criticisms of the new galleries. The decisions made at this point would have important implications for the future.

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<sup>446</sup> Wyndham 2015, pp.113–20. The committees involved were the Board of Trustees, the Hampton Site Company and the Hampton Site Steering Committee. Martin Bailey, ‘Architects vs Prince Charles: if the column goes, we go’, *The Art Newspaper*, 1 May 2015.

<sup>447</sup> Ian Latham talks to Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, *Building Design*, 1 May 1987.

<sup>448</sup> This included discussions about designs for the doorways with sliding doors, the construction and finish of the walls and the type of wood to use on the floor.

<sup>449</sup> Jules Fisher and Paul Marantz, Inc. Amery 1991, pp.132-140, outlines the chronology and construction details for the development.

<sup>450</sup> A full-scale model of the Early Renaissance galleries was built in Shepperton studios to test the lighting systems. Amery 1991, p.128.

<sup>451</sup> David Saunders, ‘Lighting’ in Amery 1991, pp.128–31.

Other design decisions also proved difficult. There were discussions about the dimensions of the new galleries. The heights were confirmed, and fortunately the height of the main gallery at 5.5 metres could be maintained. The Gallery argued that the two smaller rooms (Rooms 3 and 5, see Figure 18) should have slightly lower ceilings of 4.5 metres so that they would have better proportions.<sup>452</sup> This is why there is such a variety of room heights, a factor that would cause frustration.

There were also differences of opinion over certain architectural features. There was one particular contentious area of design.<sup>453</sup> The Polkinghorne brief (Brief 7) had asked for rooms with fixed skirtings, architraves, cornices and covings that would be sympathetic to Old Master paintings and would avoid installation expense. Wilson described the architects' designs as 'rather mean' twentieth-century mouldings in oak, similar to the Sunley Room, where false period features had been added to make the space more suitable for its contents.<sup>454</sup>

The architects, however, had designed an area that was 'neutral in space and character' and favoured a strong contrast with the permanent galleries. The designs are reminiscent of their designs for galleries at the Seattle Art Museum, built in the modern idiom with wood floors, a simple wood finish for skirting and door frames, and flexible walls.<sup>455</sup>

In the end, a compromise was reached and the architectural features were painted rather than covered in wood veneer. The original appearance of the rooms can be seen in images

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<sup>452</sup> The National Gallery Services Ltd Client Steering Committee, 10 November 1988 (NG36/3/63). VRSB wanted to keep the same height for all the rooms except Room 6, which had already been reduced to 3.5 metres.

<sup>453</sup> Michael Wilson memo to the Director, cc to Herb Gillman (Head of Design) and Caryl Hubbard (Trustee), 4 August 1988 (NG36/2). Polkinghorne Brief, 14.03.

<sup>454</sup> Oak skirting is used in Room 56, which contains the Early Netherlandish paintings. The use of pietra serena would have been inappropriate. Wilson 1991, p.41.

<sup>455</sup> <http://venturiscottbrown.org> . Seattle Art Museum opened on 5 December 1991. When its new wing opened in 2007, the interior was remodelled and the temporary exhibition galleries moved to the fourth floor.

of the display, installed for the opening of the wing in July 1991 (Figure 19).<sup>456</sup> It was explained to the Press that the temporary exhibition galleries would be decorated anew for each exhibition, otherwise they might be thought to look rather stark.<sup>457</sup>

New mouldings of a generic classical design were installed for the *Queen's Pictures* exhibition, which opened in October 1991.<sup>458</sup> The architects understood that the rooms would be 'dressed up' for each exhibition, but were unaware that these new features would become permanent.<sup>459</sup> Denise Scott Brown, in an article in *Building Design*, commented: 'In the basement, the temporary exhibition galleries were to be non-allusive, suggesting elegance but leaving opportunity for different types of shows. However, Edwardian skirting and door trims were soon added "for a special show" and left there.'<sup>460</sup> In her view, these mouldings were inappropriate, but the Gallery felt that they were vital in rendering the space more in harmony with Old Master paintings.

### **Summary**

The chapter opens with an account of the selection of the architect. A shortlist of six was reduced to two and the American architect Robert Venturi of VRSA was chosen in January 1986. Although less experienced in designing museums than James Stirling, who was the runner-up, Venturi produced the most appealing designs for the façade and the Early Renaissance galleries.

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<sup>456</sup> The decision was made at the Sainsbury Wing Post Handover Committee, 13 December 1990 (NG32/3/25). The opening display was *The Building of the Sainsbury Wing*, 10 July – 18 August 1991. This was a short display before the opening of the first major exhibition, *The Queen's Pictures: Royal Collectors through the centuries* which opened in October 1991. The new mouldings were created for this show (Figure 20).

<sup>457</sup> Press conference, 8 July 1991.

<sup>458</sup> These mouldings were designed to be in keeping with the galleries in the Wilkins building. PMT were brought in to finish off certain areas of the Sainsbury Wing. Michael Morrison, Purcell Miller Tritton, email to Mary Hersov, 22 February 2011.

<sup>459</sup> It was too expensive and time-consuming to redesign and replace them for each exhibition.

<sup>460</sup> Denise Scott Brown wrote this essay in 1990 but it was not published at that time. She added a postscript in July 2011 which contains the comments about the temporary exhibition galleries. Ellis Woodman, 'In defence of the Sainsbury Wing', *Building Design*, 22 July 2011.



Underlying Venturi's designs were two main concerns. He wanted to make a distinction between the main floor galleries and the temporary exhibition galleries. The former were influenced by Italian palaces and Soane's Dulwich Picture Gallery, resulting in a series of defined rooms, while the latter were intended to follow MoMA and be free-flowing adaptable spaces. His second concern was to follow the irregular footprint of the Hampton site at all costs.

Venturi's first plan placed the exhibition galleries on the ground floor. It was to be a regular shaped room of 530 square metres. When he received the Polkinghorne brief in March 1986, he realised that there was insufficient space for the necessary facilities on the ground floor. These key details were provided too late in the process and should have been available to the architects during their design stage. Venturi was forced to move the exhibition galleries to the lower ground floor where there was room for the expanded space of 800 square metres.<sup>461</sup> The Gallery staff and VRSB disagreed over the division of the space into rooms, and over some architectural features. Meanwhile, costs escalated.

The financial crisis was resolved but led to a major reduction in the excavated area. The new exhibition galleries ended up with 460 square metres, slightly less than the 500 square metres specified in the brief of November 1984 (Brief 2). While the reduction in costs and the Gallery's desire to fit too many facilities into the limited footprint of the Hampton site was the main cause of this, there were other underlying reasons. There had been a long history of lack of support for more space for temporary exhibitions and the senior staff, Levey and Braham, were hostile to the culture of blockbuster exhibitions. In the initial brief of November 1984, the temporary exhibition space was listed at a lowly number 7 with a

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<sup>461</sup> The Polkinghorne brief of March 1986 recommended this size. At that point, it was possible expand the site underneath Jubilee Walk.

size of 500 square metres. As it became an important part of the Gallery's vision for the future, the space rose in importance and the Polkinghorne brief listed it at number 2 and 800 square metres in size.

However, as the costs increased and cuts were necessary, there was insufficient evidence or support to justify the need for this larger space. There was no comparison with other relevant exhibition venues, no future programme and audience projection, no decision about ticket charging and therefore no business plan.<sup>462</sup> The Gallery's main focus, as always, was on the Early Renaissance galleries. It also supported a large lecture theatre, as the 'hub' of the public facilities in the building.<sup>463</sup> As a result, the temporary exhibition space was halved in size and placed in the basement in a series of irregular rooms. It was a compromise that the Gallery was prepared to accept at the time. A space conceived under Levey's directorship would now need to function under different directors, Neil MacGregor and Charles Saumarez Smith, and this is the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>462</sup> Sixsmith 1999, pp.61-65, outlines the content for an effective business plan.

<sup>463</sup> The lecture theatre was reduced in size from 500 to 320 seats but this was still sufficient to host the range of lectures, films and concerts that the Gallery desired.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE NEW SPACE IN ACTION**

### **Introduction**

This chapter considers practical consequences of the design of the new temporary exhibition galleries. It describes the creation of the exhibition programme, discusses some decisions regarding management, and contrasts the official approval of the new space with the mixed reaction of the staff, the critics and the general public. There is a closer look at the first three exhibitions, those that succeeded and those that fell short, and at the renewed challenge of the blockbuster exhibition. The chapter ends with the Gallery's response, which led to the transfer of the Velázquez exhibition to the main floor galleries, and its plans for a larger new space for temporary exhibitions.

### **Part One: Preparation**

#### **The creation of the exhibition programme**

In January 1987, the new director, Neil MacGregor, arrived with fresh energy and vision. A firm supporter of temporary exhibitions, he believed that there was no conflict between scholarship and accessibility: exhibitions could be used to present scholarship to the public so that visitors could further explore the collection.<sup>464</sup> He devised a completely new exhibition programme, but kept to the policy that exhibitions should have a strong relationship to the Gallery's collection. He brought ambition and creativity to the programme. This is reflected in the first three exhibitions, including two that involved international collaboration.

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<sup>464</sup> Neil MacGregor, 'Scholarship and the Public', *Royal Society of Arts Journal*, vol. 139, no. 5415, February 1991, pp.191–4.

MacGregor, together with the Gallery Trustees, wanted to mark the Sainsbury brothers' act of generosity with an outstanding inaugural exhibition. He approached the Royal Collection to ask whether they would lend a selection from their outstanding collection of paintings.<sup>465</sup>

The result was *The Queen's Pictures: Royal Collectors through the Centuries*, which opened in October 1991.

The second exhibition involved an ambitious international collaboration. The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, and the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, were planning a Rembrandt exhibition. The Royal Academy hoped to stage the exhibition in London but needed important Rembrandt loans from the National Gallery.<sup>466</sup> However, Berlin and Amsterdam wanted to collaborate with the National Gallery, and pool their three pre-eminent holdings of Rembrandt paintings. They had MacGregor's full support.<sup>467</sup> This was a significant decision. It showed that the Gallery now had the confidence to undertake exhibitions that the Royal Academy had set its sights on. The exhibition developed into *Rembrandt: the Master and his Workshop*, a quintessential National Gallery show making use of its curatorial, conservation and scientific expertise.<sup>468</sup>

The National Gallery contributed six works, the largest number it had ever loaned, including the *Ecce Homo* and *Saskia* which had never travelled outside Britain.<sup>469</sup> The exhibition,

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<sup>465</sup> Neil MacGregor letter to Oliver Miller, Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, 16 June 1987. The *Queen's Pictures* exhibition ran from 2 October 1991 to 19 January 1992 (NG32/192).

<sup>466</sup> Norman Rosenthal, Exhibitions Secretary at the Royal Academy, letter to Neil MacGregor, 24 April 1987 (NG32/194).

<sup>467</sup> Dr Henning Bock, Director of the Gemäldegalerie, and Dr Simon Levie, Director of the Rijksmuseum, letter to Neil MacGregor, 18 September 1987 (NG32/194). Neil MacGregor letter to Dr Levie, 31 December 1987 (NG32/194).

<sup>468</sup> The National Gallery had previous experience in using this combination of expertise to create exhibitions. *Rembrandt: Art in the Making* opened in the Sunley Room in 1988 and showed the latest technical examination of the Gallery's Rembrandts.

<sup>469</sup> There had been previous major international exhibitions that contained paintings by Rembrandt such as *Gods, Saints and Heroes: Dutch Painting in the Age of Rembrandt*, Washington, Detroit and Rijksmuseum, 1980-18. but this current exhibition had a great number of outstanding paintings.

sponsored by American Express, opened at the newly re-opened Altes Museum, Berlin, in autumn 1991 before travelling to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, and finally to the National Gallery in 1992.<sup>470</sup>

The third exhibition was based around an important National Gallery painting. When the Städtische Kunsthalle, Mannheim, requested the loan of Manet's *The Execution of Maximilian*, MacGregor agreed to show this great work in an exhibition with other versions by the artist.<sup>471</sup> The Gallery would schedule the exhibition for summer 1992 and it would then tour to Mannheim.

There was also a setback. One exhibition considered for the new Sainsbury Wing, the loan of paintings from the Prince of Liechtenstein, started to disintegrate. It proved impossible to place the complete cycle of Rubens's large 'Decius Mus' paintings in the main central room of the temporary exhibition galleries without making considerable adjustments, and the Trustees were unwilling to undertake extensive alterations during the opening period.<sup>472</sup> Trying to fit in the great Rubens paintings would provide a test for the new space, a test that it had already failed even before the public opening.

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<sup>470</sup> Altes Museum, Berlin (12 September – 10 November 1991), a more central location than the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (4 December 1991 – 1 March 1992); National Gallery, London (26 March – 24 May 1992).

<sup>471</sup> Dr Manfred Fath, Director of the Städtische Kunsthalle, Mannheim, letter to Neil MacGregor, 10 April 1987 (NG32/197). This letter mentioned his previous discussions with Michael Levey. The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, lent their painting but did not become part of the tour as originally planned. *Manet: The Execution of Maximilian* was shown at the National Gallery from 1 July – 27 September 1992.

<sup>472</sup> Michael Wilson letter to Dr Reinhold Baumstark, Director of the Princely Collections, Liechtenstein, 8 May 1990 (National Gallery Office File). MacGregor suggested another project, 'Romantic paintings from Liechtenstein', which contained works of a smaller size, but the project failed to attract commercial sponsorship and was quietly dropped after Dr Baumstark left to run the Bavarian National Museum in 1991.

## Logistical issues

It became clear that the larger exhibitions in the new galleries would require more sophisticated management than the smaller free shows in the Sunley Room.<sup>473</sup> There were several important practical decisions to be made. MacGregor encouraged the staff to conduct research in London and abroad regarding admission charges, timed ticket systems and the deployment of external banners.<sup>474</sup> These subjects had not been properly discussed before and had to be taken into consideration and slotted into the design of the now existing building.

As noted in Chapter Two, there was a willingness to discuss admission charges for larger loan exhibitions, but no formal decision had been made.<sup>475</sup> By 1988, the Conservative Government's requirement for national museums to raise more of their own funds was firmly entrenched. The Gallery had found commercial sponsors for exhibitions in the Sunley Room with Shell UK's support for the *Artist's Eye* series.<sup>476</sup> The question of admission charges had been raised in 1988 with the *French Paintings from the USSR: Watteau to Matisse* exhibition when thirty-eight masterpieces were loaned from Russian collections, but the Board of Trustees decided to wait until larger exhibitions opened in the Sainsbury Wing.<sup>477</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> Exhibitions continued to be shown in the Sunley Room. The Boardroom hosted small shows until the opening of Room One in 1995.

<sup>474</sup> Michael Wilson became Head of Exhibitions and Display in December 1989 after Alistair Smith became Director of the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester. I joined the Gallery as Exhibitions Officer in July 1990 and travelled to Amsterdam, New York and Washington to research timed ticket and queuing systems in December 1990.

<sup>475</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, March 1985. A provision for ticket desks in the foyer was made in the Polkinghorne brief of March 1987. The area was much reduced in the final design.

<sup>476</sup> The *Artist's Eye* series started in 1977 with Anthony Caro's selection. Shell UK's support started with *The Artist's Eye: Francis Bacon* in 1985.

<sup>477</sup> This extraordinary piece of diplomacy, mainly negotiated by Alistair Smith, involved an exchange of paintings with the Hermitage and the Pushkin Museum. The exhibition ran from 15 June to 18 September 1988. Board of Trustees meetings, 7 November 1987 and 4 February 1988, discussed possible admission charges.

Meanwhile, MacGregor was concerned about the Sunley Room's capacity to handle the anticipated number of visitors to the free exhibition of paintings from Russia and decided to move it to the North Galleries. But despite this move, large queues formed in the Orange Street entrance.<sup>478</sup>

Although the Polkinghorne brief of March 1987 had stated that ticket and queuing systems should be accommodated in the foyer of the temporary exhibition space in the new wing, this space had now been so reduced that there was no room. Wilson decided that the best place for the new ticket sales desk and queues would be the ground floor entrance hall. Although there was some concern about this proposal, it was agreed that there was no viable alternative.<sup>479</sup>

In the early 1990s, the Gallery rather belatedly turned its attention to the question of external signage for temporary exhibitions. Wilson noted that virtually every other museum and gallery in London displayed banners to promote its exhibitions.<sup>480</sup> He lamented the lack of such a banner for the Sainsbury Wing, a building designed expressly for public events of this kind, and regretted that no account had been taken of this need during the design process. In fact, the Polkinghorne brief did not include this item, although Stirling had included an external banner in his designs. By this stage, the Gallery was fully aware of the important opportunity to display the exhibition sponsor's logo that such a banner offered. Wilson proposed that for the *Queen's Pictures* exhibition a banner be hung vertically at right angles to the south façade, and this was done after the architects had finished their work (see Figure 1).

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<sup>478</sup> There were 520,000 free admission visitors to this show over three months.

<sup>479</sup> Minutes of the Sainsbury Wing Post-handover Steering Committee, 31 October 1990 (NG23/3/25).

<sup>480</sup> Minutes of the Sainsbury Wing Post-handover Steering Committee, 22 November 1990 (NG23/3/25). The Tate, the RA, the British Museum and the Hayward Gallery all had banners. The Metropolitan Museum, New York, was notable for the prominence of its external banners.

It was unfortunate that the Gallery had not addressed some of these practical questions in the Polkinghorne brief (Brief 7). It did specify a larger foyer adjacent to the exhibition space for ticket sales and queues, but this ample space was sacrificed for financial reasons. At this late stage, the Gallery had to compromise over the original plans for the façade and the entrance hall.

## **Part Two: Initial reaction**

### The new space: the official view

The various Gallery publications produced for the opening of the wing in July 1991 presented the official view.<sup>481</sup> Colin Amery and Michael Wilson explained that the six temporary exhibition rooms in the basement, with air-conditioning and flexible lighting, fulfilled the Gallery's criteria for a set of straightforward rooms.<sup>482</sup> The rooms were varied in scale so that they could be used in different combinations; they could be closed if not needed and 'furnished' to suit the requirements of each exhibition; and they called for the minimum of installation, thus saving costs.

The Gallery Report of 1990–1 celebrated the opening of the Sainsbury Wing, saying that the Gallery now had the exhibition, restaurant and theatre spaces that it so sorely needed. The Report declared that 'For the first time we are able to embark on exhibitions of some size without disrupting the permanent hang or unduly upsetting the routine of the Gallery.'<sup>483</sup>

This was the official line. The Gallery naturally had to show appreciation for the building so generously funded by the Sainsburys, but it was also genuinely pleased to have a larger exhibition space together with the convenient back-of-house facilities such as the loading

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<sup>481</sup> Calder 2009, p.183. The new building received a mixed response from the British architectural press. Venturi had recently been awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize sponsored by The Hyatt Foundation, USA.

<sup>482</sup> Amery 1991, p.93; Wilson 1991, pp.20–1.

<sup>483</sup> The National Gallery Report, April 1990 – March 1991, p.6.



bay and packing rooms. In private there was some disappointment, as the rooms seemed to be a compromise, rather small and dark.<sup>484</sup> They appeared to be directly at odds with the Polkinghorne brief that called for ‘substantial, well proportioned rooms’.<sup>485</sup>

### The new space: problems and reactions

When the Sainsbury Wing opened to the public on 10 July, a display of designs and photographs was mounted in the temporary exhibition space, showing the rooms with their original skirtings and door frames (Figure 19). This display was used to fill the space before *The Queen’s Pictures* opened on 2 October 1991.<sup>486</sup> For this show, the Gallery added classical skirting and door mouldings to make it more suitable for the display of Old Masters (Figure 20).

The first press reports on the exhibition galleries were decidedly mixed. John McEwen said that ‘unadorned, the rooms looked like a dismal afterthought’, although he did add that ‘decorated and properly lit, they are transformed.’<sup>487</sup> Richard Cork described the spaces as ‘windowless and chilling’, and wondered how these ‘clinical chambers’ could provide a suitable space for *The Queen’s Pictures*.<sup>488</sup> However, he thought that most of the paintings, now hung in the ‘dressed-up space’ on a rich palette of painted walls, looked marvellous.

The press coverage of the exhibitions was generally favourable and there was an enthusiastic response from the public to the first two exhibitions. Visitors were thrilled to see such a range of high-quality loan paintings in larger shows at the National Gallery. At the

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<sup>484</sup> A contractor in a private communication to Mary Hersov, 20 February 2011.

<sup>485</sup> Polkinghorne brief, 14.03.

<sup>486</sup> *The Building of the Sainsbury Wing* 10 July – 17 August 1991. It was agreed that it would be best to open the wing in July and then launch the first major exhibition in October to maximise publicity.

<sup>487</sup> John McEwen, *The Sunday Times*, 7 October 1991.

<sup>488</sup> Richard Cork, *The Times*, 4 October 1991.

same time, however, significant complaints about the new space emerged during these early exhibitions and have continued to be voiced. These complaints are discussed below.

### The location

There were many negative comments about the location of the temporary exhibition space in the basement. *The New York Times* noted the ‘windowless and slightly lugubrious underground galleries’.<sup>489</sup> *Apollo* singled out ‘subterranean vaults’.<sup>490</sup> Emma Barker and Annabel Thomas referred to the ‘somewhat gloomy basement’.<sup>491</sup> Similar comments have continued to this day whenever the venue is discussed. Why are they made and how significant are they?

The basement location is embedded in the architectural design. As we have seen, VRSB’s initial plan placed the new exhibition rooms in the entrance area so that the public could experience art before they ascended the grand light-filled staircase that drew them upstairs to the main floor galleries (Figure 22a). However, due to lack of space, the exhibition galleries were relocated in the basement and reached by another large staircase, one that Amery described in very different terms.<sup>492</sup> He says that the main staircase gives the visitor a ‘splendid sense of space, height and dignity’, but one has quite a different experience on the staircase to the lower depths, which ‘changes its entire character in the descent’. In fact, the architects had deliberately accentuated the feeling of descent (Figure 22b).<sup>493</sup>

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<sup>489</sup> John Russell, *The New York Times*, 15 December 1991.

<sup>490</sup> Walter Leitke, Curator of Dutch Paintings, Metropolitan Museum of Art, in *Apollo*, March 1992.

<sup>491</sup> Emma Barker and Annabel Thomas, ‘The Sainsbury Wing and beyond: the National Gallery today’ in Emma Barker (ed.), *Contemporary Cultures of Display*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1999, pp.93–4.

<sup>492</sup> Amery 1991, p.86.

<sup>493</sup> Amery 1991 comments that this staircase evokes ‘shades of the granite vaults of Lutyens’s Castle Drogo combined with a reminder of the giant plaster cornice of his Viceroy’s House in New Delhi’, pp.86, 93.

Although linked by lifts and stairs to the rest of the building, there are some comments that the exhibition space felt like a 'dead end' and far removed from the main floor collection.<sup>494</sup>

It could be argued that this location is less of a problem once visitors reach the foyer space and settle into the exhibition experience. The ceiling height of the foyer and several of the main rooms is a generous 5.5 metres, making it possible to display large altarpieces in Room 4. But the location and the lack of daylight make the space feel cut off and confined.

There were alternative solutions. For example, at the National Gallery of Art in Washington I.M. Pei built an underground concourse to link the new and old buildings. This contained the restaurant, shop, lecture theatre and some exhibition space. Carter Wiseman explained that Pei placed glass on one portion of the wall 'to alleviate the potentially oppressive tunnel like aspect of the concourse'.<sup>495</sup> Light from the courtyard above filters down through a cluster of glass tetrahedrons. In the Louvre, escalators take visitors down into the Cour Napoléon. This area is underground but is flooded by light from the great glass pyramid above.<sup>496</sup> The Sainsbury Wing was a different proposition but it is possible that a more satisfactory solution could have been found.

### The size and shape of the space

The area of the Sainsbury Wing galleries at 460 square metres was not large (see Figure 18). Moreover, it was divided into a series of rooms, each one of a different shape, height and size.<sup>497</sup> Room 6 is the lowest and smallest, created to provide space for the lecture theatre

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<sup>494</sup> Robin Cole Hamilton interview with Mary Hersov, 23 October 2013. Charles Saumarez Smith on the relationship of the space to the collection, 2009 pp.156–7. The basement level is 7 metres down from the entrance level.

<sup>495</sup> *The Architecture of I.M. Pei*, Thames and Hudson, London 2001, p.169. A fountain in the courtyard flows down the wall outside this glazed area.

<sup>496</sup> Wiseman 2001, p.229.

<sup>497</sup> See Chapter 3. Rooms 1, 2 and 4 had heights of 5.5 metres, Rooms 3 and 5 heights of 4.5 metres, and Room 6 a height of 3.2 metres.

above, but also to fulfil the Gallery's wish for a room dedicated to drawings. In practice, it has very rarely been used for this purpose as normally drawings are displayed adjacent to the relevant paintings.<sup>498</sup>

There are a great many doorways and apertures which break up the wall space, posing a particular difficulty in the case of large horizontal paintings (see Figures 18 and 23a).<sup>499</sup> The doorways were supposed to provide flexibility and the possibility of closing rooms if required. In reality, there have been very few occasions when this has happened.<sup>500</sup> The sharp angles of several of the rooms, the result of the architects' determination to follow the original irregular footprint of the building, made it necessary to install pictures away from the corners where they would have been difficult for the public to see (see Figures 20 and 23b).<sup>501</sup>

The Gallery staff and the architects also failed to take account of an important practical aspect, the need for barrier stands in front of unglazed works, as required by the British Government Indemnity Scheme. Once installed, these barriers reduced the area for viewers, a significant problem in the smaller rooms. Furthermore, when the galleries were painted in the historic colours of deep reds and greens, which were considered suitable for Old Master paintings, the sense of space was again reduced (Figure 20).

These features had implications for the design of each exhibition. The team of curator, designer and exhibition organiser soon found that it was necessary to plan every aspect of

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<sup>498</sup> For instance, the 'Making and Meaning' exhibitions in the 1990s all had a mixture of media throughout the rooms. The Cuyp exhibition in 2002 was a rare example of dedicating the room solely to drawings.

<sup>499</sup> Fire doors are required in every other room in temporary exhibition spaces. This problem is handled with elegance by John Miller and Partners in the Linbury Galleries in Tate Britain.

<sup>500</sup> The exhibition *Corot to Monet: a fresh look at the collection* in 2009 had one room closed.

<sup>501</sup> Some rooms on the main floor, notably Gallery 66, also have strong angled walls. These rooms contain smaller works such as the Early Netherlandish paintings and the hang is not changed so they do not require the flexibility of a temporary exhibition space.

the layout carefully in advance as there was not enough wall space to introduce a picture at the last minute, or to fit a larger work into one of the smaller rooms.<sup>502</sup> The space totally dictated the layout. A guest curator, Richard Kendall, wrote about his experiences when working on his exhibition *Degas: Beyond Impressionism* in 1996,<sup>503</sup> which presented the late works of Degas and considered the relationship between his paintings, pastels and sculptures. Kendall described how the area and the rooms defined the number and layout of the exhibits: 'so distinct and inflexible are these rooms that they cannot be fought, but must instead be turned to advantage.' He therefore selected six different themes, each tailored to the size and character of the room.<sup>504</sup>

The need to adapt the exhibition contents and narrative to fit into these particular galleries could also lead to changes in shows shared with other venues. The Degas exhibition travelled to the Art Institute, Chicago, where it was displayed in their large exhibition space, the Regenstein Hall. At 1,393 square metres, this was a huge, fully flexible area which could be arranged to suit the exhibition. It provided ample space for visitors and could accommodate many more exhibits, a fact that was revealed in the shared catalogue. The Gallery was often frustrated by having to reject pictures that could not be fitted into its exhibition galleries but could be shown at the partner venue.

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<sup>502</sup> Several attempts have been made to change the dimensions of the space including building straight walls in front of the angles but this created even smaller areas and was not repeated.

<sup>503</sup> Richard Kendall, 'Eloquent Walls and Argumentative Spaces: Displaying Late Works of Degas' in Charles Haxthausen (ed.), *The Two Art Histories: The Museum and The University*, Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, Williamstown, Mass., 2002, pp.63–73. The exhibition was shown at the National Gallery from 22 May to 26 August 1996.

<sup>504</sup> Henri Loyrette, 'Exhibition of the Year: Degas: Beyond Impressionism', *Apollo*, December 1996, p.3. Loyrette, then Director of the Musée d'Orsay, said that the 'somewhat oppressive' constrictions of the Sainsbury Wing space were exploited as a positive asset for the exhibition display. However, the exhibition was popular and there were many complaints about overcrowding.

The constraints of the space also had an effect on the public's experience during the more popular shows, and there were many complaints of overcrowding.<sup>505</sup> *The Queen's Pictures* attracted 134,000 visitors in three months and *Rembrandt* 180,000 in two months. Visitors protested about the crowds gathered around the smaller pictures in the corners and the difficulty of stepping back to get a view of the larger works. They found the place hot and the smaller rooms rather claustrophobic. Overcrowding in a popular exhibition is always a problem, even for a venue with large rooms, like the Art Institute of Chicago.<sup>506</sup> But the experience was made worse by the limited space within the Sainsbury Wing.

The Rembrandt exhibition saw the introduction of the timed-ticket and queuing systems, but it was found that the rooms quickly filled up despite all efforts to manage the numbers. The Gallery had only held free exhibitions in the past. Now it had to grapple with ticket selling and a timed-ticket system. The circular foyer entrance in the basement was limited in size but had to house the introduction text to the exhibition, a soundguide sales desk and a small shop.<sup>507</sup> Outside the foyer, visitors often had to queue for their half-hour entrance slot along a dreary corridor that led to the lifts. Paying visitors were naturally more demanding than those attending free exhibitions and there were many more complaints about overcrowding.

### Lack of natural light

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<sup>505</sup> 'Questionnaire on the Queen's Pictures Exhibition', 2 March 1992 (NG32/192); 'Survey of the Rembrandt Exhibition', 22 June 1992 (NG32/194). Up to 1,000 visitors filled in these forms. Despite these complaints, the exhibitions still had very positive ratings.

<sup>506</sup> Barker 1999, p.140. She writes about overcrowding in blockbuster exhibitions. She quotes from Jason Edward Kaufman, 'It takes Monet to make money', *Art Newspaper*, January 1995. He says that half the respondents in the visitors book protested at the jostling 'zoo-like crowds' when visiting the Monet exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago.

<sup>507</sup> A small cinema was adjacent to the shop. The Polkinghorne brief had requested two larger spaces to manage these various activities.

There has been a variety of approaches to the lighting of temporary exhibition galleries.<sup>508</sup>

Two spaces created for major international museums by I.M.Pei – the National Gallery of Art in Washington and the Cour Napoléon at the Louvre – were lit completely by artificial light.<sup>509</sup> The galleries could then show all types of media, including light-sensitive works on paper and textiles.<sup>510</sup> In 1997, the Getty Museum in Los Angeles opened with a purpose-built exhibition wing with top lighting.<sup>511</sup> Natural light was controlled by blinds which could be shut for light-sensitive works. Electric lighting provided a regular and even source of light so that exhibits could be viewed with clarity, and it was the only source of light after dark.<sup>512</sup>

The rather basic lighting system in the Sainsbury Wing's new galleries was not adequate for illuminating the quirky corner spaces in the rooms (Figure 24b). It was probably no worse than other systems which used electric lights, but the lack of natural light would become one of the major criticisms of the National Gallery's new space.<sup>513</sup>

This space suffered particularly in comparison with the main Royal Academy rooms, where the large glass ceilings admitted controlled light, supported by electric lights. A sense of space and light was always present even when the rooms were full of visitors. In contrast, the lack of daylight and of any access to the outside world in the basement galleries at the

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<sup>508</sup> M.D. Levin, 'Lighting the museum' in *The Modern Museum: Temple or Showroom*, Dvir Publishing House, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv 1983, p.77.

<sup>509</sup> Newhouse 2009, p.66. Some of the corner galleries contain skylit areas known as pods at the National Gallery of Art, Washington. These spaces were not always used.

<sup>510</sup> The Sackler Galleries at the Royal Academy were designed by Norman Foster and opened in 1991. Their size was 312 square metres. These former diploma galleries on the top floor already had access to top light, but they were greatly improved by new coved ceilings with top lighting and modern fittings.

<sup>511</sup> This wing at the J. Paul Getty Museum was c.1,000 square metres.

<sup>512</sup> Nineteenth-century museums relied on daylight. The lack of artificial lighting at the National Gallery meant that it could not open in the evening.

<sup>513</sup> John Miller and Partners' Linbury Galleries opened at Tate Britain in 2001. This is a larger space at 1,000 square metres but with a lower ceiling height at c.4.5 metres. Miller designed an ingenious lighting system that illuminated the ceiling as well as the pictures, which gives the impression of greater height.

National Gallery exacerbated the feelings of claustrophobia reported by visitors during popular exhibitions.

Lighting paintings is a highly technical subject much debated by experts in the art world. Art historians write about light 'making the paintings sing' and 'bringing them alive'.<sup>514</sup> In his book *The Sight of Death*, T.J. Clark describes the experience of looking closely at two works by Poussin in the exhibition room at the Getty Museum over a period of several months.<sup>515</sup> He particularly enjoyed watching the changing effect of the weather, from strong sunlight to overcast days, but was frustrated when the electric lighting came on. The slight yellow tone distorted the colours, and the uniformity and brightness of the artificial light lessened the subtle qualities of Poussin's depiction of colour, shadows, reflections and mid-distance.<sup>516</sup>

In an article in *The Burlington Magazine*, the picture restorer Herbert Lank argued that the total use of artificial light leads to 'considerable distortions of artistic intent'.<sup>517</sup> He used technical material and graphics to show how certain kinds of electric lighting can affect the 'subtle nuances of form and colour and the relationship of each to the other'. Lank ended his article with the warning that unless an acceptable compromise is found between the use of natural and electric lighting, 'we shall be condemning the public to visual illiteracy: an inability to appreciate properly the meaning of major works of art.'

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<sup>514</sup> Newhouse 2005, David Jaffe quote, p.276. There is a debate about whether paintings should be lit as they were in their original locations. Sheila Hale, *Titian: His Life*, HarperPress, London 2012, pp.310–11, writes about Titian's house in the Biri Grande, Venice, in which his studio had large north-facing windows. However, his paintings could be shown in darker side chapels with limited illumination.

<sup>515</sup> T.J. Clark, *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2006. The two Poussin paintings: *Landscape with a Man killed by a Snake* from the National Gallery (NG5763), and *Landscape with a Calm* from the Getty were shown together in 2000.

<sup>516</sup> It is not just Old Master paintings that can benefit from natural light. Newhouse 2005, p.203. David Sylvester said that seeing Jackson Pollock's work for the first time in the daylight spaces of the Tate in 1999 made the works more luminous and enhanced the shimmer of the aluminium paint. Jonathan Jones, 'Barbara Hepworth: the sculptor's open-air spirit gets locked away', *The Guardian*, 22 June 2015. He criticised the lack of natural light in the Linbury Galleries at Tate Britain.

<sup>517</sup> Herbert Lank, 'The function of natural light in picture galleries', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 126, January 1984, pp.4–6. Norman Bromelle provided the technical material for this article.



In his essay 'The Architecture of Daylight', Michael Compton explained how designers of art museums and galleries have tried many different ways of lighting paintings.<sup>518</sup> He closed his essay with a description of the new and highly complex lighting system in the collection galleries in the Sainsbury Wing, which combined natural top lighting with a mixture of different coloured electric lights. This system was regarded as the latest and best of its kind.<sup>519</sup>

Upstairs the Gallery was showing its famous Early Renaissance collection in large rooms illuminated to the highest and latest technical standards (Figure 24a). Yet in the much smaller basement space equally fine paintings were being exhibited and lit in a much less effective way (Figure 24b). It seems that this comparison was the real problem.

### **Part Three: The consequences**

#### **The first ten years**

The Gallery was able to examine the initial exhibitions more closely to discover what lessons could be learnt.<sup>520</sup> The inaugural exhibition, *The Queen's Pictures*, was hailed as an exciting new departure for the Gallery. However, there was simply not enough space for the 96 paintings and the exhibition team had to resort to double-hanging some of the works, which were then difficult to light. It was obliged, for instance, to install Artemisia Gentileschi's *Self Portrait* above the door frame, an experiment that was never repeated.

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<sup>518</sup> This essay appears in Waterfield 1991, pp.37–47.

<sup>519</sup> Waterfield 1991, p.47. David Saunders, 'Lighting' in Amery 1991, pp.128–31.

<sup>520</sup> The staff needed to learn how best to use the new exhibition space and see how the visitors use it.

The second exhibition, *Rembrandt: the Master and his Workshop*, presented even greater problems.<sup>521</sup> In an attempted solution to the over-abundance of pictures, the largest room (Room 4) was divided into two. The result was that the spaces were even smaller and more cramped. Visitors complained that they felt hot and constricted in the smaller areas and that the crowded conditions made it difficult to see the paintings.<sup>522</sup>

The third exhibition, *Manet and the Execution of Maximilian*, was much better received. John McEwen even described it as the first show specifically designed for these ‘hitherto deeply depressing rooms’ and claimed that it had transformed them.<sup>523</sup> In fact, all three initial exhibitions had been designed specifically for the space and were attempts to get to grips with its difficulties, but this was the first time the problems had been resolved.

The size of the Manet *Execution* pictures determined where they were placed, and visitors moved through the various rooms, each of which had a distinctive theme. The exhibition began in the largest room with the three huge versions (Figure 21).<sup>524</sup> Successive rooms displayed the related paintings in their historical context and reflected Manet’s practice as a painter of modern history. The smaller rooms were reserved for drawings, etchings, photographs and letters, which required a lower light level, so access to natural light was not an issue. The objects were less densely packed than in previous exhibitions and this, together with the lighter wall colours in the smaller rooms, helped to create a sense of space. There were also fewer visitors – around 109,000, about the optimum number for comfortable viewing. Certain lessons can be drawn from these early exhibitions. At the very

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<sup>521</sup> The exhibition was also shown in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the newly refurbished Altes Museum in Berlin, both of which had more space.

<sup>522</sup> ‘Questionnaire on the Queen’s Pictures Exhibition’, 2 March 1992 (NG32/192); ‘Survey of the Rembrandt Exhibition’, 22 June 1992 (NG32/194).

<sup>523</sup> John McEwen, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 5 July 1992.

<sup>524</sup> The exhibition started in Room 4, then Room 2 and ended in Room 1. A few exhibitions would use this sequence.

least it was now clearer what type and size of exhibition was most successful in the new space and what sort of problems were likely to arise from the larger and popular shows.

The Gallery had a varied exhibition programme over the next ten years. There were a few popular shows like *Degas: Beyond Impressionism* (1996) and *Rembrandt by Himself* (1991), but most of the shows followed the example of the Manet exhibition and focused on a particular painting or on groups of paintings from the Gallery's collection.<sup>525</sup> A typical example was the 'Making and Meaning' series (1993–7), which had free admission and was sponsored by Esso.<sup>526</sup> This series combined technical analysis with historical and social content. The exhibitions usually concentrated on a single masterpiece, such as the *Wilton Diptych*.<sup>527</sup> This didactic show contained a mixture of paintings, drawings, sculpture, objects, manuscripts and books, many of which required controlled lighting, and therefore benefited from the different shapes and sizes of the Sainsbury Wing rooms. The basement space, so often criticised, served to illuminate the small-scale objects and light up the paintings and manuscripts to create a jewel-like effect (Figure 25).

In 1997, the Director, Neil MacGregor, made a BBC television series, 'Making Masterpieces', which explored the relationship between artists and their materials, a key subject of the 'Making and Meaning' exhibition series.<sup>528</sup> The Gallery had found a method of exhibiting great artists in a more focused way and seemed content to leave larger shows to other galleries.

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<sup>525</sup> *Degas: Beyond Impressionism* (22 May – 26 August 1996) had 283,000 visitors, and *Rembrandt by Himself* (9 June – 5 September 1999) 226,000 visitors. The programme also included exhibitions from other collections such as the Oskar Reinhart Collection, Winterthur and the National Trust, and thematic shows such as *Spanish Still Life*.

<sup>526</sup> This series of five exhibitions ran from 1993 to 1997: *The Wilton Diptych*, *The Young Michelangelo*, *Turner: The Fighting Temeraire*, *Rubens's Landscapes* and *Holbein's Ambassadors*.

<sup>527</sup> *Making and Meaning: The Wilton Diptych*, 15 September – 12 December 1993.

<sup>528</sup> 'Personality of the Year: Neil MacGregor, Director of the National Gallery', *Apollo*, December 1996, p.23. He discusses the expansion of access to the collection through exhibitions and television and other activities.

### The challenge of the blockbuster

The 1990s saw the growing popularity of international blockbuster exhibitions, particularly those showing the work of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists.<sup>529</sup> The Royal Academy mounted two major Monet exhibitions, *Monet in the 90s: The Series Paintings* in 1990 and *Monet in the 20th Century* in 1999, which attracted a record number of 800,000 visitors. The Hayward Gallery showed Toulouse-Lautrec in 1992.<sup>530</sup> The Tate had a Cézanne exhibition in 1996, which featured the National Gallery's *Bathers*.<sup>531</sup> These were all exhibitions which could have been mounted by the Gallery but were much too large for the Sainsbury Wing. Two other Royal Academy exhibitions that also featured National Gallery works and fell within the remit of the Gallery's collection were the Andrea Mantegna exhibition of 1992 and the Poussin exhibition of 1995. Both exhibitions could have worked in the Gallery's space, but the display of Mantegna's *Triumphs of Caesar*, one of that exhibition's highlights, required a much larger room than the Sainsbury Wing could provide. The Poussin exhibition was also too large for the National Gallery and, which was even more important, the Royal Academy had natural top lighting to illuminate Poussin's work.<sup>532</sup>

Tate Modern, which opened in 2000 in the vast disused power station at Bankside converted by Herzog and de Meuron, became a favourite destination for large numbers of visitors. A significant space was set aside for temporary exhibitions.<sup>533</sup> The museum maintained that this would significantly enhance Britain's ability to host exhibitions of modern art and the claim played a major part in its funding application to the Millennium

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<sup>529</sup> Barker 1990, pp.130–3 and 136. She discusses why these subjects are so popular with museums and the public.

<sup>530</sup> The Hayward had already shown Pissarro in 1980 and Renoir in 1985. Both exhibitions were organised with the RMN, Paris, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

<sup>531</sup> Barker 1990, p.130, said that it was the inclusion of this painting that brought the exhibition to London. The other venues were Philadelphia and Paris.

<sup>532</sup> The exhibition travelled to the Grand Palais, Paris.

<sup>533</sup> At least 1,000 square metres of galleries on Level 3.

Commission.<sup>534</sup> This ‘new player’ in London’s art scene with a focus on modern and contemporary exhibitions would initially affect visitor numbers at Tate Britain and the Hayward Gallery. Its continued popularity meant that it regularly overtook the National Gallery as the second most popular museum after the British Museum.<sup>535</sup> Clearly the National Gallery would have to consider more ambitious temporary exhibitions.

### Changes

From the late 1990s, there were changes in programming at the Gallery. The ‘Making and Meaning’ series ended in 1997 and it was decided to charge for all exhibitions, partly because of the rising costs of international loans.<sup>536</sup> Once the initial excitement of the new Sainsbury Wing had abated, the public had reverted to using the grand entrance of the Wilkins building for access to the Gallery. This meant that the Sainsbury Wing, while busy when exhibitions were on, was quiet during the turnaround period between shows, and this created problems for the revenue-earning activities in the shop and restaurant. This issue had not been considered in the original plans, but it now became clear that the temporary exhibition programme was crucial for the financial viability of the other facilities in the wing.

From 1999, the Gallery scheduled three exhibitions a year with a five-week turnaround period.<sup>537</sup> It recognised that it needed to move away from its ‘in-focus’ niche shows and embrace larger exhibitions of its greatest artists. The money made from popular shows would help fund the less popular ones.<sup>538</sup> The Gallery soon established a reputation for

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<sup>534</sup> Spalding 1998, p.285.

<sup>535</sup> The *Matisse Picasso* show of 2002 attracted huge numbers of visitors, and in 2006 the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA) ranked Blackpool Pleasure Beach at no. 1, Tate Modern at 2, the British Museum at 3, and the National Gallery at 4.

<sup>536</sup> The Gallery returned to a free admission exhibition with *Seeing Salvation: The Image of Christ* to mark the millennium.

<sup>537</sup> It had originally scheduled five exhibitions during a two-year period with a six-week turnaround. The shorter turnaround period was in line with other art museums.

<sup>538</sup> Barker 1999, p.145. This is common practice.

high-quality, scholarly yet crowd-pleasing exhibitions and was approached by international museums keen to work with its curators and draw upon the great collection.<sup>539</sup>

Beginning in 2001 with *Vermeer and the Delft School*, the Gallery scheduled a regular exhibition programme of major artists: *Titian* in 2003, *El Greco* in 2004, *Raphael* in 2004, *Caravaggio: The Final Years* in 2005 and *Velázquez* in 2006.<sup>540</sup> The *Vermeer* exhibition had already enjoyed great popular success in New York, and when it came to London the media frenzy and the public's desperation to obtain tickets led one critic to compare the atmosphere to that of a big football match or pop concert.<sup>541</sup> This series of blockbusters marked an exciting period for the Gallery but the shows also served to highlight the deficiencies of its main exhibition space.

The Gallery was only too aware of the problems. In 1998, seven years after it had opened, Michael Wilson acknowledged the various difficulties with the space.<sup>542</sup> But the Gallery had been concentrating on renovating the main rooms in order to present the collection in a coherent manner and in an environment befitting a world-class art gallery.<sup>543</sup> It was not prepared to criticise openly any facilities in its relatively new wing. It wanted rather to focus on the serious limitations of the public reception area in the Wilkins building, including the inadequate entrance hall, cloakrooms and toilets. From early 1998, it initiated a process to

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<sup>539</sup> The Gallery collaborated with the Metropolitan Museum, New York, on *Vermeer and El Greco*; the Capodimonte, Naples, on *Caravaggio*; and the Prado on *Titian and Velázquez*. The *Raphael* exhibition could only be shown at the National Gallery as the Gallery's major works could not travel.

<sup>540</sup> Christopher Brown had wanted a *Vermeer* exhibition in the mid-1990s, but this project was postponed, while in 1995–6 the *Vermeer* exhibition was shown at The Hague and Washington.

<sup>541</sup> Nick Prior, 'Having One's Tate and Eating It' in Andrew McClellan (ed.), *Art and its Publics, Museum Studies at the Millennium*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2003, pp.63–4. The exhibition had 276,000 visitors so was a blockbuster in terms of its popularity rather than the number of paintings (about 50).

<sup>542</sup> 'Paper about Visitor Orientation and Public Facilities', 12 November 1998 (Mary Hersov archive).

<sup>543</sup> The National Gallery Review, April 2002 – March 2003, p.39. The North Galleries had been remodelled in 1997.

develop a Masterplan and appointed the architects, Dixon Jones.<sup>544</sup> Wilson's discussion of the problems with the temporary exhibition space formed part of these initial discussions.

In 2001 MacGregor marked the tenth anniversary of the Sainsbury Wing with an article in the *Guardian*. He explained that the lack of light and space in the temporary exhibition galleries was due to the constraints of the site.<sup>545</sup> But he emphasised that the new space made it possible for the Gallery to mount mid-size exhibitions for the first time, provided a means to expand the context of the collection, and enabled the British public to see shows that otherwise would never have come to London.

In July 2002, Charles Saumarez Smith, formerly Director of the National Portrait Gallery, became Director of the National Gallery. His first task was to complete the renovation of the East Wing, but he had to contend with other concerns, especially the growing criticism of the temporary exhibition space in the Sainsbury Wing.<sup>546</sup>

### The Titian exhibition

These criticisms came to the fore with the Titian exhibition, a collaboration between the National Gallery and the Prado.<sup>547</sup> The Gallery wanted to place its major Titian paintings in the context of relevant works, while the Prado planned a monographic but much larger show, drawing from its own extensive collection of Titian's work.

The National Gallery exhibition, which opened in spring 2003, was not large, and the 52 paintings fitted into the temporary exhibition galleries. In an extraordinary coup, David

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<sup>544</sup> The firm AEA Consulting was employed to drive the process forward. These plans culminated in the East Wing development, which opened in 2005.

<sup>545</sup> Neil MacGregor, 'What a difference a decade makes', *The Guardian*, 11 July 2001.

<sup>546</sup> Michael Wilson retired in June 2003 and I became Head of Exhibitions, leaving the post in June 2009.

<sup>547</sup> The project was discussed previously but advanced quickly under the new director, with David Jaffé as curator from 2002. The exhibition ran from 19 February to 18 May 2003.

Jaffé, the exhibition curator, reunited the four *Bacchanals* created for the Duke of Ferrara which had not been seen together since 1621 (Figure 26a).<sup>548</sup> This was the first major monographic exhibition of the great Venetian artist in Britain and it evoked a rapturous response from both critics and the public – ‘A magnificent show of this Renaissance giant,’ said one critic.<sup>549</sup> Some 268,000 visitors attended.

However, there was the inevitable criticism of the space. Waldemar Januszczak wrote that ‘Titian’s outsized achievement has been squeezed into the stoopy cellars that the National Gallery calls its basement galleries’, and Brian Sewell protested that Titian’s work ‘cries out for natural light’.<sup>550</sup> A member of the public wrote to *The Times* saying that blockbuster exhibitions only work if the display areas can cope with the crowds, and that the enthusiasm of the art critics would have been more muted if they had experienced the overcrowded conditions that the public had to endure.<sup>551</sup> While the audience survey commissioned by the Gallery recorded positive satisfaction, it also reported a high level of complaints.<sup>552</sup> Despite three extra evening openings and timed-ticket controls, the exhibition was nearly always overcrowded.

It was perhaps the Gallery’s misfortune that the Prado showed its expanded Titian exhibition in its enfilade of top-lit galleries (Figure 26 b).<sup>553</sup> The art world travelled to Spain

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<sup>548</sup> Titian’s *Bacchus and Ariadne* (National Gallery), *The Andrians* and *The Worship of Venus* (both Prado), and Giovanni Bellini’s *The Feast of the Gods* (National Gallery of Art, Washington). They had been shown together with other works in the Camerino of Alfonso d’Este, Duke of Ferrara, in 1621 and then dispersed.

<sup>549</sup> Andrew Lambirth, *The Spectator*, 1 March 2003.

<sup>550</sup> Waldemar Januszczak, *The Sunday Times*, 23 February 2003, Brian Sewell, *The Evening Standard*, 3 January 2003.

<sup>551</sup> R. Binns, letter, *The Times*, 18 April 2003.

<sup>552</sup> Marketlink, Titian Visitor Survey 2003. 22 per cent of visitors to the Titian exhibition complained about the crowded rooms, compared with 7 per cent for the El Greco exhibition in 2004. The Titian had 268,000 visitors, the El Greco 222,000.

<sup>553</sup> The exhibition ran from 10 June to 7 September 2003. The Prado used its main collection galleries until a new space dedicated to temporary exhibitions. Newhouse 2005, pp.272–6, discusses the two different displays of this exhibition.



to see the show and compared it unfavourably with the smaller National Gallery version and its venue. As Richard Brookes commented: 'At the Prado, these masterpieces were displayed in a series of spacious rooms replete with natural light. At the National Gallery they were cramped underground in the unnatural light of the Sainsbury Wing.'<sup>554</sup> James Fenton and other members of the Board of Trustees also visited the show in Madrid in order 'to see these Titians in daylight.'<sup>555</sup> Several critics argued that the Gallery should have followed the Prado's example and moved the exhibition to the capacious rooms on the Gallery's main floor.<sup>556</sup>

In 2005, the East Wing development opened with a new entrance, a shop, toilets, and an expanded restaurant. But Giles Waterfield, former director of Dulwich Picture Gallery, was perplexed that the new scheme did not address the most pressing need of the National Gallery, the creation of a large temporary exhibition gallery suitable for major international shows.<sup>557</sup> Martin Gayford took the argument further, asking why, given the Heritage Lottery Fund and the private funds being spent at the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery and the British Museum, none of these great institutions had a decent space capable of housing international exhibitions.<sup>558</sup> Brian Sewell argued that none of the leading national museums could match 'the enfilade of spacious well-lit rooms offered by the Royal

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<sup>554</sup> *The Sunday Times*, June 2003.

<sup>555</sup> James Fenton, *The Guardian*, 12 July 2003. Fenton explains that there was a low level of diffuse light as the access to natural light was carefully controlled for conservation purposes; a mixture with electric lights was used during cloudy periods.

<sup>556</sup> David Lister, *The Independent*, 21 June 2003.

<sup>557</sup> Giles Waterfield, 'A change for the worse', *The Museums Journal*, February 2005, p.16.

<sup>558</sup> Martin Gayford, 'Do London Galleries have art in their right places', *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 April 2004. The NPG had opened the Wolfson Gallery for exhibitions (220 square metres) in 1993. The British Museum had opened an exhibition gallery attached to the Great Court (440 square metres) in 2000.

Academy', which he and many others in the art world maintained were still the best places to display art in London.<sup>559</sup>

### The Gallery's response

In response to the criticism Saumarez Smith instituted new measures: that the number of visitors allowed into future popular Sainsbury Wing shows would be carefully controlled and that a free booklet would be provided to reduce the crowds around the picture labels.<sup>560</sup>

The Director and Trustees asked if it would be possible to move some exhibitions to the main floor and asked whether a suitable space could be identified for the major *El Greco* exhibition due to open in 2004. The curators argued that the paintings would then benefit from natural light. The rooms in the North Galleries, the location for several temporary exhibitions in the 1970s and '80s, were a possibility, but the Orange Street entrance area now housed the popular schools programme and school groups used the North Gallery rooms as their entry into the main floor collection. It would be difficult to find another route for them when extensive building works for the new East Wing were already causing problems for public access.<sup>561</sup> The Trustees agreed that it was not the appropriate time for this experiment.

Saumarez Smith, however, was looking beyond the opening of the East Wing development. He wanted to continue the Masterplan and place the subject of a new temporary exhibition space at the forefront of these plans.<sup>562</sup> He decided to address the problem in an article for

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<sup>559</sup> Brian Sewell, *The Evening Standard*, 3 January 2003.

<sup>560</sup> These plans came from staff recommendations.

<sup>561</sup> 'The location of the El Greco exhibition', paper presented to the Board of Trustees in July 2003, written by Mary Hersov together with colleagues (Mary Hersov archive). The El Greco exhibition ran from 11 February to 23 May 2004.

<sup>562</sup> The intricacies of the Masterplan development under Saumarez Smith are beyond the scope of this thesis. It considered many areas of the Gallery's activities including the new collection galleries, the development of the Library and staff needs. It examined possible spaces in the main building, particularly in the areas below the

the *Daily Telegraph* entitled 'Blockbuster art shows need big investment'.<sup>563</sup> This was the Gallery's first public admission that the Sainsbury Wing temporary exhibition space was inadequate. Saumarez Smith accepted that there had been considerable problems with the Titian exhibition, and explained that these galleries had been created for small-scale monographic shows to avoid competition with the Royal Academy. At the same time, he fully supported and promoted the current exhibition programme, which would enable the Gallery to be one of the leading players in the international field. He urged the Government to follow the example of the Spanish government, which was funding the Prado's new extension, and help national museums to build spaces to attract visitors to see great exhibitions.<sup>564</sup>

The Board of Trustees discussed the problem during 2005. In February, they considered a paper about the temporary exhibition space in which it was argued that the Gallery was displaying some of the greatest paintings in the world in an unsuitable and much-criticised space that did not do justice to the art nor provide a satisfactory experience for the visitors.<sup>565</sup> It admitted that the Gallery's temporary exhibition space of 460 square metres was much smaller than that of Tate Britain, Tate Modern, the V&A and the National Gallery of Scotland, which all now had temporary exhibition spaces of around 1,000 square metres.<sup>566</sup> The Gallery regularly collaborated with museums in the United States which had exhibition galleries of this size or larger, for example the Metropolitan Museum, the

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main floor galleries but also the redevelopment of St Vincent House, the office block behind the Sainsbury Wing purchased for the Gallery in 1998.

<sup>563</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 May 2004.

<sup>564</sup> The Prado opened its new extension, designed by Rafael Moneo, in November 2007. It contained a large temporary exhibition space of 1,000 square metres on two floors. Some areas had access to natural light.

<sup>565</sup> 'Masterplan: Discussion paper regarding the future possibilities for temporary exhibitions in the National Gallery', paper presented to the Board of Trustees in February 2005, written by Mary Hersov together with colleagues (Mary Hersov archive).

<sup>566</sup> In 2003, the National Gallery of Scotland upgraded the rooms in the Royal Scottish Academy to house temporary exhibitions.

National Gallery of Art and the Art Institute of Chicago.<sup>567</sup> The paper concluded that the Gallery required a new, better temporary exhibition space with larger, regular-size rooms and access to natural light.

Saumarez Smith returned to this subject in July.<sup>568</sup> He argued that the criticism of the Sainsbury Wing exhibition space was damaging the Gallery's standing in the museum world. The advent of global tourism meant that the Gallery now operated in an international exhibitions market, and in order to maintain its pre-eminent position it was essential to have an exhibition space of the standard found in other major museums.

#### Moving the Velázquez and Renoir exhibitions

It was clearly time for action. The Gallery was working on an important Velázquez show, scheduled for autumn 2006. It was proposed that the exhibition be moved to the main galleries as an experiment, and that the suite of rooms housing the nineteenth-century paintings could be used (Figure 27).<sup>569</sup> This would provide a floor space of around 800 square metres, the original maximum size proposed for the Sainsbury Wing. The rooms were spacious and regularly proportioned with access to natural light, which was crucial for the appreciation of Velázquez's 'dash and daub' technique.<sup>570</sup> The exhibition would not be large, comprising 46 paintings from other collections selected to complement the Gallery's own collection of the artist's work. The rooms would provide an ideal setting for the paintings, particularly for the sizeable horizontal pictures. There would be ample space to

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<sup>567</sup> The Metropolitan Museum's Tisch gallery is 1,625 square metres; the National Gallery of Art's East Wing space is 929 square metres; the Art Institute of Chicago's Regenstein Hall is 1,393 square metres.

<sup>568</sup> Saumarez Smith's paper on the Masterplan was presented to the Board in July 2005 and included a section on temporary exhibitions.

<sup>569</sup> 'Proposal to move Velázquez and Renoir Landscapes exhibitions to the main floor galleries', paper presented to the Board of Trustees in May 2005, written by Mary Hersov together with colleagues (Mary Hersov archive). The Velázquez exhibition ran from 18 October 2006 to 21 January 2007. The Renoir exhibition ran from 21 February to 20 May 2007. Given the great upheaval, it made sense to run two exhibitions consecutively in this new location.

<sup>570</sup> Larry Keith, 'Velázquez's Painting Technique' in Dawson Carr, *Velázquez*, National Gallery, London 2006.

view the large works at a distance and also for visitors to circulate without difficulty. It was also noted that a more extensive exhibition venue and a larger shop would lead to more visitors and more revenue.

The move would present a great logistical challenge. The nineteenth-century paintings would be moved to the temporary galleries in the Sainsbury Wing in a display entitled *Manet to Picasso*, which would attract visitors to the restaurant and shop there. A new exhibition shop would be set up at the exit of the Velázquez exhibition, and ticket selling and queuing would be moved to the entrance in the East Wing.<sup>571</sup>

The exhibition was a resounding success (Figure 28). The art critics applauded the Gallery's decision to move the show out of the 'sepulchral basement'.<sup>572</sup> Richard Dorment was delighted that the pictures could be seen in natural light and in ample space, and Paul Levy called it 'one of the unforgettable exhibitions of our time'.<sup>573</sup> The public response was enthusiastic. There were 320,000 visitors and few complaints about overcrowding.<sup>574</sup> While the next exhibition, *Renoir Landscapes*, also shown in the main floor galleries, was less well attended, with 130,000 visitors, people commented that natural light gave the paintings a special vibrancy and animation.<sup>575</sup>

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<sup>571</sup> Visitors bought tickets in the Annenberg Court (see Figure 27), went up to the main floor, entered the exhibition in Room 34. The exhibition was shown in Rooms 41, 43, 44 and 45. Visitors exited via the shop, temporarily placed in Room 46 (Figure 27).

<sup>572</sup> Louise Jury quoted in *The Week*, 28 October 2006.

<sup>573</sup> Richard Dorment, *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 October 2006; Paul Levy, *Wall Street Journal*, 3 November 2006.

<sup>574</sup> 'Velázquez', paper presented to the Board of Trustees in March 2007, written by Mary Hersov together with colleagues (Mary Hersov archive). It noted that some of the smaller rooms did get crowded, but there were far fewer complaints than usual and many positive remarks about the scale of the rooms and the improved light and air quality.

<sup>575</sup> Richard Dorment, *The Daily Telegraph*, 20 February 2007.

### Return to the status quo

This move could not be a permanent solution.<sup>576</sup> The temporary exhibition galleries in the Sainsbury Wing were too limited in scale to accommodate the large number of visitors who wanted to see the Impressionist paintings, and it was important to have them in the main floor galleries as part of the collection display. Although the main floor galleries were ideal for the paintings, there were problems with some of the facilities.<sup>577</sup> The rooms were far from the loading bay and the toilets and cloakrooms were inadequate. Furthermore, it was expensive to keep the exhibition open at night. The front- and back-of-house facilities clearly worked better within the purpose-built Sainsbury Wing.

After the success of the Velázquez exhibition, it would seem that the case for a larger temporary exhibition space with access to natural light had been made. Other possible locations for this space within the main building were examined. The conclusion was that such a space could only be found in a new building constructed on the St Vincent House site, the 1960s office block behind the Sainsbury Wing.<sup>578</sup> This site had been purchased in 1998 by a private charitable body on behalf of the Gallery with the long-term possibility that it could be redeveloped to provide a new wing.<sup>579</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> 'Moving *Velázquez* and *Renoir Landscapes* exhibitions to the main floor nineteenth-century galleries and placing *Manet to Picasso* in the Sainsbury Wing temporary exhibition galleries' report to the Board of Trustees, July 2007, written by Mary Hersov together with colleagues (Mary Hersov archives). The exhibitions reached their financial target.

<sup>577</sup> The shape and size of the rooms were suitable for exhibitions, but as they were permanent collection galleries, they could not be redecorated or their shape altered as was possible with the Sainsbury Wing space dedicated to temporary exhibitions.

<sup>578</sup> Report to the Board of Trustees, July 2007.

<sup>579</sup> The National Gallery Report, April 1997 – March 1998, p.52. It was bought with the support of the American Friends of the National Gallery in 1998. This building could be demolished and the Gallery could commission a new building on the site.

Sadly, the Masterplan ground to a halt with the departure of Saumarez Smith in the summer of 2007.<sup>580</sup> By the autumn of the following year, Britain was in economic recession and cuts in public expenditure adversely affected funds for national museums, although this did not prevent Tate Modern, the British Museum and the V&A from continuing their own major building developments, which included new temporary exhibition spaces.<sup>581</sup>

The National Gallery under its new Director Nicholas Penny chose to concentrate on the Gallery's long-standing objective, the acquisition of major works of art. In 2009 all fundraising efforts were focused on the joint purchase, with the National Gallery of Scotland, of two of Titian's great paintings, *Diana and Actaeon* and *Diana and Callisto*.<sup>582</sup> Once again, plans for major building redevelopments were shelved, and the Sainsbury Wing galleries remain the permanent home of temporary exhibitions for the foreseeable future. A few more exhibitions have been moved to the main floor. The Veronese exhibition was shown in a suite of collection rooms in 2014.<sup>583</sup> *Michelangelo/Sebastiano: A Meeting of Minds* will open in the North Galleries in March 2017.<sup>584</sup> As before, the size of some of the exhibition's most important works means that they can only be accommodated in the main floor galleries.

## **Summary**

From its opening exhibition in 1991, the new temporary exhibition space in the Sainsbury

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<sup>580</sup> Martin Wyld was the acting director until Nicholas Penny arrived in February 2008.

<sup>581</sup> The British Museum opened the World Conservation and Exhibition Centre in 2014, Tate Modern's Switch House opened in June 2016, and the V&A's Exhibition Road building project is due to open in 2017.

<sup>582</sup> Both paintings were finally purchased in 2012. The Gallery has always purchased new works, but these particular paintings, some of Titian's greatest works, were extremely expensive.

<sup>583</sup> *Veronese: Magnificence in Renaissance Venice* ran from 19 March to 15 June 2014. It was shown in Rooms 8, 7, 6, 4, 5, 11 and 12.

<sup>584</sup> *Michelangelo/Sebastiano: A Meeting of Minds*, 15 March – 25 June 2017. It is to be shown in Rooms 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 with the shop placed in Room 25 (Figure 27).

Wing has been criticised. It was deep in the basement, the area was limited at 460 square metres, many of the rooms were quite small with odd angled walls and there was no access to natural light. Audiences of up to 120,000 visitors could be accommodated over the course of an exhibition but the space became extremely cramped for popular shows. Smaller 'in-focus' shows such as the 'Making and Meaning' series, which could be more easily adapted to the different rooms, worked well. From 2001, the problems increased as the Gallery embarked on a series of blockbuster exhibitions culminating in the Titian exhibition of 2003 when the National Gallery's display was unfavourably compared with that of the Prado. The new Director, Charles Saumarez Smith, asserted that the public criticism threatened the Gallery's reputation as a major international museum and he supported the decision to show the Velázquez and Renoir Landscapes exhibitions on the main floor. This move was part of Saumarez Smith's desire to develop a new larger and more suitable temporary exhibition space, but these plans ended with his departure and the difficult financial situation after 2008. Under the next Director Nick Penny, the Gallery devoted itself to its long-standing priority, the purchase of great Old Master paintings. There were no major building plans and the exhibition galleries remain in the Sainsbury Wing.



## **CONCLUSION**

This thesis has been a search to unearth the largely ignored story of the temporary exhibition galleries in the Sainsbury Wing. It set out to answer the questions: why they were built, why they look the way that they do and what the consequences have been.

The building of the Sainsbury Wing was part of a widespread practice in the post-war period of adding new wings to old museums. These older buildings were unsuited for the growing visitor numbers and were often unable to provide public facilities such as restaurants and shops. The popularity of temporary exhibitions meant that there was a need for more space in museums to house these shows. This was the context for the development of the Hampton site. Acquired by the Government in 1958 for eventual use by the National Gallery, it was the obvious location for the Gallery's new wing.

As Saumarez Smith noted the National Gallery's 'sense and feeling for the past is formidably present in the underlying culture of the institution, in its deep conservatism and self-belief' which were reflected in an abiding commitment to the permanent collection, a devotion that was coupled with a deep-seated suspicion about temporary exhibitions.<sup>585</sup> This was the attitude of most of the directors with the notable exception of Kenneth Clark. From the 1960s, the Gallery focused on small-scale in-focus exhibitions, but as exhibitions in museums in the UK and abroad flourished, it developed a more varied programme under Michael Levey. However, the Gallery's main focus was the development and display of the permanent collection and its building expansion was primarily devoted to creating more space for its paintings. The underlying ambivalence towards temporary exhibitions led to

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<sup>585</sup> Saumarez Smith 2009, p.7

the creation of three dedicated spaces, the Special Exhibition Room, the Sunley Room and finally the galleries in the Sainsbury Wing, all of which soon proved to be too small.

The Gallery found itself in a difficult situation in autumn 1984 after the collapse of its scheme to share and develop the Hampton site with a commercial partner. Under great pressure, inexperienced staff were obliged to draw up a series of briefs very quickly to show how the Gallery would fill a whole building with much-needed facilities. The temporary exhibition galleries started at a lowly 7 on the list of desiderata at 500 square metres in size. This was partly due to the recent opening of the Sunley Room as there was some concern about immediately demanding another exhibition space but also could reflect Levey's concern about the growing blockbuster exhibition culture in museums in the United States.<sup>586</sup> However, as the argument developed that the new wing had to attract audiences and play its role as a major international museum, the exhibition galleries grew in importance. The Polkinghorne brief placed them as number 2 on the list with a description of regular shaped rooms at the expanded size of 800 square metres. But this brief lacked crucial evidence to back up the justification for this larger space. There was no mention of a future exhibition programme, no references to other major exhibition venues in relevant museums and no audience projections. There was no decision on ticket charging and therefore no business plan.

This lack of supporting evidence for the brief was a contributing factor to the ultimate inadequacy of the design of the space. But there were other factors. The architects, in retrospect, had limited control. There was not enough room for their original idea for an open rectangular space on the ground floor and their plan for a larger space at 800 square

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<sup>586</sup> The Sunley Room opened in September 1984.

metres in the basement was cut down to 460 square metres due to expense. However, it was their liking for asymmetry that led them to retain the irregular footprint of the Hampton site resulting in rooms of diverse shapes. On the other hand, the Gallery staff did not argue that access to natural light was of major importance and allowed the move to the basement. The staff had insisted on splitting the space into rooms and had chosen the area in the south with the more irregular shaped rooms. A focus on maintaining a large lecture theatre led to the placing of both facilities deep in the basement and limited the size of part of the temporary exhibition galleries. Ultimately, there were too many facilities to fit into the limited space of the Hampton site and it proved too expensive to fund the wide underground excavation to house these ambitions. The institutional culture prevailed as the Early Renaissance galleries, the main focus of the project, were left unscathed by the cuts.

From the opening of the wing in summer 1991, the critics were quick to point out the shortcomings of the new exhibition space and the public voiced complaints from the beginning. However, at the same time, everyone hailed the new exhibition programme. It is nicely summed up in the title of the review of the popular Leonardo exhibition in 2012: 'What's a show like this doing in a space like this?'<sup>587</sup> Enthusing about the contents of the exhibitions alternating with objections to the galleries became a regular refrain.

In an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the new galleries, it is helpful to take a closer look at the influence of the distinctive space on the exhibition programme. It soon became clear that the galleries succeeded best when there was sufficient room for the

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<sup>587</sup> Simon Tait, *The Independent*, 6 December 2011. *Leonardo da Vinci: Painter at the Court of Milan* ran from 9 November 2011 to 5 February 2012. It was the Gallery's most popular charging exhibition with 323,897 visitors. The decision was made to keep the exhibition in the Sainsbury Wing exhibition galleries as the layout worked well in this space. Visitor numbers were cut for each half-hour slot and viewing hours expanded into the evenings. However, there were still many complaints of over-crowding.

exhibits and the visitors, as in the smaller, focused shows, such as the Making and Meaning series. Another success was the *Sacred Made Real* in 2009 which featured Spanish seventeenth-century painting and sculpture in a visual comparison illuminated to dramatic effect by the lighting designers (Figure 29).<sup>588</sup> The exhibition curator described how he had embraced the ‘sepulchre-like’ atmosphere of the basement to produce a space for contemplation, and used the shape of each room to create its own mood.<sup>589</sup> The quasi-religious ambiance intensified the feeling of being cocooned from the outside world. Such shows fulfilled Venturi’s desire to use the irregularity of the Hampton site to produce variety and contrast. In these examples the space was at its best.

However, it is necessary to give due weight to the negative features: the basement location and the consequent lack of natural light, together with the limited area consisting of irregular shaped rooms, some quite small. These shortcomings became all too evident when the Titian exhibition at the National Gallery was compared with the version of the exhibition at the Prado where the paintings were displayed in large rooms flooded with light. They were well spread out on the walls, contributing to a feeling of space and allowing the visitor to contemplate them without the pressure of crowds, the cause of much dissatisfaction at the National Gallery. It was a very different experience.

Saumarez Smith was worried about the damage to the Gallery’s reputation if it could not handle large exhibitions. He decided to tackle the problem by moving blockbuster exhibitions upstairs to the collection galleries, which proved to be a great success with

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<sup>588</sup> *The Sacred Made Real: Spanish Paintings and Sculpture 1600-1700* ran from 21 October 2009 to 24 January 2010 before travelling to the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

<sup>589</sup> The National Gallery Review of the Year 2009-2010, p.31. Xavier Bray, curator of the exhibition, wrote: ‘The sepulchre-like atmosphere of the Sainsbury Wing exhibition space obliged visitors to engage directly with the intense visual dialogue between the two art forms.’ The doorway between Rooms 2 and 4 was opened so that visitors could move between rooms and enjoy multiple viewpoints as there was no specific order in which to see each room.

Velázquez in 2009. However, this could be no more than a temporary solution because exhibitions could not displace the collection on a permanent basis. Yet, the Gallery continues to move large exhibitions, such as Veronese and Sebastiano/Michelangelo to the main floor. In fact, the exhibition galleries in the Sainsbury Wing were built specifically to avoid the difficulties of the disruption and practical complications of such moves but has failed to stop them.<sup>590</sup> Without a dedicated larger exhibition space, as of today the present exhibition galleries remain in the basement.

### Postscript

As I was coming to the end of my work on the thesis, there were changes at the National Gallery. Gabriele Finaldi became Director in August 2015 and he has indicated that it might be possible to build a larger, flexible temporary exhibition space.<sup>591</sup> The Gallery has now over 25 years of experience in organising exhibitions in the Sainsbury Wing and there are important lessons to be learnt.

Firstly, the attitude is important. The Trustees, the Director and senior staff must be fully cognizant of the benefits of major temporary exhibitions: they enhance the understanding of the collection, advance scholarship, encourage a wide audience to enjoy and learn about art, and also raise funds. The right space in which to house them is vital for their success in terms of both display and visitor experience. It is as important as the display of the

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<sup>590</sup> The National Gallery Report April 1991- March 1992, p.6: The Trustees Report. With reference to the new exhibition galleries in the Sainsbury Wing, it said 'For the first time, we are able to embark on exhibitions of some size without disrupting the permanent hang or unduly upsetting the routine of the Gallery.'

<sup>591</sup> Damian Whitworth, *The Times*, 27 April 2016. Whitworth wrote that Finaldi has ambitions for the Gallery where the main temporary exhibition space in the basement of the Sainsbury Wing is an underwhelming area for blockbuster exhibitions. Finaldi said that the growing visitor numbers would require more space for the Gallery in the future and that it is considering the St Vincent house site.

permanent collection and should not be considered subordinate in any future building project.

Everyone at the Gallery needs to be united in this vision for the future. It is likely that the Gallery will seek funding from The Heritage Lottery fund (HLF) which has a stringent application process.<sup>592</sup> There is now a clear procedure for the development of the business case for temporary exhibition galleries, including the exhibition strategy and future programme.<sup>593</sup> A compelling need for the new space has to be made backed up by audience surveys and visitor research. A complete and detailed brief should be drawn up which covers both front-of-house and back-of-house.<sup>594</sup> This material should be supported by a clearly defined project team and decision-making process.

There are some crucial points to make about the new temporary exhibition galleries. It requires the latest environmental and security controls.<sup>595</sup> A size of around 1,000 square metres is now accepted as the amount of space needed for international loan exhibitions.<sup>596</sup> This space should not be in a basement but be sited as near to the collection as possible. I argue that access to natural top-light is important, especially for major artists in the Gallery's collection. This top-light should be combined with the highest quality artificial lighting system.<sup>597</sup>

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<sup>592</sup> <http://www.hlf.org.uk>. The section on Heritage Grants over £100,000 outlines the process.

<sup>593</sup> Mike Sixsmith wrote his book to help museums with their HLF applications for exhibition spaces. See Sixsmith 1999.

<sup>594</sup> Front-of-house facilities include ticket sales desks, areas for queues, a significant shop, back-of-house facilities include loading bay, a lift of sufficient size to move large paintings, packing room.

<sup>595</sup> The UK Registrars group provide information about the latest environmental and security requirements.

<sup>596</sup> <http://britishmuseum.org>. The World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre. 'At over 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> the gallery provides a space comparable to other UK and international institutions.'

<sup>597</sup> LEDS lighting is now used throughout the Gallery. It provides a cooler light and also helps the Gallery's sustainability aims. These are outlined in its Carbon Management Plan.

There are still questions around the disposition of the space: should it be an open, fully flexible space as is common for most contemporary museums now?<sup>598</sup> Or should it be divided into rooms? I would incline towards a series of well- proportioned rooms with a good ceiling height as most National Gallery exhibitions contain paintings in the majority.<sup>599</sup> The temporary exhibition space in the Rijksmuseum is a good example.<sup>600</sup>

This information should be backed up by thorough research of good practice into exhibitions at other major museums in the UK and abroad. A financial statement should be drawn up to include building and running costs together with revenue projections for ticket sales, shop revenue and evening event hire.<sup>601</sup> The visitor projections will be directly related to the size and capacity of the space. Drawing all these plans together should create a compelling business case for any new space and provide full justification for its location, size and layout.

Buildings are a means to an end, said Adrian Ellis, a cultural management consultant, and unless the commissioning institution is clear about the purpose and function of the building and articulates this in the brief, ‘all the architectural brilliance in the world’ cannot make it work.<sup>602</sup> Yet the choice of architect is still crucial to its success. As Saumarez Smith says, ‘architects... tend to assume that temporary exhibitions require little more than a

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<sup>598</sup> Renzo Piano has built a series of new temporary exhibition spaces with movable walls such as the Resnick Pavilion at Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2006-10) and the pavilion at the Kimbell Art Museum (2007-13). Piano has designed the Whitney Museum at Gansevoort St opened in May 2016. This contains ‘an expansive gallery’ for special exhibitions at approximately 1,672 square metres making it the largest column free museum gallery in New York City. [www.whitney.org/about/newbuilding](http://www.whitney.org/about/newbuilding)

<sup>599</sup> Some irregularity in large rooms can be appealing, for instance in buildings by Caruso St John such as Nottingham Contemporary which opened in 2009.

<sup>600</sup> The renovated Rijksmuseum reopened in 2014. [www.rijksmuseum.nl](http://www.rijksmuseum.nl). The renamed Philips wing contains temporary exhibition rooms with top lighting of c 1,000 square metres. Cruz and Otiz updated the elegant early twentieth- century galleries in 2014 with modern environmental and lighting controls. The *Late Rembrandt* exhibition, shown in spring 2015, had enough space for the large paintings, visitors, and access to natural light. It was an improvement on the display of the exhibition in the Sainsbury Wing in autumn 2014 and had almost double the number of visitors (265,000 in London, 523,000 in Amsterdam.)

<sup>601</sup> A sufficient area for the exhibition shop and entertaining space is required to maximise revenue.

<sup>602</sup> Adrian Ellis is a management consultant at AEA. *The Art Newspaper*, April 2016.

warehouse container, without character or architectural detailing.’<sup>603</sup> The British Museum spent many years establishing the requirements for their new temporary exhibition space and the result does match the institution’s needs as outlined on their website. However, the design has been criticised by Brian Sewell as ‘a vast featureless container, bleak, grey and gloomy, industrial in scale and size’.<sup>604</sup> This space would not suit the Gallery which needs a different kind of design.<sup>605</sup> It needs to find the right architect who shares its vision and who will work with the brief to create a space that enables the curatorial vision rather than controls it. Yet the space should have an architectural distinction that makes it more than a mere container of paintings and the Gallery has to allow an architect to bring their own creative view to the project. This will be a challenge.

The Gallery should learn from the experience of the Sainsbury Wing where a lack of commitment and understanding led to a compromised exhibition venue which has sometimes hindered the visitors’ experience and enjoyment of the shows. It sees itself as a national and international leader in the field of Old Master exhibitions and therefore should have the commitment to spaces that house them. If the Gallery can do this, it will be able to create a new larger exhibition space that can provide the best practical and sympathetic environment for the temporary exhibitions now and in the future.

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<sup>603</sup> Charles Saumarez Smith, ‘Out of the Shadows’, *Museum Practice*, Spring 2008, p.15.

<sup>604</sup> Brian Sewell, *The Evening Standard*, 6 March 2014. The Sainsbury family have supported the creation of temporary exhibition galleries in the Museum of London, the National Gallery, Tate Britain, the British Museum and the V&A (opens 2017).

<sup>605</sup> The British Museum’s exhibitions cover a wide range of objects, many of which are light sensitive. It needs a large space for showcases, and huge objects such as a Viking warship. It doesn’t need access to natural light.

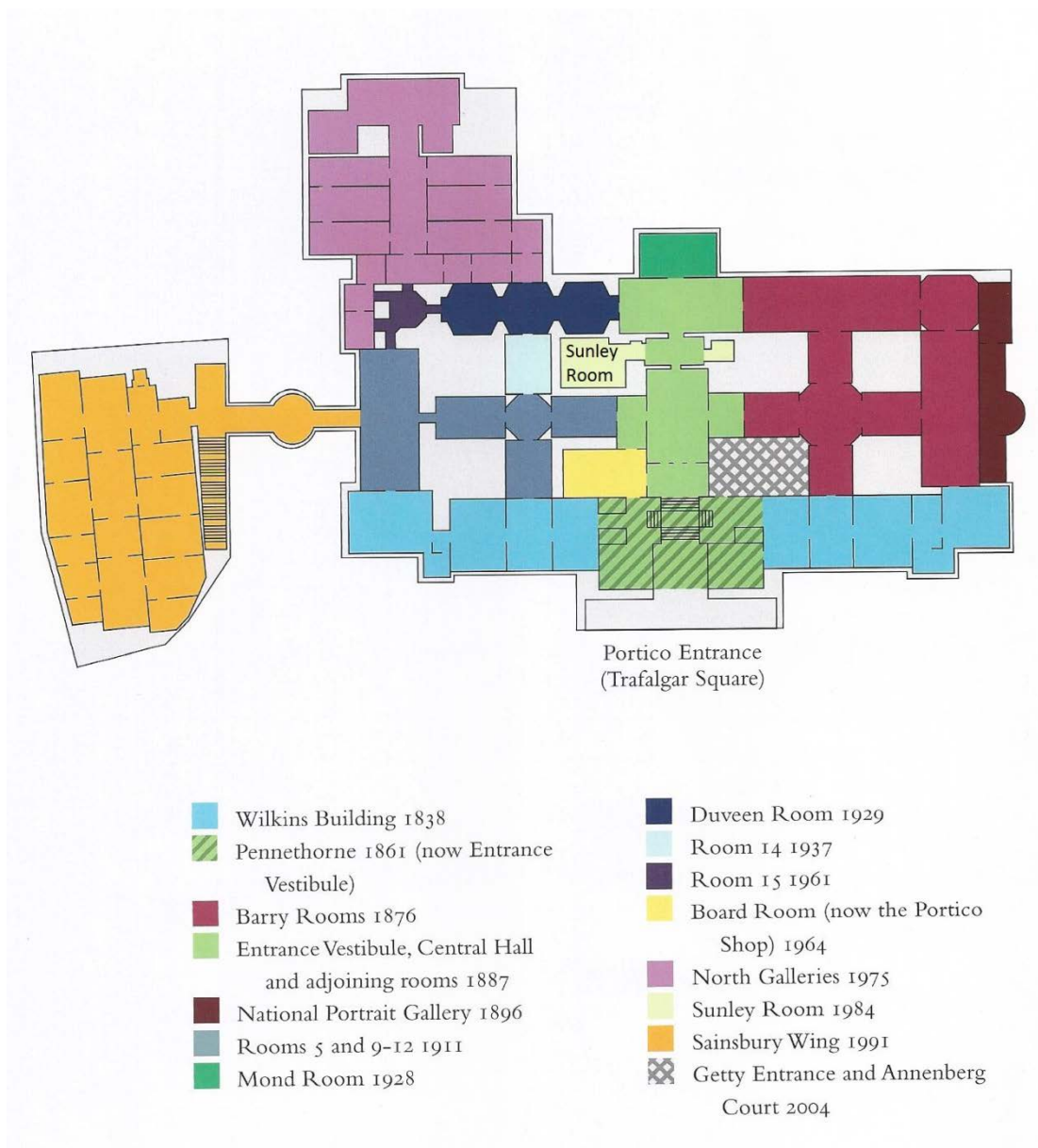


**FIGURES**

**Figure 1a**  
Façade of the Sainsbury Wing during the exhibition of Cuypp's work in 2002



**Figure 1b**  
Façade of the Wilkins building

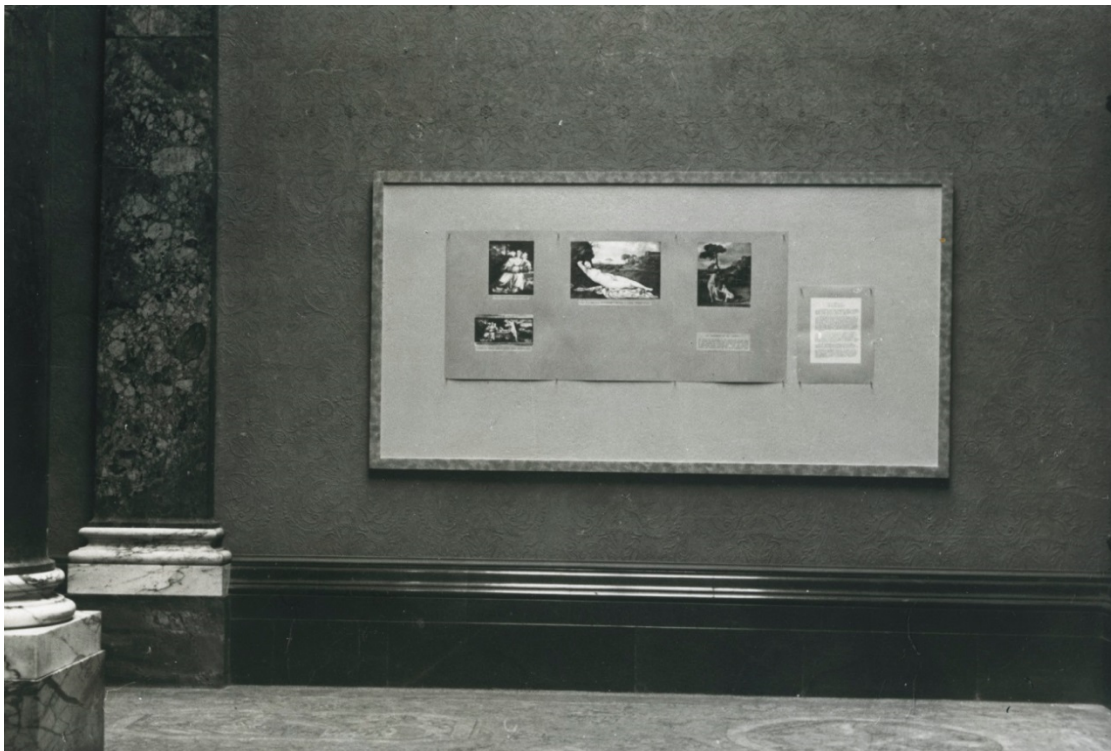


**Figure 2**  
National Gallery floor plan with the different building phases



**Figure 3a**

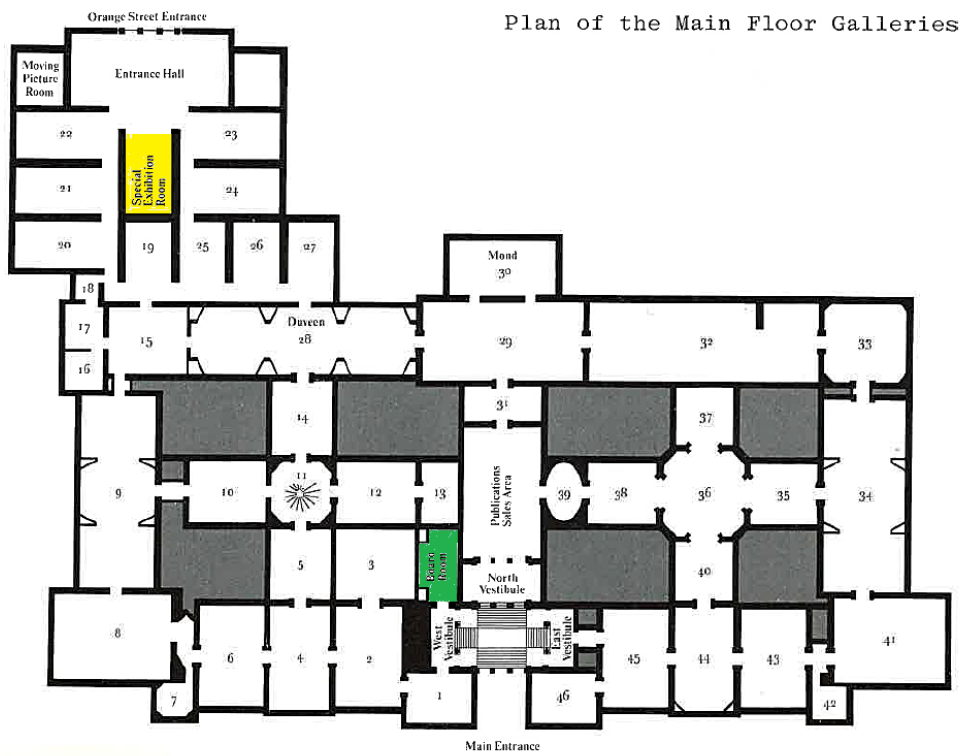
Titian's *Noli Me Tangere* in the Picture of the Month exhibition, Entrance Hall, 1942



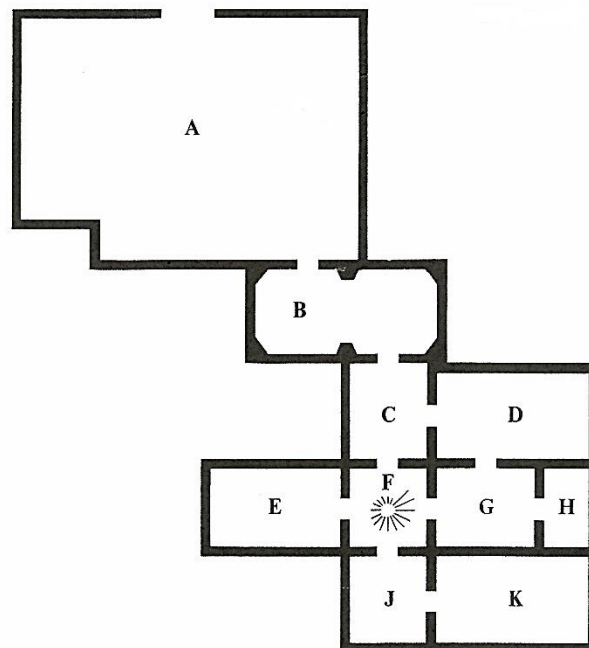
**Figure 3b**

Graphic panels accompanying the Titian display





**Figure 4a**  
National Gallery plan of the main floor galleries, 1975. The Board Room is shown in green and the Special Exhibitions Room in yellow



**Figure 4b**  
National Gallery plan of the lower floor galleries, 1975



**Figure 5**

Acquisition in Focus: *Rubens: Samson and Delilah*. An exhibition in the Special Exhibitions Room in 1983



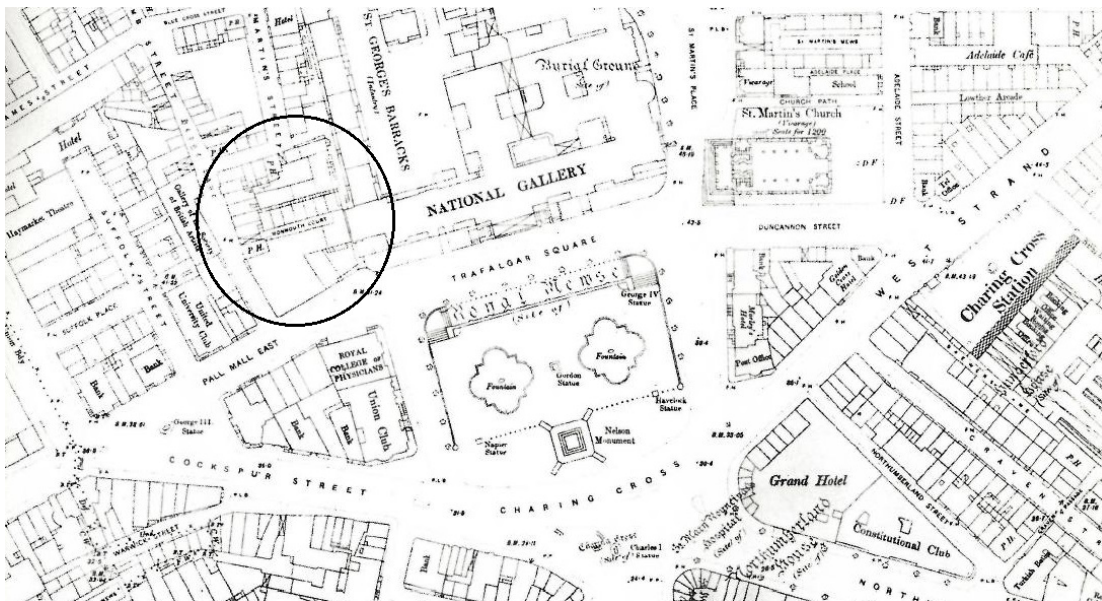
**Figure 6**

*The Rival of Nature – Renaissance Painting in its Context*. First exhibition in the North Galleries in 1975



**Figure 7**

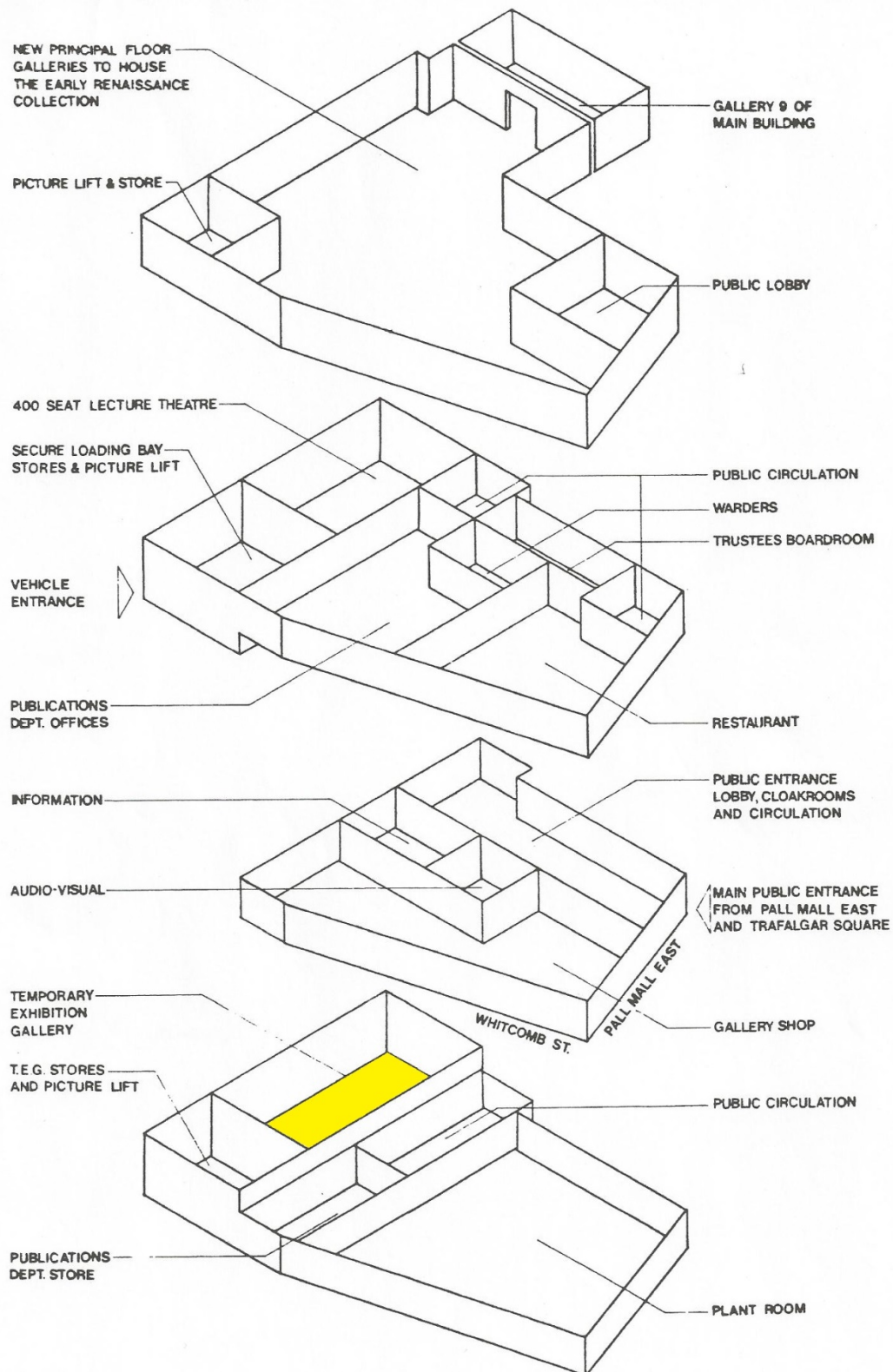
*Masterpieces from the National Gallery of Ireland. An exhibition in the Sunley Room in 1985*



**Figure 8**

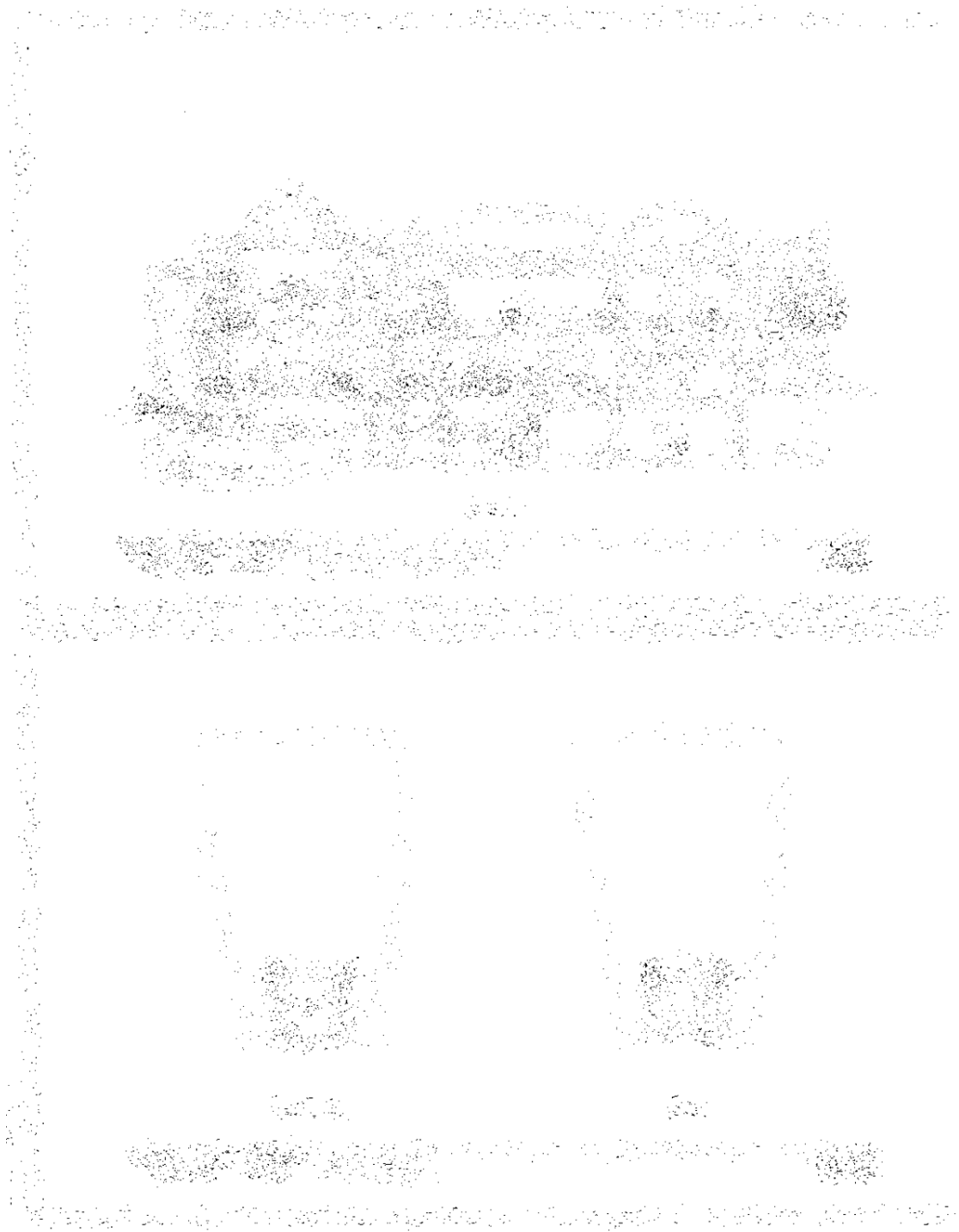
Map (dated 1894-6) of Trafalgar Square. The Hampton site is immediately to the west of the National Gallery





**Figure 9**

A plan for the Hampton Site, 30 November 1984 (Brief 2) (temporary exhibition space shown in yellow)

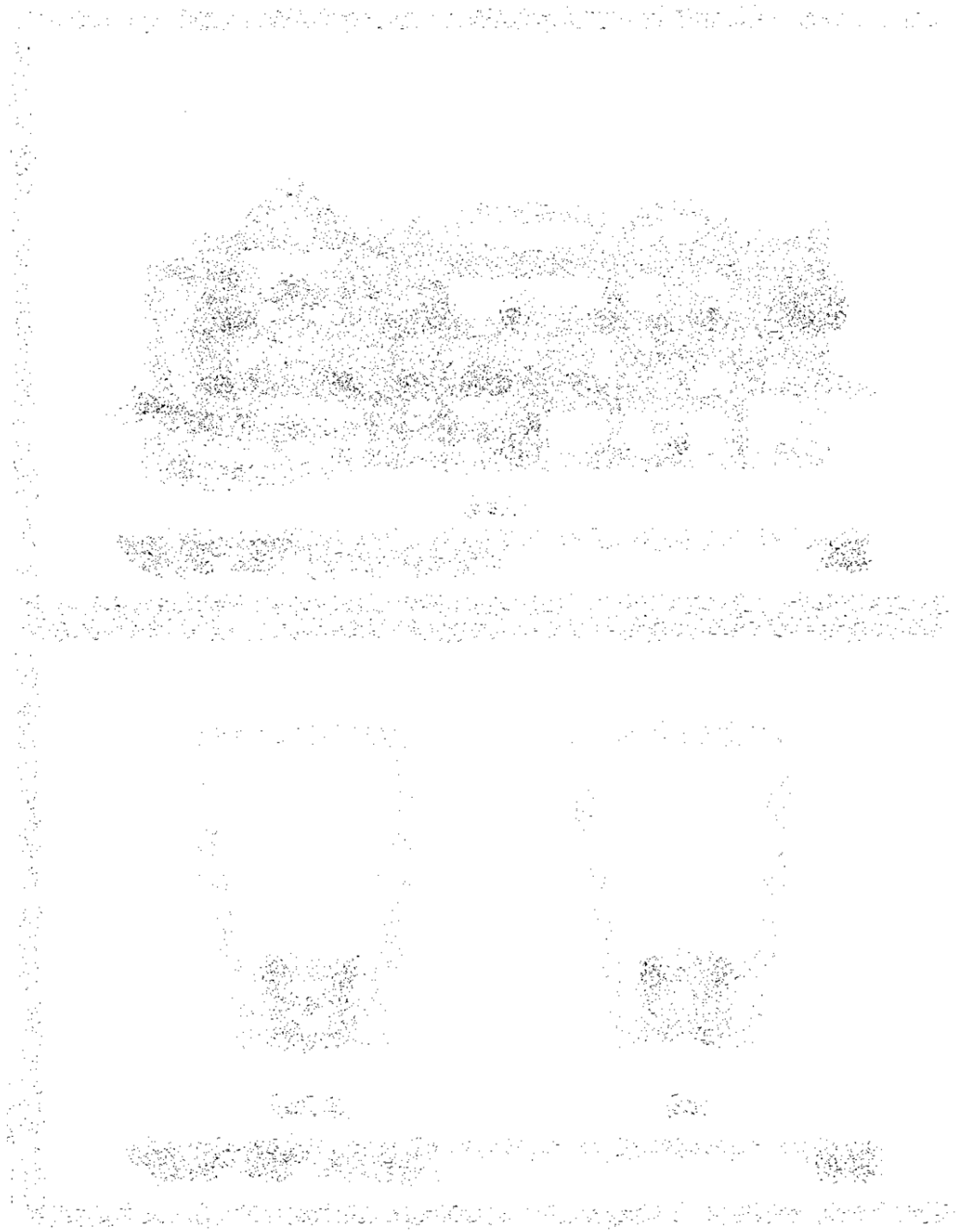


**Figure 10a**

James Stirling, Michael Wilford & Associates. National Gallery Extension, Hampton Site, London.

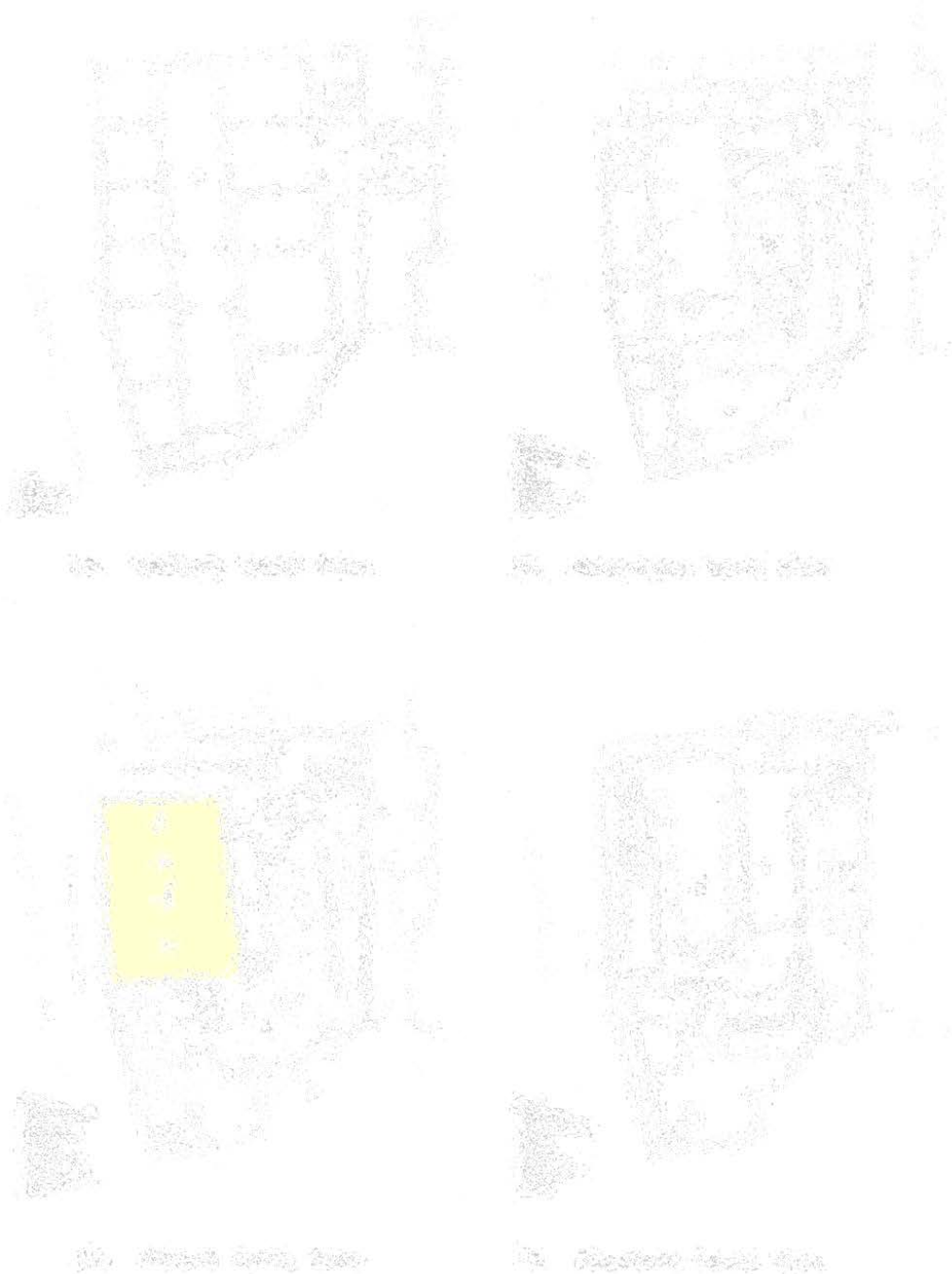
(a) Picture Galleries (b) Entrance Level (c) Below ground level (d) Basement level including temporary exhibition galleries





**Figure 10b**

James Stirling, Michael Wilford & Associates. National Gallery Extension, Hampton Site, London. Traverse section plan (temporary exhibition space shown in yellow)



**Figure 11a**

Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown: A proposed extension to the National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London. 17 January 1986: Floor plans (temporary exhibition space shown in yellow)



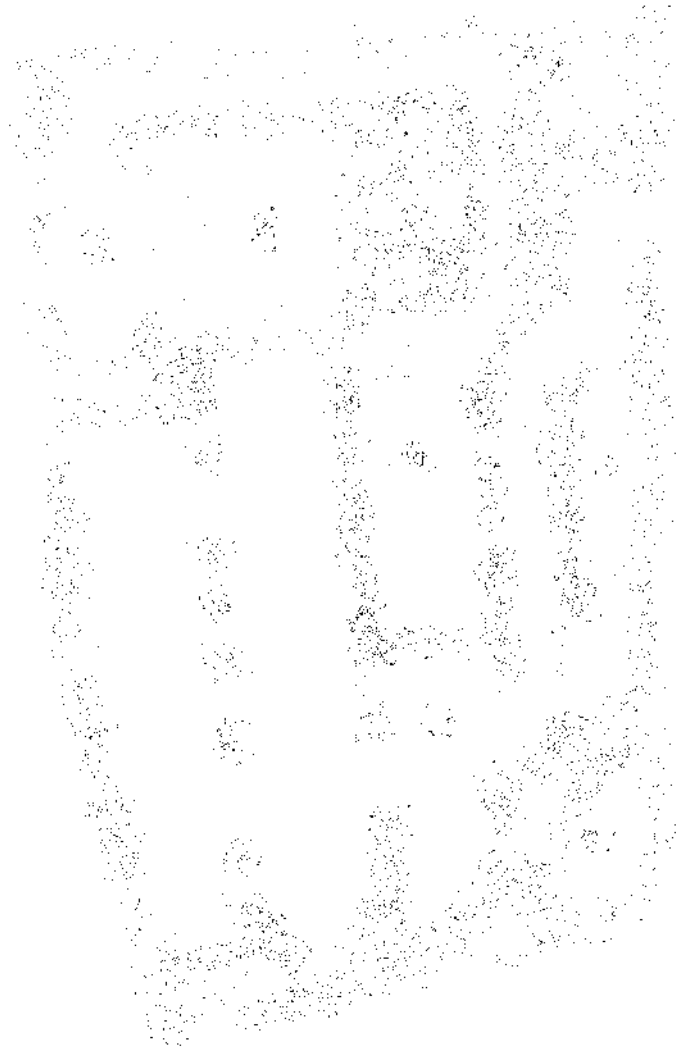
**Figure 11b**

Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown: A proposed extension to the National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London. 17 January 1986. Traverse section plan (temporary exhibition space shown in yellow)



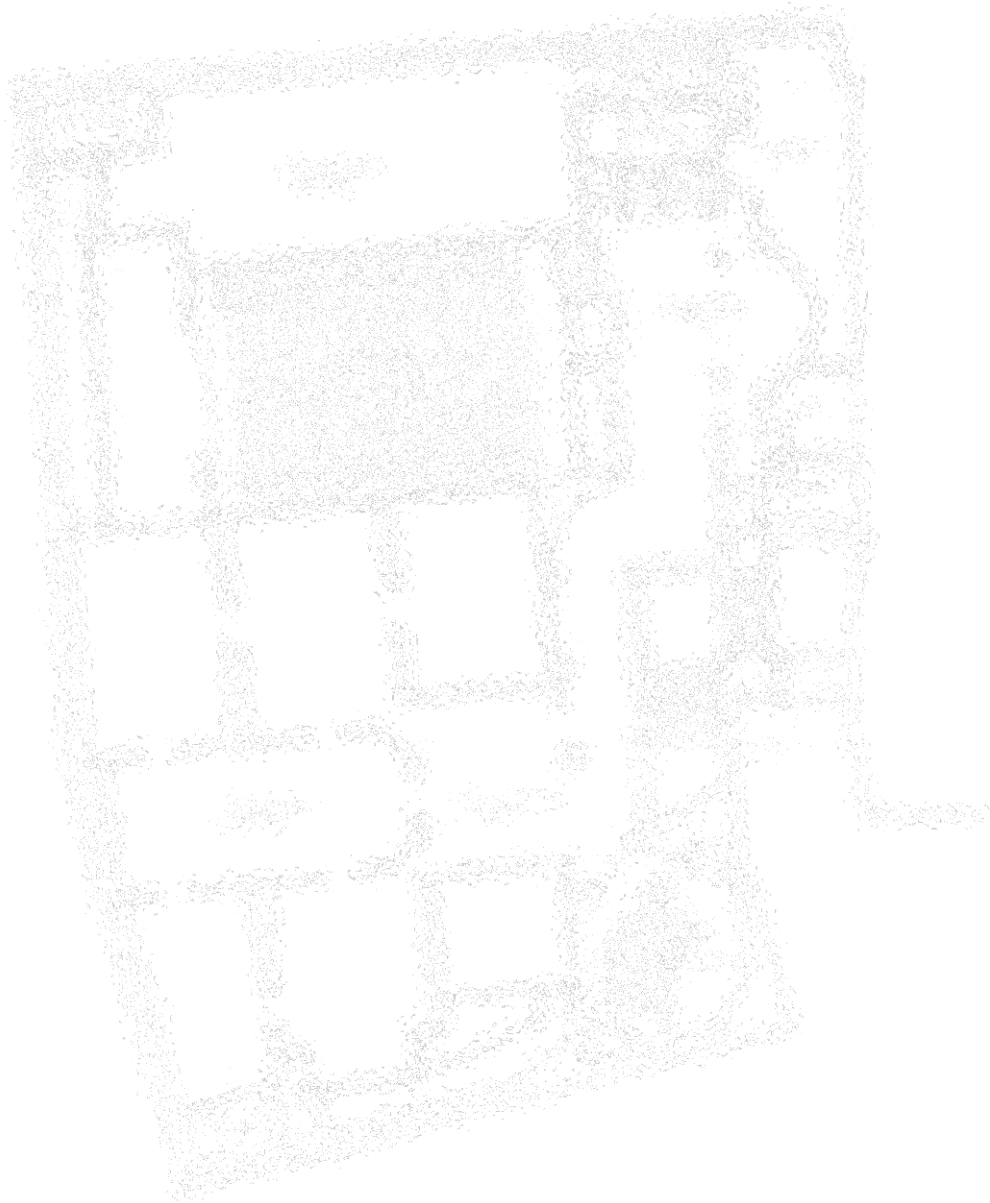
**Figure 12**

The Early Renaissance Galleries in the Sainsbury Wing



**Figure 13**

Venturi Rauch Scott Brown designs for the lower floor of the Sainsbury Wing, April 1986 (P denotes the temporary exhibition gallery and F the lecture theatre)



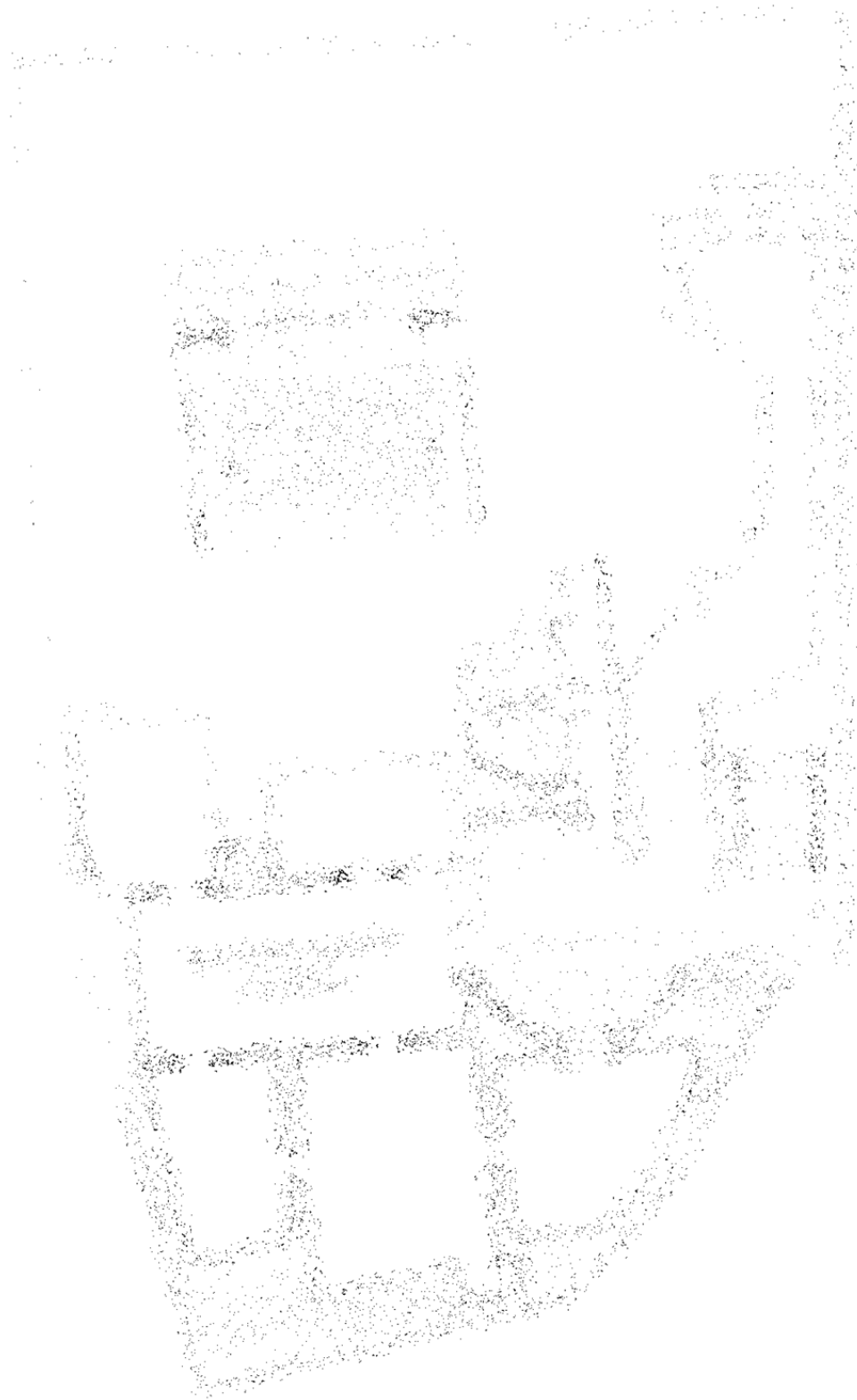
**Figure 14**

Venturi Rauch Scott Brown design A for the lower floor of the Sainsbury Wing, July 1986



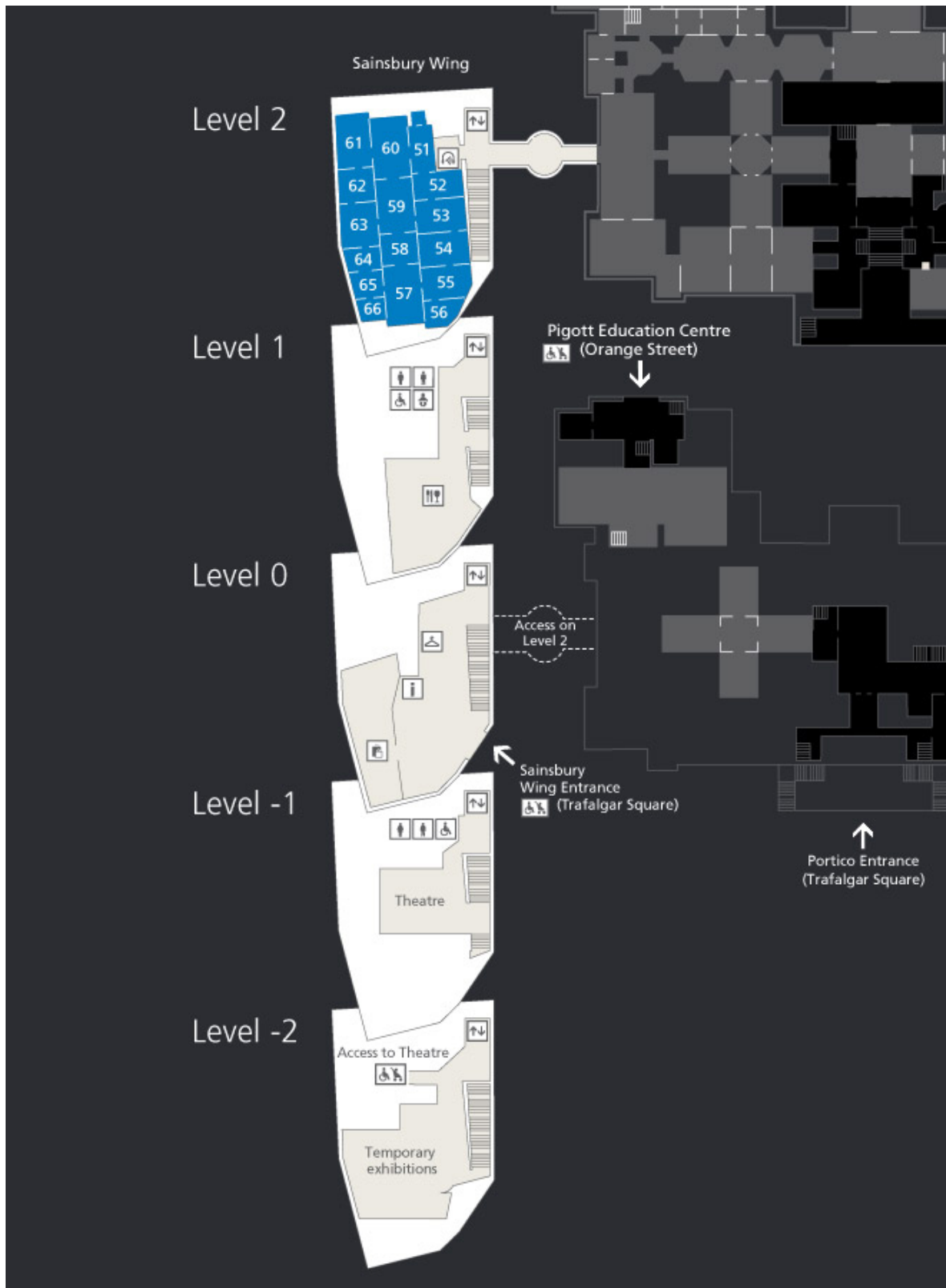
**Figure 15**

Venturi Rauch Scott Brown design B for the lower floor of the Sainsbury Wing, July 1986



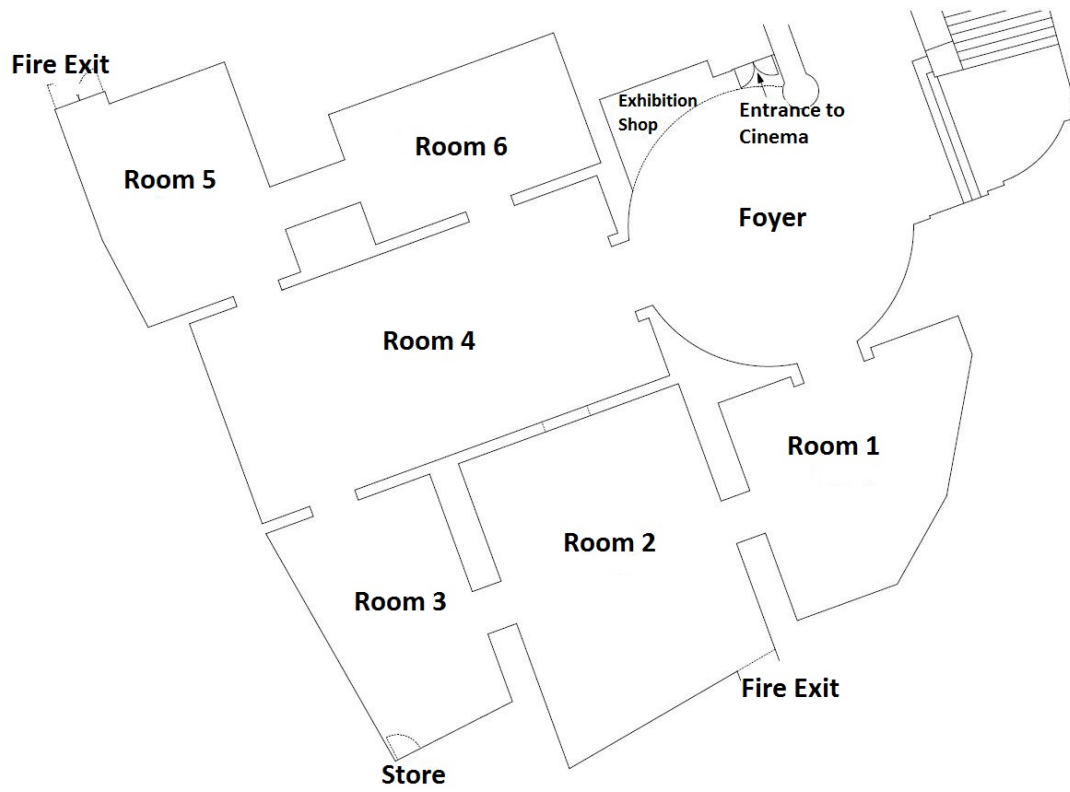
**Figure 16**

Final layout of the basement level of the Sainsbury Wing, April 1987. Private areas for packing room and other facilities are not indicated for security reasons.



**Figure 17**  
The current National Gallery floor plan showing the contents of the Sainsbury Wing





**Figure 18**  
Final design of the temporary exhibition galleries



**Figure 19**

*The Building of the Sainsbury Wing* exhibition in the new temporary exhibition galleries, July 1991. This image shows the design of the rooms 'undressed'.



**Figure 20**

*The Queen's Pictures: Royal Collectors through the Centuries*. Exhibition in the Sainsbury Wing, 2 October 1991 – 19 January 1992. This image shows the rooms 'dressed' with new skirting and doorframes.



**Figure 21**

*Manet and the Execution of Maximilian*, exhibition in the Sainsbury Wing, 1992



**Figure 22a**  
Staircase going up to the main galleries, Sainsbury Wing



**Figure 22b**  
Staircase going down to the basement level and the temporary exhibition galleries, Sainsbury Wing



**Figure 23a**

The fire exit doorway in Room 2, temporary exhibitions gallery, Sainsbury Wing



**Figure 23b**

Angle of Room 2, temporary exhibition gallery, Sainsbury Wing





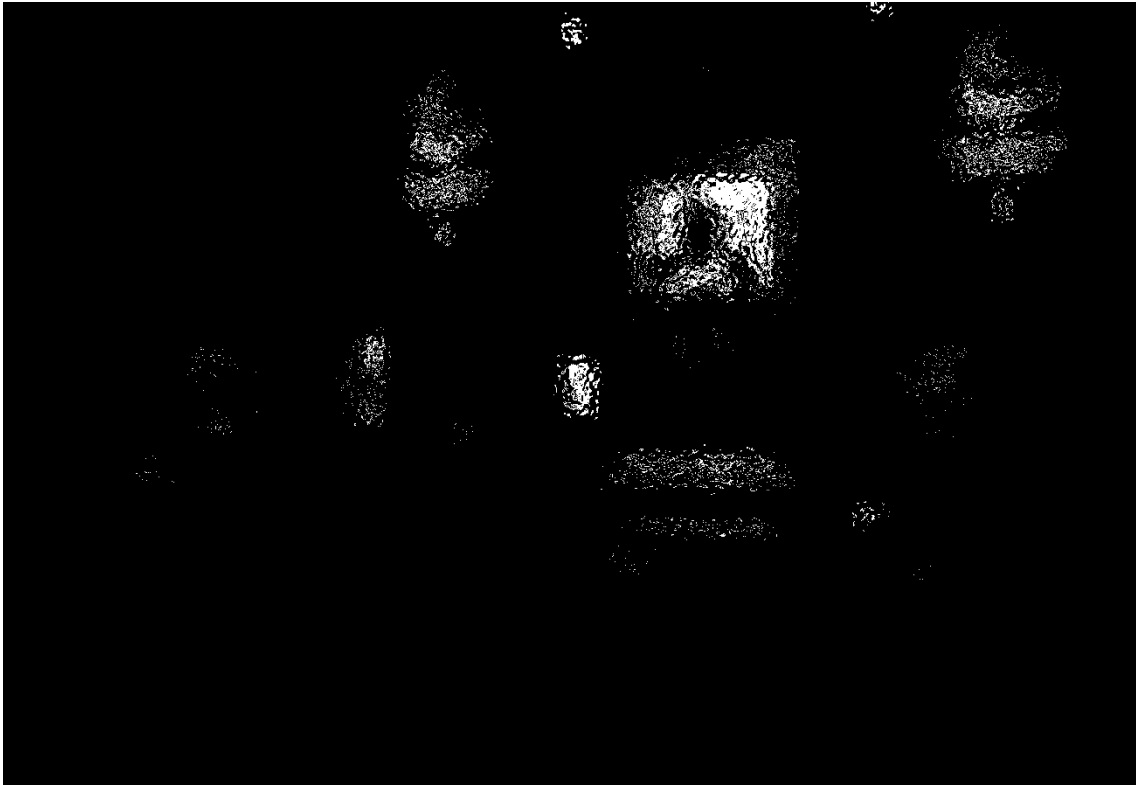
**Figure 24a**

The lighting track in the Early Renaissance galleries, Sainsbury Wing



**Figure 24b**

The lighting track in the temporary exhibition galleries, Sainsbury Wing



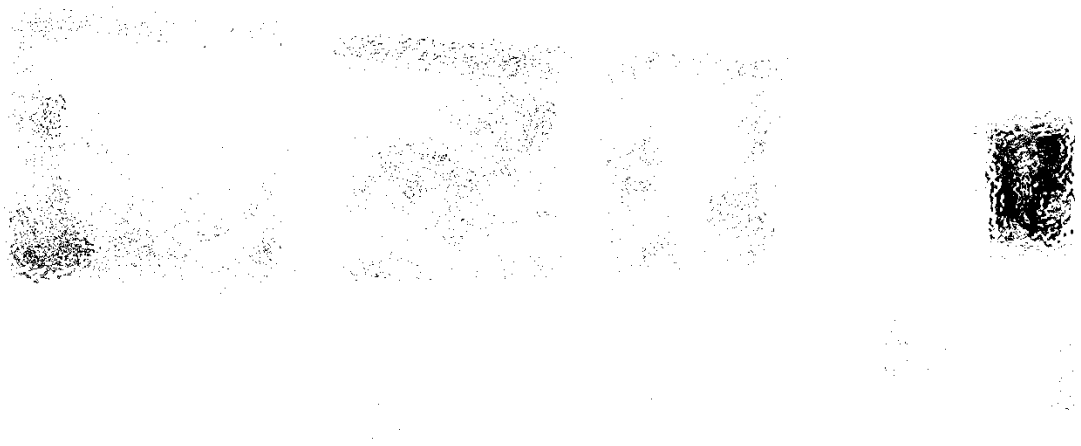
**Figure 25**

*Making and Meaning: The Wilton Diptych.* Exhibition in the Sainsbury Wing, 1993



**Figure 26a**

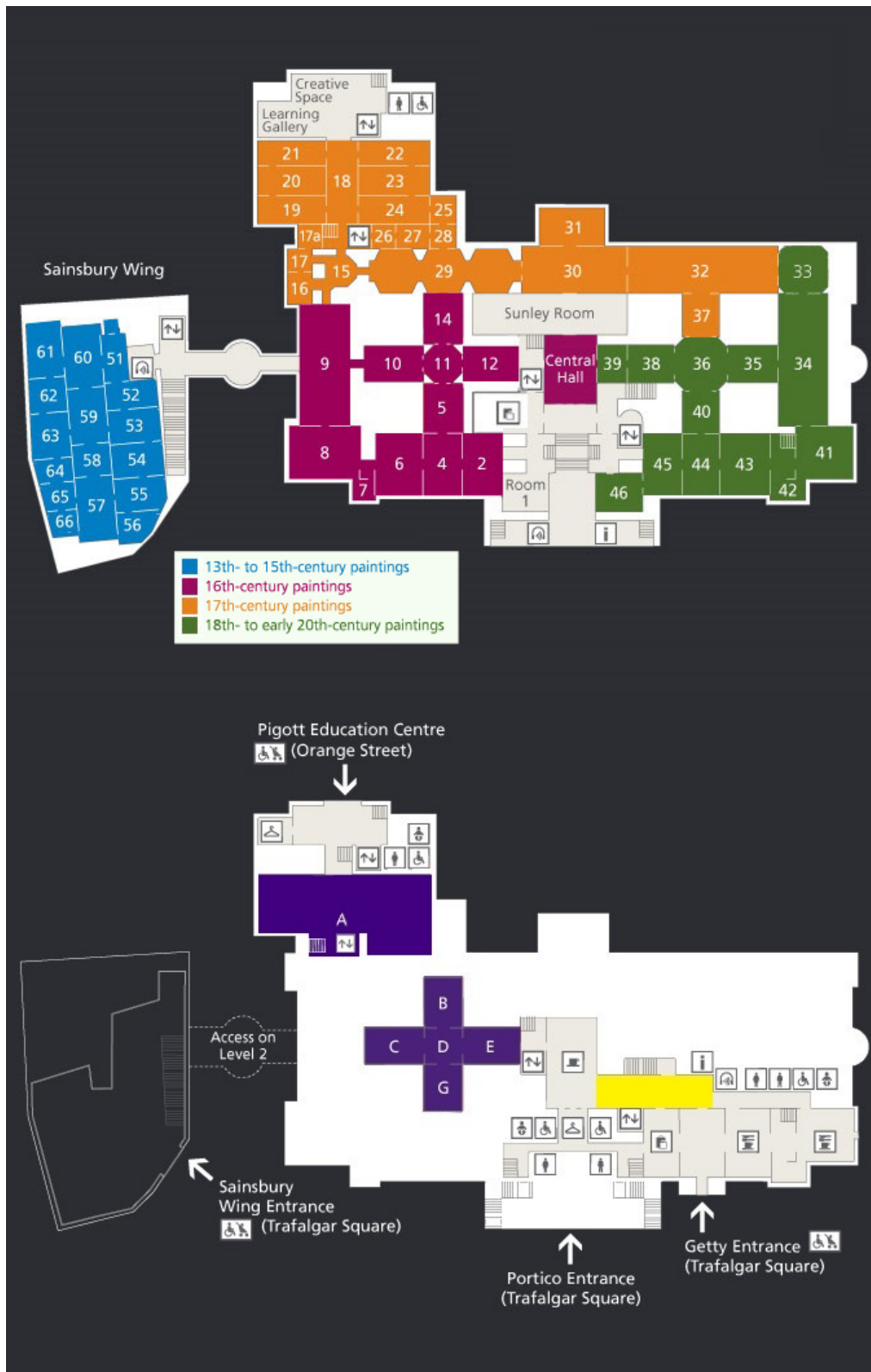
*Titian, Exhibition in the Sainsbury Wing, 2003*



**Figure 26b**

*Titian, Exhibition at the Prado, Madrid, 2003*



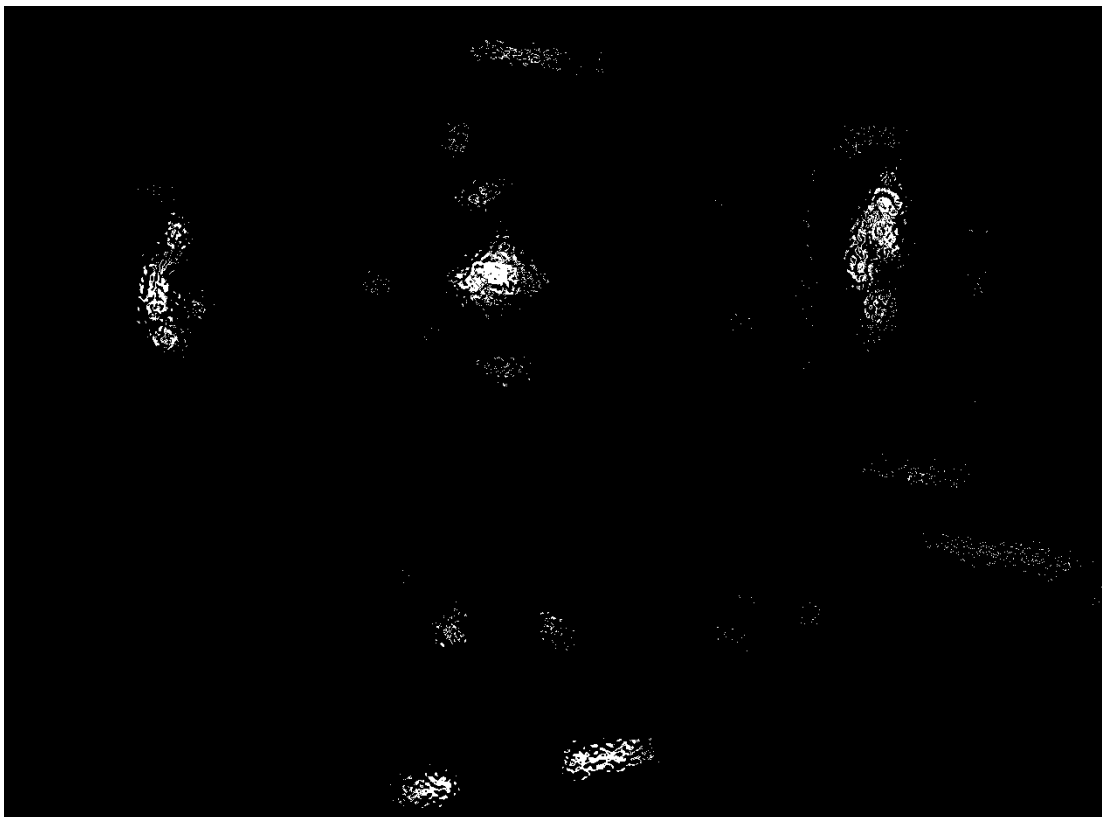


**Figure 27**  
National Gallery main floor plan and the layout of the ground floor of the main building including the Annenberg court (shown in yellow)



**Figure 28**

*Velázquez*. Exhibition on the main floor, 2006



**Figure 29**

*The Sacred Made Real*. Exhibition in the temporary exhibition galleries, Sainsbury Wing, 2009

### Image sources

All images are from the National Gallery, London, except for:

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Figure 4: The National Gallery Annual Review July 1975-December 1977, Appendix F

Figure 8: Michael Wilson, *A Guide to the Sainsbury Wing at the National Gallery*, National Gallery, London, 1991 p.9

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Figure 16: Colin Amery, *A Celebration of Art & Architecture: The National Gallery, Sainsbury Wing*, National Gallery, London 1991, p.95

Figure 18: Chris Oberon, 3-D Designer, The National Gallery

Figure 26b Victoria Newhouse, *Art and the Power of Placement*, Monacelli Press, New York 2005, p.277

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NG36/2 'The Hampton Site: Proposals for accommodation on the site', 30 November 1984 (Brief 2)

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## Appendix A

### Hampton Site – Sainsbury Wing : Key dates

(The briefs and the proposed sizes for the temporary exhibition galleries are in **bold**)

1940 November: Hampton's building bombed

1955 The Canadian Government buys lease to the site

1958 November: The Government buys lease from the Canadians

1961 December: The National Car Park Company runs the site

1964 National Gallery and National Portrait Gallery agreement

1970-75: North Galleries developed, open in October 1975

1981 December: Heseltine announces architectural competition for the site

1982 April: shortlist drawn up

1982 July: 'National Gallery Long Term Brief' (**Brief 1**)

1982 December: announcement to the press that Ahrends Burton Korelek with Trafalgar House will work on new designs

1983 December: press conference launches new designs

### **1984**

April: public enquiry set up

29 May: HRH Prince Charles's speech

5 September: opening of the Sunley Room

19 September: planning permission refused

4 October: Board of Trustees meeting to discuss the future of the Hampton Site

30 November: 'The Hampton Site: Proposals for accommodation on the site'. Exhibition galleries at **450 square metres (Brief 2)**

3 December. Building Committee meeting where Bridget Riley tables her paper 'An exposition on what functions the nation has a right to expect from an extension to its National Gallery'

## **1985**

15 January. 'National Gallery: The Development of the Hampton Site' sent to the possible donors. Exhibition galleries at **500 square metres (Brief 3)**

7 February: Board of Trustees meeting: 'The National Gallery: preliminary brief for the development of the Hampton Site' presented. Exhibition galleries at **500 square metres (Brief 4)**.

26 March: Board of Trustees meeting: announcement of Sainsbury brothers' funding and the process for the selection of the architect

2 April: press announcement of the Sainsbury brothers' funding for new building

1 July: Alistair Smith 'Notes towards a brief for the Hampton Site' Exhibition galleries at **600 square metres (Brief 5)**

24 September: The Gallery staff meet VRSB: 'material on museum design and design process' – a discussion with Robert Venturi, John Rauch and Denise Scott Brown, The Carlyle Hotel, New York

October 4: short list of six architects

October 9: 'National Gallery: Hampton Site Development: guidelines for architects'.

Exhibition galleries at **500-800 square metres (Brief 6)**

20 November: The Gallery commissions Polkinghorne, Edstall & Associates to produce 'The Hampton Site Brief' (**Brief 7**)

## **1986**

January 9: Michael Levey announces retirement

January: Architectural Review publishes the architects' proposals for the new extension

January 17: VRSB produce 'A proposed extension to the National Gallery'. Exhibition galleries at **530 square metres**

January 24: press announcement of the selection of VRSB

February 13: The Hampton Site Company, and the Hampton Site Steering Committee established

March 7: 'The National Gallery Extension Brief' produced by Polkinghorne, Edstall & Associates. Exhibition galleries at **800 square metres (Brief 7)**

March 10: Hampton Site Steering Committee. Decision is made to move exhibition galleries to below ground

April 29: Hampton Site Steering Committee. VRSB initial designs for the below ground space. Exhibition galleries at **730 square metres**

May 1: 'Some notes on the temporary exhibition area' Alistair Smith

July 9,10: Hampton Site Steering Committee: VRSB designs A and B

July 11: Response of the VRSB current design to the brief of March 7 for the National Gallery extension. **Exhibition galleries at 650 square metres**

August 19: Neil MacGregor, director designate, attends his first Hampton Site Steering Committee meeting. There are discussions about rising building costs

## **1987**

January: Michael Levey retires, Neil MacGregor is director

March 20: Board of Trustees meeting: Sainsbury brothers agree to increase in costs

April: public exhibition of VRSB's designs for the Sainsbury Wing. Exhibition galleries at **460 square metres**

December: planning permission granted

**1988**

January: construction starts

**1989**

May: completion of structure – topping out ceremony

**1990**

December: handover to the Trustees of the National Gallery

**1991**

9 July: Royal Opening by Her Majesty the Queen

10 July: Sainsbury Wing is open to the public

October 21: opening of the first exhibition *The Queen's Pictures: Royal Collectors through the Centuries*

## **Appendix B**

### **The Polkinghorne Brief**

A summary of relevant material

Polkinghorne, Redstall and Associates were commissioned in November 1985. Based upon previous departmental papers prepared by the National Gallery, they produced 'The National Gallery Extension Brief'. Agreed on 7 March 1986.

The Brief co-ordinators were Polkinghorne Redstall Associates in association with a range of specialist consultants including Michael Preston, Head of Exhibitions and Keeper of the Department of Museum Services at the Science Museum.

The co-ordinators visited the following places during the preparation of the brief:

London: The Hayward Gallery, The Tate Gallery, The Royal Academy. Glasgow: The Burrell Collection. Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, The Louvre, Orangerie des Tuileries. Munich: Alte Pinakothek, Neue Pinakothek, State Gallery of Modern Art, Schack Gallery. In the past, the co-ordinators had visited The Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC and other Museums of Science world wide.

The appendices included 'A Survey of Visitors to the National Gallery' carried out by Marplan during July 1981 (concurrently with 'The Artist's Eye: David Hockney' exhibition in the Sunley Room)



The following text is taken directly from the Polkinghorne brief:

## Temporary Exhibition Galleries

### 14.01 Background

Together, these galleries will form an exhibition space of about 800 sq m in total area which will be used for presenting temporary exhibitions often incorporating a large proportion of loan paintings. The aim is not to reproduce in size or function the much larger exhibition spaces of the Royal Academy or the Hayward Gallery, but to create a moderate sized space which will permit a greater range of exhibitions, broadly on the “old master” themes, than is currently possible. The area proposed will provide space for exhibitions up to about 150-200 paintings, and also provide the necessary space for the large numbers of visitors normally attracted to such exhibitions.

These galleries will form a vital part of the life of the National Gallery and could well remain open in the evenings, outside of normal Gallery hours. At these times the relationship of the Temporary Exhibition Galleries to the new entrance, restaurant, Lecture Theatre and shop will be especially important.

### 14.02 Design Parameters

The space should be subdivided into four to six permanent galleries of different sizes and shapes so that it can be used in a variety of ways to suit the needs of the individual exhibitions. It should therefore be possible to:

- use the space for a single exhibition
- use a reduced amount of the area

- hold two exhibitions (possibly one major, one minor) concurrently
- prepare one exhibition during the course of another.

Appropriately positioned doors will therefore be required so that the space can be logically used in these various possible ways. Door heights will need to be determined by the height adopted as standard in the building for spaces where pictures are moved. Door widths will bear a functional and aesthetic relationship to the height.

It is also essential that a high degree of insulation of airborne noise and isolation of impact noise between the rooms can be achieved.

Ceiling heights may vary as appropriate according to the sizes of the rooms, but should be in the range of 3.5m to 5.5m. However, the floor should be at the same level.

The possibility of introducing some side light should be examined in spite of the difficulties associated with its use. Artificial light must, therefore, be both flexible and of a very high standard.

A suitable system of construction (probably timber framed) for the permanent dividing walls will need to be devised. It should not be load bearing (in order to permit alteration in the future) but should be of adequate strength to support the weight of heavy paintings. (The requirements will be as defined for the Permanent Picture Galleries at 13.6 m.) The lining will probably be of thick structural grade plywood in accordance with the Gallery's current policy.

Changing exhibitions mean that the hanging/fixing of paintings on the gallery walls is also constantly changing thereby requiring regular repairs to the fixing locations. It would

therefore be valuable if an invisible and flexible fixing system could be designed, possibly as an integral part of the gallery walls. In addition, it will periodically be necessary to further subdivide the rooms, and it is desirable that the partitions used should match the permanent walls in detail as well as in surface appearance. There is therefore a need to consider systems or construction techniques suitable for the purpose concurrently with designing these galleries.

The internal climatic conditions must be the same as for the Permanent Galleries

Floor loading: 7.5kn/sq.m

#### 14.03 Character of the spaces

The exhibition galleries should be substantial, well proportioned rooms complete with skirtings, architraves, cornices/covings etc so that they may be used when necessary with the minimum installation or none at all. However, the chosen idiom must be sufficiently recessive to suite a wide range of art, (bearing in mind that the majority of exhibitions will be on "Old Master" themes within the scope of the Gallery Collection), and to allow varied installation treatment for exhibitions of differing character. So that a unified affect can be achieved when all the rooms are in use for a single exhibition, the design should be consistent throughout.

Consideration should be given to the provision of means of erecting temporary partitions and exhibition structures within the rooms. While the rooms should readily permit the erection of such partitions, conspicuous fixing points, on the ceilings and the floors should be avoided.

#### 14.04 Gallery Furnishings

The following furniture is required in gallery areas. The number and location will depend upon the size and design of individual exhibitions, and the furnishing items will be drawn from stock as required:

Public Seating

Warders' Furniture

Information Stands

Floor Plans

Picture Barriers

A flexible and removable system of barriers will need to be designed to suit the criteria defined for the barriers in the Permanent Picture Galleries.

#### 14.05 Foyer Spaces

##### General Foyer

Immediately adjacent to the galleries there should be a two-stage foyer arrangement. The outer, and larger, space should be large enough to permit visitors to temporary exhibitions to congregate, queue or move around. Although this space should be seen as a foyer to the Temporary Exhibition Galleries, it need not necessarily be dedicated provided that it satisfies the need of a foyer when required, without detriment to the needs of other nearby areas. Titling of exhibitions will be incorporated in this foyer space. The cinema should also be accessible from the General Foyer, in addition to the dedicated foyer.

### Dedicated Foyer

A second, smaller and dedicated foyer space will also be required. This area will give access to the galleries themselves and to the Cinema and will also provide for the sale of tickets, guides, catalogues etc., and for the hire of audio guides. The space will usually be 'dressed' to suit the particular exhibition and it is therefore essential that it can be both visually and physically separated from the outer foyer when in presentation.

The spatial relationship of this inner foyer with the galleries is important bearing in mind that it should provide convenient access to a variety of combinations of them.

There follows more detailed descriptions for the Cinema (14.06), Local Support Spaces (14.07), Picture Packing Suite (14.08), Security (14.09).