

News Release

Thursday 13 April 2017

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY ACQUIRES TRACEY EMIN'S 'DEATH MASK'



Tracey Emin with *Death Mask* by Tracey Emin, 2002 at the National Portrait Gallery's Conservation Studio
© Tracey Emin/National Portrait Gallery, London Photo: © Jorge Herrera

The National Portrait Gallery has acquired *Death Mask* by artist Tracey Emin, it was announced today, Thursday 13 April 2017. The portrait has been purchased for £67, 500 with a contribution of £30,000 from the Art Fund, and further support from White Cube and the artist.

Death Mask was unveiled today at the National Portrait Gallery accompanying a new display *Life, Death and Memory* which looks at the complex and sometimes troubling relationship between portraiture and mortality, drawing together historic and contemporary works from the Gallery's Collection.

In an ironic reference to the autobiographical nature of her work, Tracey Emin cast her own 'death mask' during her lifetime, creating her first sculptural work in bronze in 2002.

At the heart of the artist's preoccupation with self-disclosure and her constant engagement with, and exploration of, her own life and body, Emin says that in this work she offers herself in perpetuity as an enclosed specimen or museum display, literally transforming herself into an object for the scrutiny of generations to come. The portrait joins one other work by the artist in the Gallery's Collection, *Tracey Emin ('The Last Thing I said to you is don't leave me here. 1')*, a photographic print from the year 2000.

Emin's portrait accompanies the display *Life, Death and Memory*, which includes a death mask of John Constable; seventeenth century *memento mori* paintings of sitters with skulls including the diarist John Evelyn and the botanist

and gardener John Tradescant the Younger; and posthumous portraits including Sir Antony van Dyck's commemorative painting of Venetia, Lady Digby.

There are also works on the theme by Ian Breakwell and Sam Taylor-Johnson, the last portrait for which the artist, film-maker and gardener Derek Jarman sat; and a moving photograph of the New Labour strategist Philip Gould, diagnosed with terminal cancer, standing on his burial plot at Highgate Cemetery nine days before his death in 2011.

Tracey Emin studied at Maidstone College of Art (1986-8) and the Royal College of Art (1987-9). Her work discloses the intimate details of her life across a range of media. Notable works include *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963–1995* (1995), shown at the *Sensation* exhibition (Royal Academy, 1997), and *My Bed* (1998). Emin represented Britain at the Venice Biennale in 2007 and was elected a Royal Academician in the same year. She was awarded a CBE in 2012.



Tracey Emin with *Death Mask* by Tracey Emin, 2002 at the National Portrait Gallery's Conservation Studio
© Tracey Emin/National Portrait Gallery, London Photo: © Jorge Herrera

Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director, National Portrait Gallery, London, says: 'We are delighted to have acquired *Death Mask* by Tracey Emin, one of the most striking and singular portraits to join the Gallery's Collection in recent years. Drawing on the history of this very particular form of portraiture, Tracey Emin has taken the idea of the death mask to create an innovative work that challenges our perceptions of self-portraiture. Our sincere thanks to Art Fund, White Cube and Tracey for making this acquisition possible.'

Dr Stephen Deuchar, Art Fund Director, says: 'This is an excellent and imaginative acquisition for the National Portrait Gallery – a highly distinctive form of self-portraiture by an artist whose important work is steeped in autobiography. It offers many possibilities for interpretation and display, and will be admired by a very wide public at the National Portrait Gallery.'

Sarah Howgate, Senior Curator of Contemporary Portraits, National Portrait Gallery, London says: 'We are delighted that, thanks to the generosity of Art Fund, White Cube and Tracey Emin, the artist's first sculpture in bronze has found its rightful home amongst the Gallery's significant collection of life masks and death masks.'

Rab MacGibbon, curator of *Life, Death and Memory* and Associate Curator, National Portrait Gallery, London, says: 'Artists have frequently explored their mortality in self-portraits. Tracey Emin's *Death Mask*, the newly-acquired bronze cast of the artist's face, blurs the distinctions between life and death, art and identity.'

Death Mask by Tracey Emin accompanies the display *Life, Death and Memory* in Room 15/16, Second Floor, National Portrait Gallery, London, 13 April 2017-16 April 2018, Admission free.

NPG 7034: DEATH MASK

By Tracey Emin (b.1963)

Bronze, 2002

Purchased with generous support of the Art Fund, White Cube and the Artist, 2017

© Tracey Emin/National Portrait Gallery, London

IMAGE CAPTION *Death Mask* by Tracey Emin, 2002 © Tracey Emin /National Portrait Gallery, London

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National Portrait Gallery, St Martin's Place WC2H 0HE, opening hours Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday: 10am – 6pm (Gallery closure commences at 5.50pm) **Late Opening:** Thursday, Friday: 10am – 9pm (Gallery closure commences at 8.50pm) **Nearest Underground:** Leicester Square/Charing Cross **General information:** 0207 306 0055 **Recorded information:** 020 7312 2463 **Website/Tickets:** www.npg.org.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Death Mask by Tracey Emin

Cost

Total cost of work: £67, 500

Breakdown of funding

White Cube and the Artist £37, 500

Art Fund £30, 000

Total funding package £67, 500

About Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. In the past five years alone Art Fund has given £34 million to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections. It also helps museums share their collections with wider audiences by supporting a range of tours and exhibitions, and makes additional grants to support the training and professional development of curators. Art Fund is independently funded, with the core of its income provided by 123,000 members who receive the National Art Pass and enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions and subscription to Art Quarterly magazine. In addition to grant-giving, Art Fund's support for museums includes Art Fund Museum of the Year (won by the V&A, London, in 2016) and a range of digital platforms. www.artfund.org