

News Release

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Portrait of Algernon Moses Marsden saved for the nation by the National Portrait Gallery and The National Gallery



Today, the National Portrait Gallery and The National Gallery announce the joint acquisition of the portrait of the art dealer *Algernon Moses Marsden* (1877) by Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902).

This important Victorian painting of a fascinating character has been saved for the nation following a temporary export bar.

It will be displayed for the first time since its purchase at The National Gallery – where it will be the first work by Tissot to enter the collection – before travelling to the National Portrait Gallery ahead of its major reopening in 2023. The painting will return to The National Gallery in 2024 to mark its Bicentenary.

While the portrait of Algernon Marsden (1847-1920) was never exhibited in Tissot's lifetime, it has become an icon of the late 19th century's Aesthetic movement. It joins over 60 works by Tissot in the National Portrait Gallery's Collection, most of which are [society cartoon prints](#) published by *Vanity Fair* in the 1860s and 1870s, as well as the oil painting of the soldier and explorer [Frederick Burnaby](#)

(1870). The Marsden portrait radiates the glamour of the age for which Tissot's works are best known and testifies to the painter's influence on British art.

Following a temporary export bar, which was placed upon the painting in June 2022, the two galleries have been able to acquire the portrait thanks to the generosity of Sir Martyn Arbib and his children, who are descendants of Algernon Marsden.

Marsden's family were Jewish entrepreneurs who had risen from poverty in the East End of London through a fortune made in the ready-made clothing business. Rather than join the family business, Marsden established himself as an art dealer in London in the early 1870s. His personal magnetism drew influential friends and acquaintances, including Tissot who had recently arrived in London after fleeing Paris following the Commune. He skyrocketed to fame as a painter of the *beau monde* with deftly executed works that caught the attention of a new class of industrialists and entrepreneurs, including Marsden who bought and sold Tissot's work and, in 1877, commissioned him to paint his portrait. Executed in the artist's studio, the painting shows Marsden at his most successful, lounging on a leather armchair in a luxurious interior surrounded by objects that indicate his wealth and sophisticated taste – just four years later he would file for the first in a string of bankruptcies.

Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, said: *"We are delighted to have acquired this important painting for the National Portrait Gallery's Collection and to have saved it for the nation thanks to the generosity and imagination of Sir Martyn Arbib and his family. We look forward to working with our colleagues at The National Gallery to ensure the work is displayed in two different contexts for the enjoyment of our collective visitors."*

Gabriele Finaldi, Director of The National Gallery, said: *"We are very pleased to be collaborating with our friend and neighbour the National Portrait Gallery in ensuring this wonderful painting is able to remain on public view for everyone to enjoy, and we'd like to thank Sir Martyn Arbib and his family for his generosity in making this possible."*

Sir Martyn Arbib, great grandson of Algernon Marsden, said: *"My children and I felt very strongly that the painting of our close relative, Algernon Marsden by James Tissot, should be saved for the nation, and we were delighted to provide the funding to allow The National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery to do so."*

The portrait will be displayed in Room 44 of The National Gallery from 7 December 2022 alongside works by artists such as Cézanne, Monet, Renoir, and then in the newly named and renovated Blavatnik Wing when the National Portrait Gallery reopens in 2023.

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Notes to Editors

About Jacques Joseph (James) Tissot

Born in Nantes, Jacques Joseph Tissot moved to Paris in 1857 to attend the École des Beaux-Arts, where he studied with Jean-Hippolyte Flandrin (1809–1864) and Louis Lamothe (1822–1869), both students of Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Already by 1854 he was known as 'James', a change probably prompted by his interest in all things English. In 1859 he made his debut at the Paris Salon. In 1870–1 he fought in the Franco-Prussian War, and after the Paris Commune left for London in May 1871. Tissot painted society portraits and scenes of modern city life in a highly refined style and using a polished technique. While in London he worked for the magazine *Vanity Fair*. Many paintings of this period featured his companion, Kathleen Newton. After her death in 1882 he returned to Paris,

where he continued to paint women in a series entitled *Women of Paris*, which he showed in a major exhibition in 1885. That year he revived his Catholic faith, and from this time devoted himself to religious painting. He died suddenly in 1902 at the Château de Buillon, his house located near the Jura region of France.

National Portrait Gallery

The National Portrait Gallery was founded in 1856 to encourage, through portraiture, the appreciation and understanding of the people who have made and are making British history and culture. Today it promotes engagement with portraiture in all media to a wide-ranging public by conserving, growing and sharing the world's largest collection of portraits.

The Gallery in St Martin's Place, London is currently closed until 2023, while essential building works take place on the *Inspiring People* redevelopment project, which will transform the Gallery, including a complete refurbishment of the building and a new learning centre. During the closure period, the Gallery will continue to share its Collection through its digital channels and a series of nationwide partnerships and collaborations. www.npg.org.uk

The National Gallery

The National Gallery is one of the greatest art galleries in the world. Founded by Parliament in 1824, the Gallery houses the nation's collection of paintings in the Western European tradition from the late 13th to the early 20th century. The collection includes works by Artemisia Gentileschi, Bellini, Cézanne, Degas, Leonardo, Monet, Raphael, Rembrandt, Renoir, Rubens, Titian, Turner, Van Dyck, Van Gogh and Velázquez. The Gallery's key objectives are to care for and enhance the collection and provide the best possible access to visitors. Admission free. More at nationalgallery.org.uk

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

Jacques Joseph (James) Tissot, 1836-1902

Portrait of Algernon Moses Marsden, 1877

Oil on canvas

49.5 x 73.5 cm

Bought jointly by the National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery, with the generous support of Sir Martyn Arbib and his children, 2022

Photo © The National Gallery, London