

News Release

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National Portrait Gallery announces new Blavatnik Wing to house one hundred years of portraiture

- A £10million gift from the Blavatnik Family Foundation supports the National Portrait Gallery's most extensive redevelopment since 1896
- In recognition of this support, the first floor of the Gallery's historic building will become The Blavatnik Wing, encompassing nine galleries and one hundred years of portraiture
- Proceeds from this generous donation have also enabled the purchase of a disused structure opposite the Gallery's new entrance, kick-starting a further phase of transformation



L-R the newly refurbished galleries in The Blavatnik Wing, 2022, Photo Nick Chantarasak, Purcell Architects. Reinstallation of works in The Blavatnik Wing, Photo David Parry.

It was announced today that the Blavatnik Family Foundation has gifted £10 million to the National Portrait Gallery in support of its *Inspiring People* project. To recognise this generous gift, the most significant in the Gallery's history, the first floor of the renowned building will become The Blavatnik Wing, encompassing nine galleries and covering a momentous period in British history, from 1840 to 1945. The floor will exhibit some of the greatest portraits in the Gallery's Collection and explore society and culture in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The galleries within The Blavatnik Wing will display the portraits of a wide range of historic figures, such as Charles Darwin, Prime Ministers Gladstone and Disraeli, Mary Seacole, the Brontë sisters, Virginia Woolf, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Emmeline Pankhurst, and Oscar Wilde. The rooms will also showcase works by the finest portrait painters of the period, including Sir John Everett Millais, George Frederic Watts, John Singer Sargent, Laura Knight, Gwen John, and Lucian Freud.

Sir Leonard Blavatnik, said: “The Blavatnik Family Foundation is proud to support the National Portrait Gallery, and we look forward to next year’s opening.”

Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, said: “We are incredibly grateful to Sir Leonard and Lady Blavatnik and the Blavatnik Family Foundation for this historic and transformative gift, which has provided vital support for our *Inspiring People* project and initiates the next stage of our future development in terms of profile and programme. I would also like to thank the American Friends of the National Portrait Gallery for their involvement and support. I am delighted to recognise this generous gift through the naming of The Blavatnik Wing, which will be at the heart of our redevelopment.”

The gift will support the National Portrait Gallery’s biggest development since our building in St Martin’s Place opened in 1896. The project includes a comprehensive re-display of the Gallery’s Collection—from the Tudors to now—combined with a complete refurbishment of the building, restoring historic features, as well as enhancing the Gallery’s accessibility and surrounding areas through the new Ross Place entrance.

The designs, by Jamie Fobert Architects working in partnership with Purcell, will also see the return of the Gallery’s East Wing to public use as the Weston Wing, restoring original galleries and creating retail and catering facilities. A new Learning Centre will welcome visitors of all ages with specialist equipment, studios and breakout spaces.

The Blavatnik Family Foundation donation also kick-starts a further phase for *Inspiring People*, supporting the purchase of a ticket booth structure, situated on Irving Street alongside the Gallery’s new north-facing forecourt. A spacious 1,700 square foot area below ground level will provide opportunities for the Gallery to expand its public footprint and programme in the future.

The National Portrait Gallery is enormously appreciative of the Blavatnik Family Foundation, as well as other major *Inspiring People* donors including The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Ross Foundation and Art Fund. The Gallery also acknowledges the generous support received from foundations, individuals and other supporters.

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About the Blavatnik Family Foundation

[The Blavatnik Family Foundation](#) is an active supporter of world-renowned cultural, educational, scientific, and charitable institutions throughout the world. The foundation is headed by Sir Leonard Blavatnik, a global industrialist and philanthropist and the founder and chairman of Access Industries, a privately held investment group based in the U.S. with broad strategic interests.

The National Portrait Gallery and the Blavatnik Family Foundation have a successful history of collaboration, including the sponsorship of the exhibitions *Russia and the Arts* (2016), *Sargent: Portraits of Artists and Friends* (2015), *Glamour of the Gods* (2011), and *Andy Warhol: 10 portraits of Jews of the 20th century* (2006).

About the National Portrait Gallery

The [National Portrait Gallery](#) was founded in 1856 to encourage the appreciation and understanding of the people who have made and are making British history and culture. Today it promotes

engagement with portraiture 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. During the closure period, the Gallery has continued to share its Collection through its digital channels and a series of nationwide partnerships and collaborations. www.npg.org.uk