State of the Art: Collecting art and national formation c.1800-2000

Wednesday 18 July to Friday 20 July 2007

View of the Naval Gallery in the Painted Hall, by L.H. Michael © NMM

A three-day international conference at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, supported by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art.

Since the development of the public art gallery and museum in the early 19th century, art and the collecting of art in Britain have been closely linked to the articulation of national identity and the construction of nationhood. They have thus interleaved with debates on national morality, class, race and gender, and the social and civic functions of culture. In recent years 'cultures of collecting' have been subjects of considerable study in art history, museology and other forms of cultural studies. This international conference will build on this research, drawing together a range of academics and curators from national and international institutions, to consider the issues surrounding art collecting and nationhood across a variety of locations and cultures.

It will also develop these issues away from a purely Eurocentric focus upon the history of nation formation and the role of art and collecting in the evolution of European nationalism, to explore the significance of art collecting within the history of empire, and for emergent nation-states outside the European arena. It will also confront the complex and contentious issues within those larger histories, of the role of war and looting, and of art and its collecting as both victim and accomplice of international conflict and conquest.

The conference will complement 'Art for the Nation', the recently opened display in the Queen's House of the various oil paintings collections that make up the National Maritime Museum's total holding. One of the principal aims of the exhibition is to consider the history of these collections and how they relate to the historical definitions of Britain's maritime and imperial identity.

Full details of the conference programme, including speakers and paper topics, can be found at the National Maritime Museum website: **www.nmm.ac.uk/conferences**

Registration information

Full registration fee: £60.00. A number of student bursaries are available supported by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art. For further information on bursaries contact Lucy Nixon at the Paul Mellon Centre on 020 7580 0311. To book your place on the symposium, contact Mrs Janet Norton, Research Administrator, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich LONDON SE10 9NF Tel: 020 8312 6716 Fax: 020 8312 6592 E-mail: research@nmm.ac.uk