

## Five paintings by Stanley Spencer accepted in lieu of tax and allocated to the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge

*John Donne arriving in Heaven* (1911)

Oil on canvas, 37 x 40.5 cm

*Scrubbing Clothes* (1919)

Oil over graphite on paper laid down on hardboard, 18 x 23 cm

*Making a Red Cross* (1919)

Oil over graphite on paper laid down on hardboard, 18 x 23 cm

*Builders of the Tower of Babel* (1933)

Graphite, wash and oils on three pieces of paper, overall measurement 31.5 x 60 cm

*Making Columns for the Tower of Babel* (1933)

Oil on canvas, 54 x 49 cm

*Accepted in lieu of Inheritance Tax by H.M. Government and allocated to the Fitzwilliam Museum, 2013*



Stanley Spencer, *John Donne arriving in Heaven*, 1911  
© The Estate of Stanley Spencer

**Five works by, Stanley Spencer (1891-1959) have been accepted in lieu of inheritance tax and allocated to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. They include one of his most significant early paintings and two preliminary sketches documenting his experiences of World War I. The works were acquired through HM Government's acceptance in lieu scheme with additional support from the Art Fund, The V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Friends of the Fitzwilliam.**

Stanley Spencer is recognised as one of the most important British painters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Born in Cookham, Berkshire in 1891, at the age of seventeen he went to study at the Slade School of Art in London. The group of five works allocated to the Fitzwilliam were formerly in the collection of wood engraver Gwen Raverat, grand-daughter of Charles Darwin, who first met Stanley Spencer when they both enrolled at the Slade School in 1908. They became life-long friends, Gwen dubbing Spencer 'Cookham' in recognition of the affection Spencer held for his home village.

*John Donne arriving in Heaven* was painted by Spencer when he was still at the Slade aged 20. It was one of the most important works of his early career and was shown at the second Post Impressionist Exhibition (1912) where it was hung in the same gallery as works by artists including Matisse and Picasso. Spencer shows the poet crossing Widbrook Common; he passes four figures, each praying in a different direction to express the all-encompassing nature of Heaven. Spencer regarded the picture highly saying it came 'more directly from my imagination than any I have ever done.' It is one of the first works where he sets a religious event in an English rural setting, a concept that would be a hallmark of many of his later great masterpieces.

*Scrubbing Clothes* and *Making a Red Cross* were painted in 1919 when Spencer had returned from the war. Originally he had been commissioned by the Ministry of Information to work up these war studies into paintings, but instead they inspired part of his decorations for the Sandham Memorial

Chapel. *Scrubbing Clothes* depicts men of Spencer's Field Ambulance Unit washing their clothes on boulders in the River Struma. *Making a Red Cross* shows the unit laying out a cross made of broken tiles and rocks as a recognition signal to aircraft. Both studies show his natural sense of design.

In 1932 Gwen Raverat proposed that Spencer paint decorative panels for two 10 foot semi-circular spaces over the doors of the Reading Room of the new University Library, then under construction in Cambridge. Unfortunately Syndics of the Library could not afford the project; the sketch *Builders of the Tower of Babel* and the small oil painting *Making Columns for the Tower of Babel* were all that remain of this suggested commission.

The five paintings join the Fitzwilliam's fine collection of early twentieth-century British paintings, which already includes eight paintings and four drawings by Spencer. The collection features some of Spencer's most famous canvases; *Love among the Nations* (1935-36), *Self-Portrait with Patricia Preece* (1937), *Self-Portrait* (1939) and *Love on the Moor* (1949-1954). The institution is one of the most important places to study the artist outside London.

The works have been acquired for the nation through the Acceptance in Lieu scheme, administered by Arts Council England from the estate of Gwen Raverat and allocated to the Fitzwilliam Museum. Tax of £167,883 was settled by their acceptance. As their total value exceeded the liability on the estate the Fitzwilliam Museum made good the difference of £308,117 with the help of generous grants from the Art Fund, the V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum.

Tim Knox, Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum commented: "The five works by Spencer that have been added to the Fitzwilliam Museum's collection greatly enrich our holdings of this interesting and very English artist. Moreover, they also have a strong Cambridge connection. We are grateful to the AIL Scheme for allocating these works to the Museum, and to the generous donors who supplied the additional funds needed to secure them."

The new acquisitions are now on display with other 20<sup>th</sup>-century British works in the recently refurbished Gallery I at the Fitzwilliam Museum.

Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chair Arts Council England said: "That these five works have been offered in lieu of inheritance tax and can now be permanently accessed by members of the public, means that important parts of our own history, society and identity are not lost, hidden in houses, but are part of an institution's collection, open to interpretation and educating and inspiring people."

Stephen Deuchar, Director of the Art Fund, said: "Stanley Spencer is one of the greatest British artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it is with great pleasure that we support the Fitzwilliam Museum's acquisition of this group of exceptional works. It is another example of the benefits of the government's Acceptance-in-Lieu scheme to UK museums, galleries, and their visiting public."

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**For further information and images contact the Press Office:**  
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## Notes to editors:

**Arts Council England** champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2010 and 2015, we will invest £1.9 billion of public money from government and an estimated £1.1 billion from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

**The Acceptance in Lieu (AIL) Scheme** allows those who have a bill for Inheritance Tax to pay the tax by transferring important cultural, scientific or historic objects to the nation. Items accepted under the Scheme are allocated to public collections and are available for all.

**The Art Fund** is the national fundraising charity for art, helping museums to buy and show great art. Over the past 5 years we've given £26m to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections, and placed hundreds of gifts and bequests, from ancient sculpture and treasure hoards to Old Master paintings and contemporary commissions. We are independently funded, the majority of our income coming from over 100,000 members who, through the National Art Pass, enjoy free entry to over 220 museums, galleries and historic houses across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions.

Find out more about the Art Fund and the National Art Pass at [www.artfund.org](http://www.artfund.org).

**Founded in 1816 the Fitzwilliam Museum** is the principal museum of the University of Cambridge and lead partner for the University of Cambridge Museums (UCM) Major Partner Museum programme, funded by The Arts Council. The Fitzwilliam's collections explore world history and art from antiquity to the present day. It houses over half a million objects from ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman artefacts, to medieval illuminated manuscripts, masterpiece paintings from the Renaissance to the 21st century, world class prints and drawings, and outstanding collections of applied arts, ceramics, coins, and Asian arts. Welcoming over 470,000 visitors a year, the Fitzwilliam presents a wide ranging public programme of major exhibitions, events and education activities, and is an internationally recognised institute of learning, research and conservation. [www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk](http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk)