

STANLEY SPENCER'S 'NUDES' SEEN IN PUBLIC AND REUNITED FOR THE FIRST TIME AS PRIVATE ART COLLECTION COMES TO THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM



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Two virtually unknown privately owned works by Sir Stanley Spencer (1891-1959) have come to the Fitzwilliam Museum on long-term loan.

The first, Stanley Spencer's 'Nude' c. 1935-42 depicting Patricia Preece in an attitude of post-coital abandon, is reunited for the first time with its pair, the Fitzwilliam's yearning painting, Stanley Spencer's 'Self-portrait with Patricia Preece' c. 1937.



Stanley Spencer 'Nude' c. 1935 - 42
© The estate of Stanley Spencer/Bridgeman Images.

These stark and shocking works have never been seen together in public before. Spencer had intended the pair to be displayed together, with a third painting, now in Tate Britain, in an aborted 'Chapel of Love' dedicated to Patricia Preece, his second wife. They portray what he himself described as 'a sort of religious fervour' for Preece, with his ill-fated infatuation and ultimate sexual humiliation. At the time they were painted, the sensitive subject of these paintings made them especially difficult to sell or even to exhibit.

The second work, 'Self-portrait' c. 1938-39, is one of only two, full length, over life size, drawings of Spencer in the nude; the other is also in a private collection. It is drawn on the reverse of a roll of

the wallpaper seen in the background of his nude oil portrait with Patricia Preece. This charcoal study has never been publically exhibited before.

According to an account given by his brother Gilbert, Spencer used to hide these nude self-portraits from his housekeeper Mrs Barnes, and when asked how he went about drawing such works, Spencer replied that he 'started with the head and went on pushing the paper over the end of the table top until the feet came up'. These works complement the Fitzwilliam's rich permanent collection of works by Stanley Spencer – only rivalled by the collection at Tate Britain.

The two new loans are part of the eclectic, private, Frua-Valsecchi Collection, a remarkable array of over 130 unusual works of art which includes a Gilbert & George collage, rare Meissen porcelain, Arts & Crafts furniture, including William Burges's 'Flax & Wool' cabinet, Art Nouveau Tiffany glass, metalwork and silver designed by Christopher Dresser and Italian Neoclassical furniture. The collection has been placed on long term loan to the Fitzwilliam Museum by the Italian Massimo and Francesca Valsecchi.



The juxtaposition of objects of different dates and cultures that Francesca and Massimo delight in has not been lost at the Fitzwilliam. The collection has been deliberately displayed throughout the galleries of the Museum to try to recapture the charm and idiosyncrasy of the Valsecchi's private displays. The collection is full of quirky, sometimes obscure, masterpieces that will appeal to the general visitor and connoisseur alike, the pieces are on display throughout the galleries and can be identified by special labels. The Frua-Valsecchi collection is initially on loan to the Fitzwilliam Museum for three years.

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

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About the Fitzwilliam Museum

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 coins, Asian arts, ceramics and other applied arts. 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

The Fitzwilliam Museum
Trumpington Street
Cambridge CB2 1RB

Free admission

OPEN: Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 - 17.00, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 – 17.00;

CLOSED: 24-26 & 31 December, 1 January, Good Friday

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