

## Adult Access Programme at the National Gallery

We would like to thank the Trustees of the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation for their generosity in supporting the National Gallery's adult access programme, which enables the Gallery to provide meaningful and enjoyable events for adult visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing or blind and partially sighted.

The National Gallery is for everyone and the paintings in the collection are held for everyone regardless of education, income, residence, or personal circumstances. The Gallery seeks to provide all visitors with access to the building and its collection, making alternative provision where required (within the constraints of a Grade 1 Listed Building).



A BSL user enjoying a talk in the Gallery.

We continue to consult with both audiences and disability experts on provision at the Gallery. Some of the facilities we provide include:

- Wheelchairs – available on request upon arrival at the Gallery
- Stools – available from the Information Desks on request.
- Four entrances have level access: the Getty, Sainsbury Wing, National Café, and Pigott

- Audio-guides with volume enhancement are provided both for exhibitions and for paintings in the permanent collection, and transcripts of audio-guides are also available
- Exhibition videos and films have subtitles and transcripts
- Large print transcripts of exhibition texts and labels
- Assistance dogs are welcome, and water is provided for them
- Induction loops are provided at the Information Desks and in the Sainsbury Wing Lecture Theatre and the Sainsbury Wing Exhibition cinema
- Visitors with disabilities can bring an escort free of charge
- A National Gallery British Sign Language multi-media tour featuring highlights from the collection, and including video clips with British Sign Language (BSL) commentaries and other visual elements, such as details of paintings and zoom functions is freely available
- An audio-guide for blind and partially sighted visitors is also available. This tour includes rich verbal descriptions of 23 key highlights from the collection, together with contextual and navigational information and prompts. Each stop provides a detailed and evocative description, to convey the emotion and initial impression that a sighted person would experience.
- A Mental health awareness audio tour was developed in 2019 and is now available free of charge. On this audio tour, visitors are invited to consider their own views on mental health and reflect on wellbeing as they are guided round the gallery. Paintings and painters are explored in ways that may be unexpected, and visitors are asked to reflect on experiences that promote greater understanding of our mental health.

During 2019, as a result of the generous support of the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation, the National Gallery has continued to provide a world class programme of enjoyable and accessible activities for deaf or hard of hearing visitors and blind or partially sighted visitors. This programme of adult access events plays an important role in ensuring that the National Gallery continues to be accessible to everyone and has enabled visitors with varying access preferences to experience, learn from, and enjoy our permanent collection and exciting exhibition programme.

There is a growing body of evidence that describes the role of museums in social inclusion and improving health and wellbeing, especially for people with disabilities, as they are more at risk of being socially isolated. This research has shown that engaging in museums provides people with positive social experiences, leading to reduced social isolation; opportunities for learning and acquiring new skills; calming experiences, leading to decreased anxiety; increased positive emotions, such as optimism, hope and enjoyment; increased self-esteem and sense of identity; increased inspiration and opportunities for meaning making.

In 2019 the Gallery held 22 different events for deaf or hard of hearing visitors and blind or partially sighted visitors, which were attended by 552 people. Some of the events that took place at the Gallery are outlined below.

### **Events for Deaf and Hard of Hearing visitors**

Free talks in British Sign Language (BSL) take place on the last Friday of the month throughout the year (excluding December). They are given by deaf lecturers or in spoken English with BSL interpretation. These events continue to be both social and interactive as well as educational. They are consistently busy and receive very positive

feedback from participants. The BSL interpreted events take place as part of the Gallery's Friday Late programme, and tickets are prioritised for BSL speakers and visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing.

All the BSL events are listed on the National Gallery website (see link):  
<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/events/access>

The BSL events are regularly promoted on the Gallery's main Facebook and Twitter social channels. Facebook updates for BSL events are sent monthly and Twitter messages are sent out twice a month.



Twitter post promoting one of our monthly BSL talks

BSL versions of our monthly newsletter are emailed quarterly to subscribers who have the BSL preference. Our email subscribers with a BSL preference have grown to 869, and our circulation list includes a variety of disability organisations, such as Shape, RNIB, British Deaf News and BL4D (Business Link for Deaf), so promoting our BSL events to a wider audience.

The following BSL events took place in 2019 and were attended by a total of 318 people.

**Exhibition introduction to Rachel Maclean: The Lion and The Unicorn**

Friday 25 January 2019, 18:30 – 19:30

Join Melissa Mostyn for a BSL tour that takes in the dialogue between Rachel Maclean's 'The Lion and The Unicorn' and Landseer's 'The Monarch of the Glen.'

### **Saints in the Frame**

Friday 22 February, 18:30 – 19:30

Join Serena Cant to explore 14th century images of saints: who are they? how can we recognise them? how do they fit within the architecture of the painting frame?

### **Constable vs Turner: British landscapes of the early 1800s**

Friday 29 March, 18:30 – 19:30

Join Alan Murray to explore the contributions and contemporary approaches that Constable and Turner brought to British landscape painting.

Landscape painters, Turner and Constable were both influential and successful artists of their time. Often pitted as rivals, Turner travelled extensively throughout his life and was known for dramatic seascapes and landscapes, while Constable who never left England, made his name depicting the nostalgic countryside of his youth.

### **Have you ever wondered how exhibitions happen?**

Friday 26 April 2019, 18:30-19:30

Meet curator Francesca Whitlum-Cooper and discover how our new Boilly exhibition came into being. Focusing on 20 works from a British private collection never previously displayed or published, this exhibition is the first of its kind in the UK. With BSL interpretation by Russell Aldersson.

### **Sorolla**

Friday 31 May 2019 18:30 - 19.30

Unearth the influence and inspirations of the Spanish Master of Light

Spanish Impressionist painter Joaquín Sorolla, was known as the 'master of light' for his luminous and vibrant canvases. He is most renowned for his portraits, landscapes, and genre scenes of Spanish life, achieving success in his own life-time. But how did he get there?

Learn about Sorolla's life and discover his interest in artists including Velázquez, Goya, and Sargent as well as the generations he in turn inspired; with interpretation by Melanie Pendrick-Wright.

### **Sean Scully: Sea Star**

Friday 28 June 2019, 18:30 - 19.30

Learn more about contemporary artist Sean Scully and the influences on his work

Join artist Rubbena Aurangzeb-Tariq and learn more about contemporary artist Sean Scully. Discover some of his new works inspired by Turner's 'The Evening Star'.

Poignant and poetic, Scully's abstract works are constructed from panels painted in oil, often with thickly applied paint to create rich, textured surfaces. Using the motif of the stripe or chequerboards, the artist evokes landscapes and architecture, horizons, fields, and coastlines; his contemplative forms become reminders of personal experiences and distinctive moments.

The exhibition charts Scully's personal journey of deep admiration for colour, composition, and the power of painting.

### **Pride & Joy: Gods and Goddesses**

Saturday 29 June 2019, 16:30 - 17:30

Search for the gods and goddesses in our collection during our Pride and Joy festival weekend. Stories of gods and goddesses have entertained and enthralled us from the dawn of civilisation. Handed down to us through Western art and culture, we are reminded of our humanity and connection with one another.

Join Deaf lecturer John Wilson to explore and learn about the gods and goddesses in our collection.





Deaf lecturer John Wilson delivering a talk in BSL in Room 9

### **Women Artists**

Friday 26 July 2019, 18:30 - 19:30

Join Chisato Minamimura to learn more about women artists in the National Gallery Collection.

### **Bermejo**

Friday 30 August 2019, 18:30 – 19:30

Join Caroline Smith and learn more about Bermejo's paintings.

This exhibition brings together seven of his rare works, six of which have never been seen in the UK. Explore how Bermejo drew inspiration from Netherlandish painting, using illusionistic effects and a rich colour palette, to become one of the greatest artists of the Spanish Renaissance. At the heart of the exhibition is Saint Michael Triumphs over the Devil, widely considered the most important early Spanish painting in Britain. Its technical skill and excellent state of preservation are even clearer following its recent year-long conservation treatment.

### **Renaissance faces**

Friday 27 September 2019, 18:30 - 19.30

Discover how artists of the Italian Renaissance reflected and expressed the individual identity and social role of their sitters through portraits. Through examples such as Titian's 'Portrait of Gerolamo (?) Barbarigo', Raphael's 'Portrait of Julius II' and Hans Holbein the Younger's 'The Ambassadors' discover the clues and symbols that unlock meaning and hidden stories in these paintings.

### **Architecture in Art**

Friday 25 October 2019, 18:30 - 19.30

Join architect, and Deaf presenter Martin Glover to consider real and imagined architectural structures and spaces in painting. From marble columns, balustrades, and turrets, to arches, windows and doors, architectural details and structures have been used by artists to create place and space within a painting for stories to unfold. Often adding depth and complexity to the scene, discover how artists used architectural structures and details to create composition and perspective in painting. You will explore examples throughout art history and the National Gallery Collection, from Crivelli to Canaletto.

### **Gauguin Portraits**

Friday 29 November 2019, 18:30 - 19.30

Join Deaf presenter John Wilson to learn more about Paul Gauguin and his work through his portraits. Spanning his early years as an artist through to his later years spent in French Polynesia, the exhibition shows how the French artist revolutionised the portrait. Featuring about 50 works, the exhibition includes paintings, works on paper, and three-dimensional objects in a variety of media, from public and private collections worldwide.

### **Blind and partially sighted visitors**

The Gallery has continued to offer a range of resources and events for blind and partially sighted visitors, to help them to experience and enjoy our paintings and exhibitions. Resources produced by the Gallery include:

#### Welcome packs

We provide both Braille information and large print versions of the Gallery's floorplan for blind and partially sighted visitors.

#### Descriptive Folders

Descriptive Folders are available at the Information Desk for use by blind and partially sighted visitors. Each folder focuses on two highlight paintings and includes descriptive text and interpretation of the paintings in either large print or Braille. In addition, the folders include photographic reproductions showing close-up sections of the painting for partially sighted visitors and tactile images for those who are blind.

#### Braille newsletters

We produce a Braille newsletter three times per year and distribute it by post and at the Gallery's Information desk for use by blind and partially sighted visitors. In addition, we also send out an Art through Words and large font e-newsletters to 33 people.

#### Smartify

Smartify allows visitors to explore the collection with their smartphone. To use Smartify in the Gallery, visitors simply must hold their smartphone up towards a painting and detailed information about the work will appear on-screen. Smartify has been developed through extensive accessibility research and works seamlessly with accessible features inbuilt in iOS and Android devices such as voice over. The Gallery has also been offering additional audio content for some paintings.

## **'Art through Words' Events**

As a result of the support of the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation, the Gallery has been able to continue its programme 'Art through Words'. A programme for visitors who are blind, partially sighted and those with no sight or no visual memory. Art Through Words uses verbal description techniques, tactile drawings and sensory experiences to enable visitors to engage directly with and have discussions about paintings in the collection.

### **The aims of the programme are:**

- Provide a unique, enriching experience for visitors.
- As well as conveying a sense of what the painting looks like in detail, it aims to evoke the atmosphere and emotional content of the painting and to offer context about the artist, techniques used and time in which it was created.
- Over time visitors can build up knowledge about Art History and the Gallery's collection
- It encourages a sense of community and confidence to participate in discussion about the paintings and what they mean to us.

Trained staff lead a description, interpretation and discussion based upon one focus painting. The first part of this takes place in a conference room, where large-scale colour reproductions are made available (A3, with extra enlarged detailed sections in a matt finish to minimise glare). Visitors with some sight can use optical devices on these enlarged images to help them to see the picture being discussed. We also provide Zyfuse raised outline drawings to help get those who prefer this method get to grips with the overall composition of the painting.

The session begins with an introduction to the painting (title, artist, medium, dimensions, subject), followed by a detailed description of what you can see. The aim is to convey both what can be seen in the painting, but also what it makes us feel and think about. Where other sensory objects are helpful to convey the atmosphere, context or texture of a painting they are specifically sourced or designed for the session. These range from soundscapes created to reflect the atmosphere of a painting, to objects helping to convey texture (from eggs, to fine silks and even snakes!) and samples of frames to convey a wider context of how the painting is displayed. Contextual and interpretive material is incorporated into the description - for example, what sort of society did the artist and original viewer live in, and what difference did that make to what was painted? The describer also communicates their personal and emotional responses to the picture, sharing how and why the painting 'works on them' and participants are encouraged to share their thoughts and questions throughout the session.

After the initial description and discussion, the group visit the gallery in which the painting is located. This enables the visitor to experience the work itself, sense the environment in which it sits; the sense of space and sounds surrounding it in its Gallery setting, which feels quite different to other spaces.

The sessions take place at 11.30am on the last Saturday of every month and lasts approximately 1 ½ hours. This programme has been running for over 10 years and has

attracted a dedicated following: numbers have increased steadily as more people hear about Art through Words. We now average 20 - 30 people per session – one of the largest audience of visitors with a visual impairment of any gallery in the country.

Due to the generosity of the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation we have been able to continue to offer these sessions free of charge.



Art Through Words session in action

All the events are listed in large print newsletters and on the National Gallery website: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/events/access>. Sessions are also advertised on the National Gallery's Facebook and Twitter pages.

Art through Words events take place on the last Saturday of the month. Sessions that took place in 2019 are listed below. A total of 234 people attended these events.

**Mignard: The Marquise de Seignelay and two of her sons**

Saturday 26 January 2019, 11:30 – 13:00

**Juan de Zurbarán: Still Life with Lemons in a Wicker Basket**

Saturday 23 February 2019, 11:30 – 13:00

**Beuckelaer's The Four Elements: Fire.**

Saturday 30 March 2019, 11:30 – 13:00

**Raphael - An Allegory ('Vision of a Knight'), about 1504 (NG213)**

Saturday 27 April 2019, 11:00 – 13:00

**Turner, Joseph Mallord William - Ulysses deriding Polyphemus - Homer's Odyssey, 1829**

Saturday 25 May 2019, 11:00 – 13:





**National Gallery**  @NationalGallery · Jul 25, 2019

On the last Saturday of every month, come and join our **Art through Words** tour for blind and partially sighted visitors. We'll begin with a detailed verbal description of a painting, and then visit the Gallery. On 27 July, explore 'The Magdalen Reading': [bit.ly/2DzTdaP](https://bit.ly/2DzTdaP)



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Promotion of 'Art through Words' events on social media

**Ruysch, Rachel - Flowers in a Vase, about 1685**

Saturday 29 June 2019, 11:00 – 13:00

**Weyden, Rogier van der - The Magdalen Reading, before 1438**

Saturday 27 July 2019, 11:00 – 13:00

**Bartolomé Bermejo - Saint Michael triumphant over the Devil with the Donor Antonio Juan, 1468**

Saturday 31 August 2019, 11:00 - 13:00

**Delaroche, Paul - The Execution of Lady Jane Grey, 1833**

Saturday 28 September 2019, 11:00 - 13:00

**Redon, Odilon - Ophelia among the Flowers, about 1905-8**

Saturday 26 October 2019, 11:00 – 13:00

**Gauguin Portraits**

Saturday 30 November 2019, 11:00 - 13:00



Participant at an 'Art Through Words' event

### **Further Developments**

We continue to work towards making the National Gallery one of the most welcoming and inspiring places in the country. Karen Eslea joined the Gallery in October 2019 as our new Head of Learning and National Programmes and is currently working on a new strategy for the department. The aim is to develop a world-leading Learning and National Programme that puts people at the centre of our work, reaching across London and the UK to those who currently have little access to our collection, igniting curiosity and exploring its relevance together. We will connect art, people and life across centuries, countries and cultures, enabling everyone to reflect, question, learn, develop new skills, meet and inspire others, play, have fun and thrive, and develop a life-long connection to The National Gallery.

The Gallery is developing an 'Atelier' programme for artists with learning difficulties and a programme 'Call to Mind' for people living with dementia and their carers. We hope to work in partnership with experts, charities and health and social care organisations to build these into world-leading programmes which can connect with others, nationally and internationally.

### **Our thanks to The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation**

We are enormously grateful to the Trustees of the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation for their generous support for the National Gallery's adult access programme. Your support enables the National Gallery to provide rewarding opportunities for visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing and blind or partially sighted to engage with and learn from our collection. These programmes not only provide stimulating learning opportunities, but also the chance for participants to meet up with like-minded friends and peers.

Thank you for your help and support for this valuable programme.