

HERMITAGE FOUNDATION UK 2015 ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2015 The Hermitage Foundation UK agreed to be responsible for the management of an offshore Endowment Fund held in trust for The Hermitage. It is structured under a 'Declaration of Trust' which sets out our legal responsibilities. An advisory committee on the use of the income was set up and three representatives of the Russian Hermitage joined the board, the Director Professor Piotrovsky, Ekaterina Sirakanian, Head of Development, and Larissa Zelkova, director of the Potanin Foundation. Two initial donations were received, one of €1.5 million and another of \$1 million.

Our Annual Gala was co-hosted by Professor Piotrovsky and Inna Bazhenova, the new publisher of the Art Newspaper. It was held at Spencer House, and was a great social and fundraising success. Auction lots included works by Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, Maggi Hambling, and several dining and travel opportunities. It was attended by Lord Rothschild, Viscount Linley, the Chairman of Christie's, and several museum directors.

As part of the Hermitage's 250th anniversary celebrations a major exhibition of Francis Bacon's work was held at The State Hermitage Museum, opening in December 2014. *Francis Bacon and the Masters* then travelled to the UK. Professor Piotrovsky came to England in April to open this exhibition at The Sainsbury Centre in Norwich. A private view was also arranged for the London Friends with the curator to lead them round. This fascinating exhibition showed Bacon's obsession with the art of the past. Works by Rembrandt, Velazquez, Picasso, Cézanne, Matisse and Van Gogh from the Hermitage were juxtaposed with Bacon's paintings from the Sainsbury Centre and items from his studio.

We contributed operational help and funding to the summer exhibition *Zaha Hadid at the Hermitage Museum*, which was voted the best exhibition of the year in a St Petersburg museum.

The Friends of The Hermitage Foundation UK were responsible for the restoration of a portrait of the Duke of Wellington by Francois Gérard. The canvas had been found rolled up in the vaults of the Hermitage, having been previously assumed lost.

Numerous events were organised for the London Friends of the Hermitage including private views of *Inventing Impression* (National Gallery), *Every Object Tells a Story* (Oliver Hoare's Cabinet of Curiosities), *Louis Vuitton Series 3* (130 Strand), *Candida Hofer: Memory* (Ben Brown Fine Arts) and the hugely popular exhibition *Ai Weiwei* at the Royal Academy. VIP passes were also arranged for Frieze, Chelsea Art Fair, BADA Antiques Fair and the International Art and Antiques Fair.

We arranged a launch of Professor Piotrovsky's new book, *My Hermitage*, at the Russian Ambassador's residence in October 2015 which was attended by many friends and patrons. The next day he gave a well attended lecture at the Victoria & Albert Museum.

We facilitated a trip to St Petersburg for visually impaired students from the specialist school, The WESC Foundation in Exeter. We arranged a free private tour of the State Hermitage Museum on a day that it was closed to the public. In their letter of thanks they praised everyone who had helped them get around in St Petersburg, a city not known for its accessibility to those with visual impairment or reduced mobility.

The Visiting Curators Scheme again offered opportunities to several members of staff from St Petersburg. Ekaterina Nekrasova, Curator of Medieval Collections, Dimitrii Vasko, Assistant in the Department of Classical Antiquities, Daria Lazarevskaya, Curator of carved hardstone and mosaics, Maria Postarnak, Curator of Coins of the Far East and Julia Elikhina, Curator of the Mongolian, Tibetan and Khotan collections, came to London this year to meet their colleagues, work on catalogues and study new techniques and displays in the Museums in the United Kingdom.

One of our previous Visiting Curators, Marina Lopato, Curator of European Silver, travelled to London to launch the English translation of her catalogue on British Silver in the State Hermitage Museum. A reception and book signing was held at the Silver Vaults when Marina talked about the small but internationally renowned collection.

