

A Great Commerce in Curious Paintings: the role and practices of art dealers and agents in the reception and re-evaluation of pre-1500 European paintings in Britain 1800-1865



The Picture Galleries, The Bowes Museum, c.1900. Image Courtesy of The Bowes Museum.

AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership Studentship in collaboration with The Bowes Museum, The National Gallery, London and the University of Leeds.

The School of Fine Art, History of Art & Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds, The Bowes Museum and the National Gallery are pleased to announce a funded studentship for doctoral research, awarded under the AHRC's Collaborative Doctoral Partnership Scheme.

The acquisition of pre-1500 paintings of the Italian, German and Netherlandish Schools was of limited interest to collectors in Britain during the first decades of the nineteenth century. Such art, often categorized as 'curiosities' and known at the time as 'Primitives' or 'Ancient Masters', was collected by a few pioneering individuals but during the second quarter of the 19th century tastes had begun to shift and by the 1860s such paintings were also appearing with increasing frequency in public art collections in Britain. Such a shift in taste is illustrated by the collecting activities of John Bowes (1811-1885), one of the founders of the Bowes Museum, who in 1840 acquired a number of 'Ancient Master' paintings from the auction sale of the Duke of Lucca's collection. In the same period the acquisition policy at the National Gallery was paying increasing attention to 'Ancient Masters'. This places both The Bowes Museum and the National Gallery at the nexus of these significant shifts.

To date the histories of art collections have concentrated on the role of collectors and institutional histories in the expanding taste for art collecting in the early 19th century and consequently comparatively little is known about the art dealers and

agents who facilitated the increasing desire for 'Ancient Masters'. This studentship offers the potential to investigate the collecting activities of John Bowes and the developments at the National Gallery as two interconnected case studies, set against the the developing art market for 'Primitives', in the period. The research aims to shed new light on the mechanisms by which collectors and institutions built up their collections of early art. The focus on the Bowes Museum and the National Gallery could be further contextualised through comparative studies of other collections in the period which also amassed early art through art dealers and agents. The research will contribute significantly towards the understanding of and potential interpretation of the extensive collections of early paintings at both the Bowes and National Gallery.

The project is flexible enough to allow a student to develop their own ideas with this broad framework, but some key research questions could be:

- What were the criteria for the inclusion of 'Ancient Master' paintings in collections in the opening decades of the 19th century? How did these criteria shift by the 1860s?
- What role did the structures, rhythms and dynamics of the art market play in the increasing interest in 'Ancient Master' paintings?
- How were collections of 'Ancient Master' paintings introduced and circulated in the art market? How did art dealers and agents respond to or stimulate demand?
- Who were the key art dealers in 'Ancient Masters' in the period? What constituted their expertise?
- What was the relationship between evolving notions of connoisseurship and art market structures?
- What were the relationships between the collecting activities of John Bowes and the developments of the collections at the National Gallery?
- How influential were art dealers in the assembly of the collections of John Bowes and at the National Gallery?

It is envisaged that the research will underpin new museum interpretations on the history of the collections and individual paintings.

Subject to AHRC eligibility criteria, the award will cover tuition fees and a standard AHRC grant of £14,777 per year towards living expenses for three years; plus £550 additional stipend payment for Collaborative Doctoral Students. This studentship also includes an additional six months funding to contribute towards expenses for a Student Development Project (SDP). In addition, the student will receive additional support of £1,000 per year towards research expenses from The Bowes

Museum/National Gallery Consortium over the course of the research studentship. The successful applicant will be able to participate in additional training and other opportunities provided to CDP students by The Bowes Museum/National Gallery CDP Consortium and receive Museum staff passes for Bowes/NG, access to a workspace with computer at Bowes Museum, and research library access and staff privileges at Bowes/NG. The student will also have access to all of the research support provided to PGR students at the University of Leeds and be part of the Centre for the Study of the Art & Antiques Market (www.csaam.leeds.ac.uk) in the School of Fine Art, History of Art & Cultural Studies.

This studentship will be supervised by Dr Mark Westgarth, University of Leeds, Dr Howard Coutts at The Bowes Museum and Dr Susanna Avery-Quash at the National Gallery. This full time studentship is funded for 3.5 years and will begin 1 October 2018.

For more information on how to apply for this studentship see the University of Leeds Scholarships website – a University of Leeds application form for PhD study is available on the website.

In place of the standard personal statement and research proposal, please construct an alternative, **two-page** statement to convey your motivation and enthusiasm for this project, and to demonstrate your suitability for your intended studies at the University of Leeds, The Bowes Museum and The National Gallery. It should include examples that draw on relevant work, voluntary or study experiences and illustrate the transferable skills you will use when you become a CDP student (for example, time management, project management, communication skills, problem solving and working with museum collections).

It should highlight the following:

- Your interest in this project and details on why you have chosen the University of Leeds, The Bowes Museum and the National Gallery
- How you will apply your current skills, knowledge and experience to undertaking a PhD and completing this project
- How the project fits into your career plans and ambitions

Please note that two references will be required. See the application form for details.

The completed application form and both references must be received by the deadline of 5pm Wednesday 11th April 2018. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure referees submit references on time.

Interviews are scheduled to be held at The Bowes Museum on 17th or 18th May 2018.

Applicants should have a good undergraduate degree in History, Art History or another relevant discipline, satisfy AHRC eligibility requirements including Masters-level advanced research training or equivalent, and be able to demonstrate an active interest in art history, art museums and archival research. Applications from those who have a working knowledge of Italian will be welcomed but this is not essential.

Applicants must be a resident of the UK or European Economic Area (EEA). In general, full studentships are available to students who are settled in the UK and have been ordinarily resident for a period of at least three years before the start of postgraduate studies. Fees-only awards are generally available to EU nationals resident in the EEA. International applicants are normally not eligible to apply for this studentship.

Informal enquires can be made, or further details about the research project's scope discussed, by contacting Dr Mark Westgarth (m.w.westgarth@leeds.ac.uk), Dr Howard Coutts (howard.coutts@thebowesmuseum.org) or Dr Susanna Avery-Quash (susanna.avery.quash@national-gallery.org) or more information on the AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award scheme, please see [here](#), and for students' eligibility requirements, please see the AHRC Student Funding Guide.