

Major new touring exhibition traces the stories of Arthurian legend and the Pre-Raphaelite artists across the UK

- **Three renowned British museums tell the story of the links between Arthurian legend and the Pre-Raphaelites**
- **Brings the entire Lady of Shalott series of paintings by John William Waterhouse together for the first time ever**

Plans have been announced to stage a major touring exhibition at three renowned British public museums, telling the story for the first time of the links between Arthurian legend, Pre-Raphaelite artists and UK locations linked to the story of King Arthur – and providing an exclusive opportunity to see the entire Lady of Shalott series of paintings by John William Waterhouse together for the first time.

Curated by Natalie Rigby of Falmouth Art Gallery, **The Legend of King Arthur: A Pre-Raphaelite Love Story** traces the legend of King Arthur and signposts the various relics and landmarks across the country - creating an immersive experience allowing audiences to walk in Arthur's footsteps and seeing it through new eyes in a year-long gallery tour.

The William Morris Gallery in London, Tullie House in Carlisle and Falmouth Art Gallery in Cornwall were selected for their connection to the stories of King Arthur, with each stage of the tour tweaked to tell the stories of their particular region.

Each gallery will be exhibiting work by Pre-Raphaelite artists such as William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones and John William Waterhouse amongst many others. The exhibition will also feature the work of Pre-Raphaelite women artists including Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale, Emma Sandys and Elizabeth Siddal.

The exhibition debuts at William Morris Gallery in London running from 14 October 2022 – 22 January 2023 before moving to Tullie House in Carlisle from 4 February 2023 to 3 June 2023. – allowing members of the public to visit their nearest gallery to experience this ground-breaking exhibition.

The final stage of the exhibition sees it arrive in Cornwall – long-known for its geographical connections to the legend of King Arthur – finding a home at Falmouth Art Gallery from 17 June 2023 until 30 September 2023.

Falmouth Art Gallery has secured the entire Lady of Shalott series of paintings by English painter John William Waterhouse as a major part of the exhibition. Painted over a twenty-year period, these have never been exhibited together in the UK, providing an exclusive and unique opportunity to see them all together in Cornwall. Oil studies, drawings and sketchbooks from the series and Waterhouse's personal copy of 'Tennyson's Poems' with drawings and annotations will also be displayed.

The 12-month touring exhibition brings together large oil paintings, sketches and oil studies, illustrated books, sketchbooks and etchings at all three galleries, with exhibits differing slightly between the galleries – all exploring the King Arthur legend through the lens of Pre-

Raphaelite artists and their followers, who were challenging the conventional paintings they had typically seen at the Royal Academy in the mid-1800s.

Natalie Rigby, curator of Falmouth Art Gallery who has spent over six years putting this exhibition together, said: “This project has awoken a childhood obsession with King Arthur, so it has been incredibly cathartic to curate this exhibition. It has taken many years of hard work and has been an absolute pleasure to discover the links to Cornwall. I hope to ignite this passion I’ve experienced in visitors young and old.”

She added: “This exhibition has purposely been curated as a regional museum tour - which means that important better-known works by the Pre-Raphaelites can be exhibited in selected museums and galleries in the UK, ones that are synonymous with the Arthurian legend.”

William Morris Gallery represents the south-east of England, the area where the round table was built and where Excalibur was encased as the ‘Sword in the Stone’. It is also closely related to the fictional ‘**Astolat**’, a place which is associated with Lancelot’s affair with Elaine, the Lily Maid of Astolat, whose story inspired Tennyson’s ‘Lady of Shalott’.

Tullie House’s location in Carlisle is surrounded by ancient battle sites associated with King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. It also very closely associated with Lancelot and Guinevere’s love affair and subsequently Guinevere’s death.

Falmouth Art Gallery will be working with a number of visitor attractions and landmarks across the county to create a storytelling heritage trail filled with sites linked to the Arthurian legend – including the world-famous Tintagel Castle.

Cornwall is home to a number of key sites linked to the legend of King Arthur including Arthur’s birthplace and castle, and Merlin’s cave at Tintagel, the battle site between King Arthur and Mordred, the site of the Lady of the Lake, the location of Excalibur at Loe Bar and the Tristan stone in Fowey.

A fully illustrated book will accompany the exhibition. Published by Sansom & Company, it will feature essays by internationally recognised Arthurian specialists and explores the legend and its influence on the Victorian period. An Arthurian Quest card game and jigsaw will also be released by Laurence King Publishing in 2023.

This exhibition has been kindly supported by Visit Cornwall, Visit England and Cornwall Museums Partnership. This exhibition was made possible with Art Fund support.

Find out more about the forthcoming exhibition and plans for its launch here:

<https://open.falculture.org/2022/08/05/arthur/>

<https://www.wmgallery.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions-43/the-legend-of-king-arthur-a-pre-raphaelite-love-story/>

Photography

All images can be downloaded here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/p2k2687u915fgmb/AACqto69C9PmVLh7uxN5mtFda?dl=0>

Available imagery includes:

- Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898), *Lancelot at the Chapel of the Holy Grail*, 1896–98. Oil on canvas, 138.5 x 169.8 cms. Southampton City Art Gallery

- Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898) and William Morris (1834–1896), *The Arming and Departure of the Knights of the Round Table on the Quest for the Holy Grail* (The Holy Grail Tapestries), 1890–94. Tapestry in cotton, wool and silk, 244 x 362 cms. The Jimmy Page Collection
- Arthur Hughes (1832–1915), *The Rift Within the Lute*, 1861–62. Oil on canvas, 52 x 92 cms. Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle
- Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), *Tristram and Isolde Drinking the Love Potion*, 1867. Mixed media, 62.3 x 59.1 cms. The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum, Bedford
- John William Waterhouse (1849–1917), *Study for 'The Lady of Shalott'*, 1894. Oil on canvas, 121 x 69 cms. Falmouth Art Gallery

Editorial notes

The exhibition will feature works from many major museums and Private Collections across the UK and beyond including Art Gallery Ontario, Birmingham Museums Trust, Bradford Museums and Galleries, Leeds City Art Gallery, Southampton City Art Gallery, TATE, V & A, London, Walker Art Gallery , Liverpool, William Morris Gallery and the Jimmy Page Collection London, and project partners including Visit Cornwall, Visit England, Visit Britain, Cornwall Museums Partnership, National Trust, English Heritage, Christies London, Sotheby's London, Bonhams London, and Paul Reeves, London.

For further enquiries

Natalie Rigby is available for media interviews.

All requests to be directed to:

Lauren Webb
Roscoe Communications
lauren@talktoroscoe.com
07915 083079