

CORNWALL MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

Press Release

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Museum to re-open in March with new art gallery

One of Cornwall's major museums is set to reopen this March, when it will incorporate a spectacular new art gallery showcasing a nationally significant art collection.

Formerly Royal Cornwall Museum, the landmark building in the centre of Truro will throw open its doors again next month under a new name - Cornwall Museum and Art Gallery - ushering in a fresh era in the history of this 200-year-old institution.

The organisation is part-way through a major transformation which began with the Mineral Gallery last year and will continue with improvements to the upper galleries and facilities in 2026/27.

A new visual identity and [website](#) has also been revealed this week, reflecting an aspiration to become one of the UK's most exciting regional museums.

Julie Caplin-Grey, Chair of the Trustees, described the evolution of the museum and the resurrection of the art gallery as "a bold step into the future while respecting the past."

Artistic Director Bryony Robins expanded: "At times during our history we have been known as an art gallery as well as a museum because of the notable collection of paintings, sculptures, and drawings. When we took a step back and looked at our holdings and exhibitions, it was clear that we could and should be a museum and an art gallery once again."

Alongside the large number of works from the permanent collection going on display in March there will be a busy programme of art exhibitions, beginning with Kurt Jackson's *Biodiversity* and continuing with *Exploring Time: A Painter's Perspective* by artist and environmentalist, Tony Foster.

However, with over 500 artworks in the permanent collection dating from the 1300s to the present day, art lovers will need few excuses for regular visits to soak up works from the German, Italian and Dutch renaissances, English history and landscape paintings, the Pre-Raphaelite and Newlyn schools, and St Ives modernism.

The towering walls of the second-floor balcony, which overlook the central gallery, will be put to maximum use with a 'salon hang', meaning paintings will be displayed virtually from floor to ceiling, while cases will display sculptures and fragile works on paper.

Robins elaborates: "Works will be grouped together in a mixture of themes and movements, inviting connections across space and time and prompting visitors to make associations with historical objects elsewhere in the museum."

Jackson, one of Britain's best-known contemporary artists, commented: "I'm delighted to be exhibiting my project, *Biodiversity*, at the Cornwall Museum and Art Gallery in its new incarnation, and I'm looking forward to seeing the permanent collection on display too. Art isn't meant to be stored away for posterity, it's meant to inspire and provoke, to elicit conversations and creative responses, and that's exactly what this new art gallery for Cornwall will do."

Robins adds: "The founders of the museum wanted to enable cultural experiences for all – something which remains a cornerstone of our mission today. With an updated name and a new look, we're inviting a whole new generation to engage afresh with the incredible cultural riches of Cornwall."

To find out more, visit the new website at www.cornwallmuseum.org

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About Us

Cornwall Museum and Art Gallery in the heart of Truro is home to a treasure trove of art and artefacts shedding light on what makes Cornwall such a unique and special place. As well as the permanent collections, the museum has an exciting and diverse programme of exhibitions to discover each year.

An Annual Pass costs £10, while members and Under 18s are free.

Our Transformation

In January 2024 we began transforming the building - home to our 200-year-old institution and more than one million artefacts. We're improving accessibility, fixing the building to secure our collections, and making the visitor experience more engaging. This stage of the museum's transformation has been made possible thanks to funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund delivered via Cornwall Council, Truro Town Deal & Arts Council England.

The origins of the art collection

The RIC's collection was begun over 200 years ago for philanthropic purposes. At the time education was a privilege rather than a right, which meant many people were excluded from cultural experiences. And, with the prohibitive cost and time of travel, people who lived in Cornwall rarely got to see a wide range of paintings and sculptures. The founders of the RIC

wanted to create 'a V&A for Cornwall' - a space which inspired, where knowledge could be shared, and where ideas could be discussed freely.

Curator's note

The way the art collection of the RIC was amassed – often through donations from individuals - means that it grew from the interests and tastes of a narrow section of society; namely wealthy white men. Both the artists themselves and their subjects follow this pattern, and we're painfully aware that women, ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ+ people are chronically underrepresented on these walls. This is something we will be working hard to redress in the coming years.

Some key works to look out for

Study of Three Girls' Heads by Lucas Cranach the elder dates from c.1525. One of the stars of the RIC collection, this is thought to be a triple portrait of Cranach's three daughters, or possibly a study for a now destroyed painting of the Judgement of Paris. It was gifted to the RIC in 1824.

Other famous names featuring in the collection include John Constable, William Hogarth, Terence Tenison Cuneo, Peter Lanyon, Bryan Pearce, Henry Scott Tuke, Stanhope Forbes, Christopher Wood and John Opie. There are also works thought to be from the studios or circles of Claude Lorrain, Willem van de Velde II, Giorgio Vasari, Jan Brueghel the elder, and Masaccio.

More about the opening art exhibition, Kurt Jackson's *Biodiversity*

Kurt Jackson is one of Britain's best-known contemporary artists. He's also a passionate environmentalist whose work actively calls attention to the beauty, complexity, and increasing fragility of the natural world.

In *Biodiversity*, Jackson opens windows onto different locations across the UK and explores the spectrum of plant and animal life found there. From train tracks to ancient woodland, peat bogs to urban streams, ecological processes come under the scrutiny of his painterly eye.

Through paintings, sculpture, and mixed media works, Jackson shows what an ecologically rich world we still live in, but also how things are changing – themes which are explored in depth in our newly reimagined Nature Gallery.

What else is there to see and do in March?

When the museum reopens in March, visitors will also be able to see and take part in Withy Lore – an exhibition celebrating the craft and heritage of Withy Pot making.

St Petrocs Portraits is a group exhibition of portraits in tribute to the clients and staff of Cornish homelessness charity, St Petrocs. Original Rebels by Camilla Dixon and collaborators, also continues.

The museum's Ancient Civilisations Gallery remains the same, as does the Mineral Gallery which was creatively reimagined and successfully reopened last summer.

There's also a busy programme of events planned with something for everyone, from children's theatre to film screenings, Museum Lates to lunchtime talks.

Additional Info

Cornwall Museum and Art Gallery is a registered charity (Registered Charity Number 1150749)

This phase of the project to transform the museum has received £2.3m from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which is being managed locally by the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Good Growth Programme. For more information, visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

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