

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY – SELF-ASSESSMENT

1 What is the strategic vision of your museum?

The National Portrait Gallery wishes to be a dynamic and influential collection of international importance – an authoritative and innovative leader in the understanding and enjoyment of portraiture. This ambition has led the Gallery to become one of the most successful of national museums and the 11th most visited visitor attraction in the United Kingdom.

The Gallery has two overarching aims (defined in the Museums and Galleries Act 1992) ‘to promote through the medium of portraits the appreciation and understanding of the men and women who have made and are making British history and culture’ and ‘to promote the appreciation and understanding of portraiture in all media’. The Gallery interprets these aims broadly and openly – responsive to the changing context of the 21st Century. It wants to encourage a wide interest in portraiture, both as the recording of great women and men, and as an engaging and complex artform in its own right.

Since 2003 these aims have been pursued through six objectives:

To **extend and broaden the range of audiences** for the National Portrait Gallery and its work

To **develop the Collection**, creating opportunities for acquisition and commission, while improving its care and conservation

To **increase the understanding of and engagement with the Collection** and its subjects through bringing more of the reference collections into use, and through outstanding research, displays and exhibition, education, access, publishing, information, regional and digital programmes, and a higher national and public profile

To **maximize the financial resources** available through both public and private sector support, trading and licensing and through the effective management of the Gallery’s assets and resources

To **develop staff** as an essential resource through the extension of staff diversity, training, development and learning programmes

To **bring the buildings, technical and managerial infrastructure of the Gallery to the highest standards**, including processes, systems, collection storage and staff accommodation

These objectives have formed the central axis of the Gallery’s Three Year Corporate Plan (Document 7), linked to the Gallery’s budgets, to departmental plans and personal objectives set in individual performance review meetings, and to the risk assessment framework (Document 11).

2 How do you measure success and excellence in meeting it?

The success of the Gallery's programming and the strength of its audience development work is measured directly in the number of visits, and the degree of visitor satisfaction expressed in visitor comments together with audience evaluations undertaken three times each year (currently by Morris Hargreaves Macintyre; see summary in Document 19).

The Gallery monitors a number of key performance indicators which are checked and circulated through monthly management reports (an example of which is Document 10), and are reported to the Trustees at their quarterly meetings.

Many other forms of evaluation also come into play, relating to specific objectives, including:

- The number of significant acquisitions across the range of the Collection
- The response to new portrait commissions
- The availability of the Collection through displays, cataloguing and research
- Numbers of website visits compared to peer institutions
- The degree of interest from other museums – within the UK and internationally - in the exhibitions offered for collaboration or tour (Document 3 shows the future exhibitions programme)
- Internal evaluation of loan exhibitions (an example is Document 20)
- Sales of catalogues and publications
- The status of the Gallery as an Independent Research Organisation with AHRC and support for research projects
- The degree of interest from academics and research institutions wishing to work on projects with the Gallery
- Citations of the Gallery's exhibitions and research activities in scholarly reviews and journals
- Press interest and coverage
- Proportion of self-generated income and level of donations
- Critical commentary from trustees and members of the Development Board
- Feedback from the biennial Staff Survey (Document 18)
- Reports from Internal Audit (AHL; Document 13) and External Audit (National Audit Office; Document 12)

3 What has gone well recently? What hasn't?

Over the past two years (since the celebration of the 150th anniversary year in 2006) the Gallery's successes include:

- Increasing the number of visits to above 1.6m (08-09 is likely to be above 1.7m), and increasing the proportion of family visitors, younger visitors, and those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds
- Making a number of very significant acquisitions from John Donne (with a successful appeal to raise £1.4m), John Fletcher, Richard Arkwright, and Lady Dacre and her Son, to R.B.Kitaj's self portrait, David Hockney's *Self-Portrait with Charlie* and many photographs, including Edward Steichen's *Charles Laughton* and James Joyce by Berenice Abbott
- Establishing and building the Portrait Fund, now standing at £3.4m
- Commissioning exceptional portraits including *Zaha Hadid* by Michael Craig-Martin and *Akram Khan* by Darvish Fakhr
- Creating a system for donations to support the Collection allied to the purchase of exhibition tickets, which qualifies for Gift-Aid and added £40k to acquisition funds last year
- Completing the Getty-funded catalogue of the later Victorian portraits (phase one) and the Paul Mellon-funded Later Stuart catalogue, continuing Leverhulme Fellowships and developing the major collaborative research project *Making Art in Tudor Britain*
- Achieving more than 14 million visits to the website, extending digitisation of the collection to nearly 60,000 images of portraits, and re-building the website for re-launch in November 2008
- Making an inventive set of displays of the Collection and developing interpretation for them and for loan exhibitions
- Creating successful exhibitions, including *David Hockney Portraits* (also Boston and Los Angeles), *Face of Fashion* (two awards for innovative marketing), *Pop Art Portraits* (also Stuttgart), *Brilliant Women: 18th Century Bluestockings*, *Vanity Fair Portraits* (Lucie Award, New York, and also Edinburgh, Los Angeles, Canberra and Toronto) and two highly successful competitions for new portrait work, the *BP Portrait Award* and the *Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize*.
- Producing the larger trade edition of *Vanity Fair Portraits*, with 60,000 copies sold into the US market
- A sequence of displays, special web material and activities for the Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the first Act towards the abolition of the slave trade.
- Developing programmes for the Olympic summer of 2008 and planning projects and exhibitions for the Cultural Olympiad

- Developing new Learning and Access programmes, including *Reaching Out and Drawing In* funded by the HLF, video-conferencing, work with Hospital Schools and the Online Learning Project led by the V&A.
- Creation of the National Portrait Gallery Trading Company in April 2006, and the recruitment of an independent member of the Board
- Collaboration with the National Trust, including new displays and access at Beningbrough Hall and new collaboration with Bristol University leading to a new display at Montacute House
- Creating *Understanding British Portraits*, the Subject Specialist Network for portraiture (Document 17) and early development on the *Portrait Finder*
- Developing internships, and collaborating with the Courtauld MA programme, the Diversify scheme and the Inspire Fellowships
- Creating new display spaces on the Balcony and the Landing and making new lift access so that the last inaccessible space in the building was made wheel-chair accessible with support from the Wolfson/DCMS Fund
- Upgrading the IT system servers, renewing network cabling and establishing an online purchasing system, Soprano, and introducing IT information systems, EOS and CALM, for the Library and Gallery records
- Installing more cost and energy efficient boilers and new chillers.
- A £5m pledge from the Lerner Foundation to be used towards building the Portrait Fund, and digitisation, outreach and research work
- Taylor Wessing taking on the headline sponsorship for the Photographic Portrait Prize, Herbert Smith becoming the Gallery's Spring Season sponsor and continuing to gain new sponsors such as British Land and Bank of New York Mellon

In the same period, difficulties for the Gallery have included:

- DCMS's inability to consider the Gallery's considered submission for increased funding as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review
- The lack of forward commitment from DCMS and DCFS on the Strategic Commissioning Programme
- The stalling of the Tate's National Art Collections Centre project in which the Gallery is a key partner
- The *Facing Out* project, working in collaboration with communities and regional venues, not being supported by the HLF; nor did the Gallery's bid under the *Collecting Cultures* strand receive funding.
- Serious damage to two works on display in August 07 and October 2008
- Lehman Brothers going into administration and therefore no longer being able to be sponsor of the *Gerhard Richter Portraits* exhibition for February 2009.

4 What are your particular plans and how will you fulfil them?

The Gallery is formulating a new Strategic Plan for 2009-15, a draft of which is submitted with this self-assessment (Document 6).

The Strategic Plan focuses on various goals:

- Continuing to broaden and diversify audiences
- Improving the displays, responding to the challenges of limited display space with innovative rotations of the Collection and new approaches to portraiture
- Upgrading facilities, services and programmes at St Martin's Place and therefore the visitor experience
- Maximising opportunities for developing the Collection, with the support of the Portrait Fund, and including new commissions
- Extending collections-related research and building on the facilities of the Heinz Archive and Library
- Developing outstanding exhibitions of international excellence, significance and impact
- Extending the learning and outreach programmes in innovative ways
- Consolidating the national programme of collaboration with both historic houses and public museums
- Building on a new website to offer enhanced digital materials and links to other portrait collections
- Ensuring that the Gallery stays ahead with appropriate IT investment
- Making the most of the Gallery's over-stretched buildings
- Ensuring that the Gallery reduces its use of natural resources
- Re-housing the paintings and sculptures in store and improving the frame conservation facilities
- Developing further financial support over and above grant-in-aid, even in difficult financial times
- Persuading government of the Gallery's case for investment
- Enhancing the Gallery's ability to gain income from trading activities
- Continuing to promote staff development, diversity and good governance

The Gallery's staff and Trustees are very determined to build on the progress achieved in recent years. Achieving all of the goals above will be difficult

without extra support, despite the creative use of very limited resources and strict control of both costs and commitments.

The Gallery uses a three-year planning system, with a revised Corporate Plan (Document 7, linked to Departmental Plans and Risk Registers) for each new financial year which is approved in February by the Trustees. Recent work has gone into revising the planning system in order to make it more responsive to change, and more closely aligned with programme and budget decision-making in each department. The Corporate Plan includes key performance indicators which assist in monitoring whether the Gallery is achieving its objectives. Regular review of the Risk Register contributes both to monitoring and to forward planning (Document 11).

The Gallery's budget setting and planning are also linked to the annual review of each staff member's work (together with discussion of development and training) and to an annual Manpower Planning and Staff Review which assesses pressures and changes in staff requirements. The same meeting reviews pay levels in particular areas of staffing, and in relation to individual cases. The Gallery works hard to offer the best it can by way of pay, training and recognition for its staff, in order to support complex cross-departmental projects and maintain the most creative working environment. The work culture of the Gallery is team-based - supportive, engaging, flexible and ambitious.

5 What challenges and opportunities do you foresee in undertaking them?

The challenges faced by the Gallery include:

- The downturn in the economy reducing sponsorship and support from corporate members, trusts, individuals and restricting income from ticketing and events
- The continuing threat of terrorist activity in central London
- Restricted buildings, both for display and storage, given the extraordinary number of visits being made and the standard of care of the collections now expected
- Finding the best way to improve storage of the Collection (Document 14)
- The inability of the Gallery to negotiate pay directly with its staff without heavy Treasury restrictions
- Responding to the complex, diverse and changing nature of the population of London and Britain today
- The potential constraint on the Gallery's ability to deploy and expend its reserves (such as the Portrait Fund) as they are subject to the Treasury's End Year Flexibility (EYF) restrictions

- Government failing to invest in the best national museums (the Gallery has received consistently less than £5 per visitor)
- The Gallery being unable to sustain current levels of success while remaining seriously under-resourced
- Increasing competition amongst those London museums making loan exhibitions

The particular opportunities for the Gallery include:

- A public which likes the National Portrait Gallery, its collection, its scale and its engaging culture
- Continuing to make the most of its location in the centre of London
- Ensuring that the Gallery's website is in the top five UK museum and gallery websites
- Moving forward with key academic and national partners
- Developing the Trading Company so that it can contribute more to net earnings
- Taking further the collaborations with broadcasters, digital and print publishers
- Fulfilling the desire for collaboration in the use of the Gallery's collections around the country
- The continued interest in portraiture from artists and photographers
- The strong links between portraiture and issues of identity, representation and nationhood
- The commitment of conscientious, engaged and motivated staff members

6 Do you have the leadership needed to achieve your goals and are you positioned to be adaptable to change?

Leadership

The Gallery is fortunate to have, under Professor David Cannadine's chairmanship, a strong, diverse board of Trustees, with a well-developed sense of the critical, supportive and over-arching role that they play in the life of the Gallery.

In recent years the Board has developed a 'governance review session' as part of its annual Review Day. In 2007 the Trustees completed a self-assessment process (see Document 16) which, amongst other things, helped the Board determine the need for a new Strategic Plan (Document 6). Trustees contribute to the Development Board, under the leadership of Amelia Fawcett, Deputy Chair, which involves high-level volunteers advising on

corporate sector fundraising and individual giving. The Audit and Compliance Committee is led by David Ross and involves three other Trustees as members. Professor Robert Boucher acts a 'Finance Trustee', taking the time to examine, on behalf of the Board, management reports and budgets in closer detail.

The Trustees' discussions in recent years have been concerned to improve the systems of governance and management, to increase the base resources for the organisation while also allowing an expanded ambition for the collection and the programme that surrounds it. Much of this is steered by the Director, Sandy Nairne, working in close concert with the senior management team. In 2007, as a measure of the strength of the Gallery's leadership, the Director was able to take up a Visiting Fellowship awarded by the Clark Institute in Williamstown in order to undertake his own research work. The senior team was recently reinforced with Jacob Simon, Chief Curator and Pim Baxter, Director of Communications and Development, being made Deputy Directors in April 2008.

The leadership of the Gallery is consolidated in a Senior Management Team, which meets each fortnight (and has an annual Awayday for longer term thinking and planning) and is supported by a Planning Team of key members with the larger budget responsibilities (Document 4). Much work is organised through project teams, and the ethos is combine planning ahead with being flexible in responding to opportunity or changing circumstance.

Considerable effort has gone into improving the programme of training and staff development at the Gallery. The Gallery is now in the third year of offering to all mid-level managers a nine-month management course devised with the Institute of Learning and Management. Much stress is placed on the 'development' section of staff performance review meetings, and 'bite-size' skills training is offered on many topics. On various occasions more junior staff have been asked to cover for senior colleagues (undertaking research or other projects) in order to advance skills and gain experience. The Gallery has had two colleagues selected as Clore Cultural Leadership Fellows, and the Director regularly contributes to the Clore programme as well mentoring on this and other programmes. The aim is to make the National Portrait Gallery a 'learning organisation' in which sharing skills, improving knowledge and developing leadership and management is the responsibility of each member of staff.

The Gallery also aims to improve its leadership and public service through remaining acutely aware of its public accountability and the transparency with which it should undertake its work at all times. Copies of Visitor Comments are circulated to all members of the Management team and all members of staff are accessible through the website (including the Director).

The Gallery undertook the second biennial Staff Survey in 2008 as a way of testing which changes affect staff most and what internal developments have been the most effective (Document 18).

Adaptability

The Gallery takes a broad view of cultural and museum developments, through its own contacts and through participation in organisations such as the National Museums Directors' Conference, Museums Association and the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions. Within that broader view it is well-placed to respond to opportunity by holding appropriate monies in reserve (in the Investment and Contingency Fund) through which new programmes can be developed – although longer-term funding is always an issue.

More specifically, the nature of the Gallery's unique commissions programme is risk-taking and to some degree opportunistic, assessing individual achievement, while also taking a view about history and a longer-term perspective about what and who will be celebrated in the future.

There are many other occasions when the Gallery has responded to new opportunities - whether in the debates which take place at the Exhibitions Committee or the Curatorial Meeting, in the organising of displays, seminars or talks, or in working with a particular artist or photographer. The Gallery aims to be nimble in its ability to respond to good ideas and in how it innovates.

November 2008

Documents to support National Portrait Gallery Self Assessment

- 1 Draft schedule for the peer review visit over three days, allowing for a 1 hour briefing session with DCMS staff on the first day and an afternoon of debriefing and report writing on the final day
- 2 A list of Exhibits for the Review Panel to visit as featured in our current Quarterly: Exhibitions, Talks, Events
- 3 Exhibitions Programme 2008-2012
- 4 List of Senior Management Team and Key Managers and diagram of departmental structure
- 5 Note about possible visit to Regional Partners and options for viewing outreach work
- 6 Draft Strategic Plan 2009-15
- 7 Corporate Plan 2008-2011
- 8 Primary Education Programme 2008/09 and Secondary Education Programme 2008/09
- 9 Annual Review 2007/2008
- 10 Monthly Management Report
- 11 High Level Risk Register
- 12 NAO 2007-08 Audit Completion Report
- 13 Internal Audit Operational Plan for 2008-09
- 14 Collections Care and Storage and Options Appraisal, July 2006
- 15 National Portrait Gallery Combined Equality scheme and Appendix 1 - Equality Action Plan
- 16 Trustees' Effectiveness Report and Review, 2007
- 17 Subject Specialist Network, Understanding British Portraits Evaluation Report
- 18 National Portrait Gallery Employee Viewpoint Survey 2008 - Management Summary
- 19 A summary of Visitor Research at the National Portrait Gallery
- 20 Evaluation - Executive Summary for *David Hockney Portraits*, 12 October 2006 - 21 January 2007

A set of printed material for *Annie Leibovitz: A Photographer's Life 1990-2005* and *Wyndham Lewis: Portraits*