

Report to Executive Committee



DATE	14 th October, 2008
PORTFOLIO	Communities
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Purchase of a bust of Charles Townley. 1807

PURPOSE

1. To seek approval to apply for external funding to purchase the bust of Charles Townley by Joseph Nollekens.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That the Curator be authorised to apply to the Art Fund, the National Heritage Memorial Fund and smaller bodies and to undertake local fundraising.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3 This purchase has national support. It is the subject of a starred export ban which is an indication of the high quality of the sculpture and its historic importance. (The last starred sculpture was Canova's "The Three Graces").
The bust was on exhibition at Towneley from 1927-2007 and was one of the treasures of the Art Gallery. In 2007 it was sold by the O'Hagan family and now belongs to Daniel Katz of New Bond Street, London who has sold it to Yale University, USA. If the funding is not raised by December 3rd it will go to Yale University.

The bust will be displayed in the art gallery near to the celebrated portrait of Charles Townley by Zoffany.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

4. Bust of Charles Townley by Joseph Nollekens, 1807.
 - A fine bust of the most important late 18th century collector of classical sculptures by the best sculptor of his day.
 - Until recently an important part of the displays at Towneley Hall Art Gallery and Museum along with other busts by Nollekens and a celebrated portrait by Zoffany.
 - A epitome of the spirit of the Neoclassical age.
Sold to Yale University, USA and the subject of a starred export deferral.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION

There is no budget provision. To date fund raising is as follows:

- Stocks Massey Bequest - £3000 confirmed
- Towneley Hall Society - £5000 confirmed
- Private Donors - £6000 confirmed
- Small Trust - £5000 confirmed
- National Heritage Memorial Fund – up to £200,000 requested (This is funding of last resort)
- The Art Fund - £93,750 confirmed
- Fund raising activities – to be arranged
- Further bids – to be made.

It is proposed that a proportion of the funds raised by the Flower Festival (Dec 4-7) be used to make up any manageable shortfall in December.

There are no revenue implications.

The bust has been valued by W. Agnew & Co. Limited, Englesfield Road, London “in the region of £350,000”

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6. None

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION

Councillor Bullas – Executive Member
Councillor Frost – Heritage Champion
Mick Cartledge – Director of Community Services
Simon Goff – Head of Green Spaces & Amenities
Sarah Yorke – External Funding Manager
Marjorie Trusted – Keeper of Sculpture, V&A Museum, London.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

8. File at Townley Hall + Appendix
Grant Applications
Valuation from W. Agnew & Co. Ltd dated 8th September.

FURTHER INFORMATION

PLEASE CONTACT:

Susan Bourne, Curator – 01282 424213

ALSO:

**Simon Goff, Head of Green Spaces &
Amenities – 01282 664614.**

Appendix 1.

Charles Townley by Joseph Nollekens 1807.

Posthumous bust of Charles Townley, the Connoisseur (1737-1805) by his friend and contemporary, the sculptor, Joseph Nollekens (1737-1823) in white marble.

The bust is inscribed twice "Nollekens Ft 1807" and bears a Greek inscription which may be translated as: "By knowing ancient things you will have clear understanding of the new"

Joseph Farington, the diarist recorded that Nollekens was working on the bust on 6th February, 1805 shortly after Towneley's death. "from a cast taken after his death – The bust very like."

The bust may have been commissioned by Townley's uncle and partial heir, John Towneley of Chiswick (1731-1813) the bibliophile. It was engraved for The General Chronicle and Literary Magazine as "in the possession of John Towneley Esq." There is a bust of John Towneley by Nollekens in the collection at Towneley, recently purchased from the family, and Charles Townley's tomb in St. Peter's Church, Burnley is in the form of a sarcophagus plaque by Nollekens.

The museum also owns a copy from 1807 by Nollekens of "The Towneley Isis" a classical bust from Charles Townley's collection now known better as 'Clytie'. The original is now in the British Museum together with Townley's celebrated collection of classical sculpture depicted in Zoffany's painting of the collection.

The museum owns two paintings of Charles Townley: Zoffany's "Charles Townley and his friends in the Park St. Gallery, Westminster" (funded by the NACF) and Cosway's "Group of Connoisseurs" a satirical portrait of collectors of ancient sculpture.

The bust has been in family ownership until now and was on loan to the museum from 1926.

In recent years it stood with Clytie beside Zoffany's celebrated painting in the Art Gallery with detailed interpretive panel.

The bust formed the centrepiece of an exhibition in 2005 "The Eminent Virtuoso" which marked the bi-centenary of Charles Townley's death shown at Towneley Hall.

There is an earlier bust of Charles Townley by Christopher Hewetson in the British Museum Enlightenment Gallery and a studio copy of the Nollekens bust in store at the British Museum.

This bust is the autograph work by Nollekens, owned by the family, which has long formed a centrepiece of the displays at Towneley Hall. If it is returned it will continue to enhance the story of the Towneley family and its most celebrated member.

Charles Townley was the noted collector of ancient sculpture of his day, partly because his collection was on display in his London house and available to view. He was a friend and "indefatigable patron" of artists and scholars, a member of the Society of Dilletanti and a Trustee of the British Museum.

After his death a Towneley Gallery was formed in the British Museum when his collection of sculpture was purchased by the nation after discussion in Parliament. This bust is considered a particularly fine work by a major sculptor of an important figure.

Lord Inglewood, Chairman of the Reviewing Committee for the Export of Works of Art said “ This portrait bust of an important British art collector, by a renowned British sculptor, demonstrates a fascinating fusion of realism and the classical ideal. It will prove valuable for the study of both men, who were pivotal in the art world in the 18th century.”

The committee has expressed its opinion of the importance of this bust by giving it a starred deferral.

Exhibitions:

2005 The Eminent Virtuoso, Towneley Hall.

Bibliography:

There is an extensive bibliography on Charles Townley, this selection relates to the bust.

- J. T. Smith – Nollekens and His Times, 1828. 2 vols.
Reprint, Century Hutchinson 1986. (shows Townley on the cover)
pp. 125-131 (Bust p. 130).
- B. F. Cook – The Townley Marbles, British Museum 1985.
- Gerard Vaughan – The Collecting of Classical Antiques in England in the
18th century:
A Study of Charles Townley and his Circle, unpublished
PHD thesis. Wolfson College, Oxford 1988.
- Rupert Gunnis – Dictionary of British Sculptors 1880-1851.
Abbey Library, Revised Edition. N.D. pp. 278-279.