

May 2008

SAVE THE BATONI PORTRAIT

**OLYMPIA INTERNATIONAL ART AND ANTIQUES FAIR and THE ART FUND
LAUNCH PUBLIC APPEAL**



Portrait of John Rolle Walter Pompeo Girolamo Batoni (1708-1787)

The prestigious Olympia International Art & Antiques Fair and The Art Fund announce a public appeal to save a Pompeo Batoni (1708-1787) portrait of John Rolle Walter for the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery in Exeter. The Art Fund is the UK's leading independent art charity that saves art on behalf of the nation for generations of art-lovers to enjoy, and is the official charity for The Olympia International Art & Antiques Fair, one of London's leading art fairs taking place between 5th – 15th June at Olympia, where many rare and important works of art are sold each year.

The Art Fund and fair organisers, Clarion Arts, are urging visitors to the fair to contribute towards the fundraising campaign to secure the future of the Pompeo Batoni portrait. A target amount of £15,000 towards the £300,000 sale price of the painting will be raised through donations for pieces of a giant jigsaw puzzle, a replica of the portrait, made by Wentworth. Ranging from £5 to £1,000 the pieces will be on sale over the ten day period.

For press information, images, interview requests or accreditation please contact:
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**Olympia
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The painting brings together the dominant Italian portrait painter of the eighteenth century and an eminent public figure in the political history of South West England. The work was recently pulled at the last minute from an auction sale at Christies in order to give the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter the chance to fundraise. The painting would be an important addition to their collection, which is one of the finest examples of Batoni's work and is widely considered the missing link to the current museum collection.

Freya Simms, Director of the Olympia International Art & Antiques Fair said: "We strongly support private giving for the national good and with The Art Fund as our official charity, are glad to be able to give something back to the community this year. There is a rich resource of cultural heritage at the Olympia International Art and Antiques Fair and we would like the wider community to benefit from the inheritance of these wonderful works of art".

David Barrie, Director of The Art Fund said: "This great Batoni portrait is of historical interest because John Rolle Walter was a key figure in the turbulent politics 18th century Exeter, but what really matters is that it is an artistic tour de force. Exeter must have it and I am sure that visitors to the Olympia Fair will rise to the challenge now that The Art Fund has launched the fundraising campaign."

Pompeo Batoni was a fashionable portrait painter in Rome in the mid 18th century and was greatly in demand, particularly by the British who travelled through Italy on the 'Grand Tour'. For this reason Batoni was prolific in private collections. This led to a popularisation of the genre in the UK, influencing leading portrait artists of the time such as Reynolds. A collection of important works by Batoni are currently on display in an exhibition at the National Gallery.

John Rolle Walter (1712-1779) was a landowner and eminent political figure in the South West, serving both as an MP for Exeter (1754-76) and for Devon (1776-1779). The second son of John Rolle of Stevenstone and Isabella Charlotte nee Walter, he took the name of Walter on inheritance of his mother's estates in Oxfordshire. The Rolle family were also Lords of the Manor of Torrington where Walter acted as Town Recorder between 1739-79.

For 35 years the Olympia International Art & Antiques Fair has been one of the season's top destinations for lovers of art, antiques, jewellery and ornamental objects, attracting top specialists from across the world to exhibit in London each June.

Further Art Fund fundraising events on the opening night of the fair include 25% of profit from tickets sold on the night and proceeds from pink Art Fund cocktails.

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This announcement follows news that Britain's major cultural institutions including The Art Fund have launched a nationwide campaign entitled "Private Giving for the Public Good" calling for greater support to encourage a culture of giving and wider recognition of the contribution made by cultural philanthropists.

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Notes to editors:

- Images are available on request.
- Clarion Arts are available for comment on fundraising events and other aspects of the art and antiques market.
- Art Fund members will receive a 2 for 1 entry offer to the fair on presentation of their membership cards.
- The Art Fund is the UK's leading independent art charity. It offers grants to help UK museums and galleries enrich their collections; campaigns on behalf of museums and their visitors; and promotes the enjoyment of art. It is entirely funded from public donations and has 80,000 members. Since 1903 the charity has helped museums and galleries all over the UK secure 860,000 works of art for their collections. Recent achievements include: helping secure Anthony d'Offay's collection, ARTIST ROOMS, for Tate and National Galleries of Scotland in February 2008 with a grant of £1million; putting together a unique funding package to ensure Dumfries House in Ayrshire and its contents were secured intact for the nation in July 2007; and running the 'Buy a Brushstroke' public appeal which raised over £550,000 to keep Turner's *Blue Rigi* watercolour in the UK. For more information contact the Press Office on 020 7225 4888 or visit www.artfund.org

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