

RUBENS: REUNITING THE GREAT LANDSCAPES

- Rubens's two great landscape paintings reunited for the first time in 200 years
- First chance to see the National Gallery painting after extensive conservation work
- Major collaboration between the National Gallery and the Wallace Collection

3 June - 15 August 2021

#ReunitingRubens

In partnership with VISITFLANDERS

This year, the Wallace Collection will reunite two great masterpieces of Rubens's late landscape painting: *A View of Het Steen in the Early Morning* and *The Rainbow Landscape*. Thanks to an exceptional loan from the National Gallery, this is the first time in two hundred years that these works, long considered to be companion pieces, will be seen together. This major collaboration between the Wallace Collection and the National Gallery was initiated with the Wallace Collection's inaugural loan in 2019 of Titian's *Perseus and Andromeda*, enabling the National Gallery to complete Titian's *Poesie* cycle for the first time in 400 years for their exhibition *Titian: Love, Desire, Death*. The National Gallery is now making an equally unprecedented reciprocal loan to the Wallace Collection, lending this work for the first time, which will reunite Rubens's famous and very rare companion pair of landscape paintings for the first time in 200 years.

This exhibition is also the first opportunity for audiences to see the National Gallery painting newly cleaned and conserved, as throughout 2020 it has been the focus of a major conservation project specifically in preparation for this reunion. The pendant pair can be admired in new historically appropriate, matching frames, also created especially for this exhibition. Both loans are once-in-a-generation moments, and encapsulate the extraordinary benefits of two national museums working in close collaboration to shine new light on their collections, and allow exceptional new research and scholarship.

Late in his life in 1635, Rubens acquired the country estate of Het Steen, where he spent the summer months 'somewhat in retirement' away from the pressures of his busy studio in Antwerp. The house, re-modelled in the intervening centuries, still stands and now belongs to VISITFLANDERS, an agency of the government of Flanders. Het Steen provided the direct inspiration for the view we see in *A View of Het Steen in the Early Morning* — a broad panoramic sweep which appears to continue into the farmland depicted in its companion piece, *The Rainbow Landscape*. The rapid, exuberant brushwork and radiant colour seen in both these works are typical of his late style, and synchronise perfectly with his subject — the abundance and regenerative forces of nature. They communicate his love for the landscape of Brabant, and can be seen as continuing in the tradition of his Flemish predecessor, Pieter Bruegel. While painted with great attention to naturalistic detail and extraordinary sensitivity to atmospheric effect, they are actually idealised depictions of the landscape, a merging of fact and fantasy, raising the horizon lines and adopting the elevated viewpoint of a bird in flight. Completing this poetic vision is the

great rainbow in *The Rainbow Landscape*. This would have been recognised by Rubens and his generation — who lived through tumultuous times against the backdrop of the Eighty Years' War — as a symbol of peace and hope, just as it has been adopted in recent months by millions around the world.

The largest of his landscapes and two great masterpieces of painting, these works must have been particularly special to Rubens, as they were painted for pleasure rather than on commission, entirely by the artist himself, and remained in his personal collection on his death. The two paintings are perfectly matched in scale and ambition, being almost identical in dimension and painted on very complex composite panels, each comprising just under twenty oak boards. Recent scientific examination of both paintings has revealed that Rubens developed their compositions incrementally, following two stages of expansion of the panel support, which is the working method particularly associated with works that he painted for himself, at leisure. Due to its complex construction, *A View of Het Steen in the Early Morning*, made almost 400 years ago, has never been lent before. However, following recent conservation treatment undertaken by the National Gallery Conservation Department, the gallery was delighted to confirm that the work can now be shown in this historic exhibition.

The two paintings were in Rubens's collection on his death in 1640, and after a brief separation (when they were kept by his family) are believed to have remained together until they arrived in Britain in the early nineteenth century. *A View of Het Steen in the Early Morning* was purchased by Lady Beaumont as a gift for her husband Sir George, who presented it to the National Gallery in 1826 where it became one of the founding works of the permanent collection. *The Rainbow Landscape* passed through private collections until 1856, when Sir Charles Eastlake, first Director of the National Gallery, was outbid at auction by Richard Seymour-Conway, 4th Marquess of Hertford, whose collections later formed part of the Wallace Collection. His winning bid was of £4,550, a vast sum at the time. John Ingamells, Director of the Wallace Collection from 1978 to 1992, would later lament that "the chance of bringing the pictures together again was thus lost, as it turned out, forever."

Visitors to *Rubens: Reuniting the Great Landscapes*, will have an exclusive opportunity to see these two paintings together again, face to face in the Wallace Collection's exhibition galleries, as it is thought that Rubens may have displayed them in his own home. Visitors will be able to immerse themselves in their breathtaking vastness of scope, while appreciating their seemingly infinite wealth of detail. In the adjoining exhibition gallery, a newly commissioned documentary film will be shown, which explores the two landscapes with brand-new footage of *Het Steen* as it survives today, offers an insight into how Rubens painted these masterpieces, and reveals their subsequent journeys.

The Collection would like to thank **VISITFLANDERS**, Marilyn and Lawrence Friedland, as well as James and Clare Kirkman for their support of this exhibition and related projects.

Dr Xavier Bray, Director of the Wallace Collection, said:

"It's absolutely thrilling for me that for the first time in 200 years, two of the finest jewels of British national collections will each be shown together again, allowing us to view them in a completely new context. Our unique collaboration with the National Gallery has enabled a wonderful new understanding of these enormously important works. As the rainbow was a symbol of hope throughout 2020, we hope that for 2021 *The Rainbow Landscape* and its pendant bring hope, inspiration, solace and joy to all."

Dr Gabriele Finaldi, Director of the National Gallery, said:

"*A View of Het Steen in the Early Morning* is a work of simply breath-taking beauty and following its conservation treatment at the National Gallery it will be shown in a unique display at the Wallace Collection where it will be reunited for the first time in two centuries with its equally beautiful companion piece, the *Landscape with a Rainbow*. Like the Titian Poesie reunion at the National Gallery last year, which brought together six 'impossible' loans after five centuries, this display has always been considered unrealisable. But I am delighted that it will happen later this year and I, for one, simply cannot wait."

Peter De Wilde, Chief Executive of VISIT**FLANDERS**, said:

"The timing of this unique exhibition at the Wallace Collection coincides with VISIT**FLANDERS**' purchase of the castle at Elewijt – also known as the 'Rubens Castle' – where Rubens chose to enjoy his retirement, and to continue to paint, for pleasure. The reunification of these two outstanding works of art, painted by Rubens and depicting the Flemish landscape surrounding his castle, has been a dream of art lovers for many years. This exhibition will uncover new facets into the life of this internationally renowned Flemish Master, and will undoubtedly inspire visitors to travel and discover more about Rubens in his homeland, Flanders."

ENDS

Notes to Editors

For further press information please contact the Communications Team on press@wallacecollection.org / 07483 310811

This release, accompanying imagery, assets and the public programme [here](#).

For public information, please print 020 7560 9500 or wallacecollection.org
The Wallace Collection, Hertford House, Manchester Square, London, W1U 3BN

Tickets

Tickets are free with a suggested £5 donation, and must be booked in advance.

Tickets go on sale on Thursday 13 May 2021 and are available from www.wallacecollection.org

Opening hours

From Thursday 3 June, the Wallace Collection is open daily from 10.00-17.00.

Social Media

Instagram: [@wallacemuseum](https://www.instagram.com/wallacemuseum)

Facebook: [@wallacecollection](https://www.facebook.com/wallacecollection)

Twitter: [@WallaceMuseum](https://twitter.com/WallaceMuseum)

YouTube: [TheWallaceCollection](https://www.youtube.com/TheWallaceCollection)

Publication

Rubens. The Two Great Landscapes, a richly illustrated monograph dedicated to the two paintings, by exhibition curator Dr Lucy Davis, is available now.

Bloomberg Connects

Discover more from the Wallace Collection anytime, anywhere with the free Bloomberg Connects app, available on iOS and Android. Delve into the permanent collection with our new Flemish Art and Landscape Trails, which are the perfect accompaniment to a visit to *Rubens: Reuniting the Great Landscapes*. The Wallace Collection plans to launch on Bloomberg Connects on 17 June 2021.

Public Events

The Wallace Collection has a fantastic programme of online talks and courses running in conjunction with the exhibition, featuring an array of international experts and speakers from the Rubenshuis in Antwerp, Yale University, the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, the University of Lisbon and the National Trust. A major conference, *Rubens's Great Landscapes*, drawing together a panel of eminent conservators and scholars focusing exclusively on Rubens as a landscape painter, takes place on 17 and 18 May 2021.

Find out more: wallacecollection.org/whats-on

About the Wallace Collection

As one of Britain's preeminent cultural institutions, the Wallace Collection is home to one of the most significant ensembles of fine and decorative arts in the world. Highlights include oil paintings from the fourteenth to the late nineteenth centuries by artists such as Titian, Velazquez, Rubens and Van Dyck; princely arms and armour; and one of the finest collections of eighteenth-century French paintings and decorative arts. Visitors can also enjoy superb medieval and Renaissance objects, including Limoges enamel, maiolica, glass and bronzes. Displayed at Hertford House, former home to Sir Richard and Lady Wallace, this outstanding collection is displayed in a manner designed to evoke the lives and tastes of its founders, creating a special ambiance that remains an essential part of its charm.

www.wallacecollection.org

Image Sheet: Rubens: Reuniting the Great Landscapes



Peter Paul Rubens, *The Rainbow Landscape*, c.1636 © Trustees of The Wallace Collection, London.
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Peter Paul Rubens, *A View of Het Steen in the Early Morning*, probably 1636 © Trustees of The National Gallery, London.
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