

Press Release  
**The American  
Dream:  
pop to the  
present**

9 March – 18 June 2017  
Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery

*Sponsored by Morgan Stanley*

*Supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art*

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The UK's first major exhibition to chart modern and contemporary American printmaking will be held in spring 2017, the British Museum has announced. Sponsored by Morgan Stanley and supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art, ***The American Dream: pop to the present*** will explore the creativity of a medium that flourished through some of the most dynamic and turbulent years in US history and that accompanied a period when its wealth, power and cultural influence had never been greater.

The exhibition will include important loans from institutions such as New York's Museum of Modern Art and the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC as well as works drawn from the British Museum's extensive collection of prints. Using more than 200 works by 70 artists, the exhibition will trace the creative momentum of American art over the past six decades – from the moment pop art burst onto the New York and West Coast scenes in the early 1960s, through the rise of minimalism, conceptual art and photorealism in the 1970s, to the practices of living artists working today.

Many of America's greatest artists will feature, including **Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Ed Ruscha, Chuck Close, Louise Bourgeois, Kara Walker** and **Andy Warhol**, all of whom engaged with printmaking to create some of the most enduring images of recent years. The exhibition will explore the innovative techniques

and unprecedented scale, boldness and ambition that made American printmaking an ideal expression of the USA's power and influence, as well as how the medium addressed contemporary social issues such as race, AIDS, and feminism. Large prints designed to be seen *en masse*, such as Warhol's *Marilyn*, the minimalist linear inflections of the sculptor **Donald Judd** or the monumental woodcut *Stowage* by the African American **Willie Cole** on the legacy of slavery, will be shown alongside those on a smaller, more intimate scale, including artists' books by **Ed Ruscha, Ida Applebroog** and others. Some American artists made prints that related closely to their work in other media, and this crossover will be shown in works such as **Andy Warhol's** *Little Electric Chair* painting alongside his series of ten screenprints of the same subject and **Claes Oldenburg's** sculpture of the *Three-Way Plug* juxtaposed with his *Floating Three-Way Plug* etching.

A revolutionary and enduring change in the production, marketing and consumption of prints took place in the 1960s. Inspired by the monumental, bold and eye-catching imagery of post-war America, a young generation of artists took to printmaking with enthusiasm, putting it on an equal footing with painting and sculpture and matching their size, bright colour and impact. Meanwhile, the growth of an affluent middle class in urban America also opened a booming market

for prints that was seized upon by enterprising publishers, print workshops and artists. Artists were encouraged to create prints in state-of-the-art workshops newly established on both the East and West Coast. The widening audience for prints also attracted some to use the medium as a means for expressing pungent, sometimes dissenting, opinions on the great social issues of the day.

American prints provide a vivid and varied commentary on a period of great change for US society. Works celebrating America's famed enterprise and ingenuity include Rauschenberg's rocket-sized *Sky Garden* from his *Stoned Moon* print series (marking the 1969 moon landings) whilst other works touch on darker themes such as President Kennedy's assassination in 1963, the Vietnam War, the struggle for civil rights, the AIDS crisis and issues of gender and identity.

The confidence and assertiveness of America in the post-war boom years has given way to a gradual disintegration of the American Dream as the very notion of the country's exceptionalism has been critically questioned by artists. The creative momentum unleashed in the 1960s persists to this day as American artists continue to explore the vital and expressive potential of printmaking as an integral part of their aesthetic, with its ability to reach a broader audience and address wider social and political issues.

**Hartwig Fischer**, Director of the British Museum said "*The American Dream* is an extremely exciting project for the British Museum, highlighting our extraordinary holdings of American prints and drawings. The Museum has been building up this collection of modern and contemporary works

since the hugely successful exhibition *The American Scene: Prints from Hopper to Pollock in 2008*, and we are very grateful to Morgan Stanley and the Terra Foundation for helping us to stage this ambitious show. As a new President enters the White House and another chapter of US history begins, it feels like an apposite moment to consider how artists have reflected America as a nation over 50 tumultuous years."

**Robert Rooney**, CEO of Morgan Stanley International said, "We are delighted to partner with the British Museum on this ground-breaking exhibition. With many of the prints being exhibited for the first time here in London, the show provides a fascinating perspective on American culture and society over the last fifty years."

**Elizabeth Glassman**, President and CEO of the Terra Foundation for American Art, stated, "We congratulate the British Museum on this exceptional exhibition, which examines and illuminates a salient period in American history through key developments and figures in the printmaking medium. *The American Dream* inspires new perspectives on American art and ultimately amplifies the Terra Foundation's mission to foster the worldwide exploration, understanding, and enjoyment of the visual arts of the United States. We are proud to partner in this rich cross-cultural dialogue."

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#### Notes to Editors

##### **The American Dream: pop to present**

9 March – 18 July 2017

Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery (Room 30),  
British Museum  
Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG

Tickets on sale from 12 October 2016

Booking strongly recommended

£16.50, children under 16 free

Booking fees may apply

Group rates available

[www.americandreamexhibition.org](http://www.americandreamexhibition.org)

+44 (0)20 7323 8181

Opening times

Monday–Thursday 10.00–17.30

Friday 10.00–20.30

Saturday–Sunday 09.00–17.30

Last entry 80 minutes before closing time.

Follow updates on the exhibition via Twitter with

#AmericanDream and follow the Museum on Twitter

@britishmuseum

To coincide with the exhibition, a fully illustrated book *The American Dream: pop to the present* by Stephen Coppel, Catherine Daunt and Susan Tallman, will be published in March 2017 by Thames and Hudson. Hardback £40, paperback £25.

A full public programme will accompany the exhibition. More information is available from the press office.

#### **About Morgan Stanley**

Morgan Stanley (NYSE: MS) is a leading global financial services Firm providing investment banking, securities, wealth management and investment management services. With offices in more than 43 countries, the Firm's employees serve clients worldwide including corporations, governments, institutions and individuals.

#### **About the Terra Foundation for American Art**

The Terra Foundation for American Art is dedicated to fostering exploration, understanding, and enjoyment of the visual arts of the United States for national and international audiences. Recognizing the importance of experiencing original works of art, the foundation provides opportunities for interaction and study, beginning with the presentation and growth of its own art collection in Chicago. To further cross-cultural dialogue on American art, the foundation supports and collaborates on innovative exhibitions, research, and educational programs. Implicit in such activities is the belief that art has the potential both to distinguish cultures and to unite them.

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#### **For further information**

Please contact the British Museum Press Office on +44 20 7323 8583 / 8522 or [communications@britishmuseum.org](mailto:communications@britishmuseum.org)  
For high resolution images and captions:  
<http://tinyurl.com/h5jo95c>