

Dr Nicholas Cullinan appointed as new Director of the British Museum

Press images: <https://bit.ly/49irjfw>

LONDON, 28 March 2024: Dr Nicholas Cullinan OBE has been appointed as the new Director of the British Museum, following the unanimous approval of the Board of Trustees and the agreement of the Prime Minister.

Nicholas is one of the UK's most admired and experienced museum directors, having successfully run the National Portrait Gallery since April 2015. During his time at the National Portrait Gallery Nicholas led the most significant transformation in the Gallery's history, with a complete re-presentation of the Collection and major redevelopment of the building increasing public space by a fifth. Before that he worked at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and Tate Modern in London as a curator, bringing an international perspective to his approach.

Nicholas takes over from Interim Director Sir Mark Jones and will take up his role in the summer.

George Osborne, Chair of the British Museum, said:

"The Trustees chose Nicholas Cullinan as the new Director of the British Museum because he brings proven leadership today and great potential for tomorrow. He has shown his capacity as Director of the National Portrait Gallery to oversee both a major physical renovation and a compelling renewal of purpose in a way that doesn't take sides, but brings people together - and won universal acclaim. We believe he can achieve this, and more, on the bigger scale of the British Museum as we undertake a once-in-a-generation redevelopment. In doing so he can build on the solid foundations laid by Mark Jones, to whom we owe a huge debt of gratitude for stepping into the breach last year. I could not be more thrilled for Nick and more excited for us as we enter this new chapter in the long story of the British Museum with confidence, and back on the front foot."

Dr Nicholas Cullinan OBE, Incoming Director of the British Museum, said:

"One of the greatest museums in the world, it is an honour to become the next Director of the British Museum. I look forward to joining its wonderful and dedicated staff and to work with its hugely impressive Board in leading it into a new chapter. This will encompass the most significant transformations, both architectural and intellectual, happening in any museum globally, to continue making the British Museum the most engaged and collaborative it can be. I want to pay tribute to my

predecessors, most recently Sir Mark Jones, and look forward to building on their extraordinary achievements. Leading the remarkable transformation of the National Portrait Gallery over the last decade with its wonderful Trustees, staff and supporters has been the honour of a lifetime and I can't imagine a better challenge or opportunity to build on that than collectively reimagining the British Museum for the widest possible audience and future generations."

Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer, said:

"Following a successful tenure at the National Portrait Gallery, I'm pleased that Dr Nicholas Cullinan will be joining the British Museum as Director.

"I look forward to Nick sharing his vision for the Museum, including how he will strengthen its world-leading partnerships, deliver the next phase of its major capital project, and ensure the Museum's magnificent collections are enjoyed for generations to come.

"I want to thank Sir Mark Jones for his leadership and providing stability to the organisation during a difficult period."

Notes to editors

Dr Nicholas Cullinan OBE became Director of the National Portrait Gallery in spring 2015 and oversaw the biggest transformation of the Gallery since its building opened in 1896. He also initiated an innovative international collaboration with Getty to co-acquire *Portrait of Mai* (c. 1776) by Sir Joshua Reynolds - the largest acquisition in the Gallery's history and that the UK has ever made (along with the Titian acquired by the National Gallery and National Galleries of Scotland in 2009).

Prior to this, he was a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and Tate Modern in London, where he co-curated an exhibition of Henri Matisse's cut-outs with Sir Nicholas Serota in 2014, which is the most popular exhibition in Tate's history and the first to receive more than half a million visitors.

Nicholas received his BA, MA and PhD in art history from the Courtauld Institute of Art in London and in 2006–7 he held the Hilla Rebay International Fellowship at the Guggenheim museums in Bilbao, New York and Venice. Other fellowships include The Morgan Library & Museum in New York and the British School at Rome. Nicholas sits on several boards, including as a Trustee of Chatsworth House Trust and has published extensively and lectured internationally.

He was awarded an OBE for services to the Arts in the 2024 King's New Years Honours list.



Further information:

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