

Appointment of

Keeper of Western Art

July 2025 EBVGA

Saxton Bampfylde

INTRODUCTION FROM THE DIRECTOR

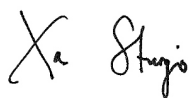
Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Keeper of Western Art at the Ashmolean Museum. This is an exciting moment in which to take on the leadership of a department which looks after one of the most significant collections of Western Art in the UK and to help shape the future of one of the world's great university museums.

This is a particularly exciting time to be joining the Ashmolean as we are in the early stages of a project which will see the development of the 'West Wing' – restoring and improving our nineteenth-century building, transforming access to the Western Art Print Room and providing an opportunity for the complete redisplay of most of the galleries that currently house the Western Art collections. The Keeper will help lead this project, working with colleagues to shape gallery narratives and create a visitor experience that is intellectually rich, welcoming, and inclusive.

We are looking for a curatorial leader of academic distinction, with a strong track record in research, exhibitions, and public engagement. You will be a strategic thinker, capable of working collaboratively across departments and disciplines, and you will bring a passion for connecting collections to diverse audiences. The role also involves active fundraising and advocacy, especially as we look ahead to the delivery of the West Wing Project.

The Ashmolean is at a moment of ambition and renewal. If you are inspired by the prospect of leading this important department and contributing to a transformative phase in the Museum's history, I hope you will consider applying. Thank you again for your interest, and I look forward to learning more about what you might bring to this role.



Dr Xa Sturgis, CBE
Director, Ashmolean Museum
University of Oxford



WHO WE ARE

Open since 1683, we are the University of Oxford's world-class museum of art and archaeology. Situated in the heart of the city we are an iconic cultural destination open to everyone every day.



WHAT WE DO

We preserve and share our collections and knowledge to promote research, learning and enjoyment.

COLLECTIONS

Care for, develop and widen access to our collections, in person and online.

RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Enable, lead and deliver world-class research and teaching.

AUDIENCES

Provide engaging experiences for an increasingly diverse audience.

WHY WE DO IT

To illuminate our shared humanity.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Welcome to the University of Oxford. We aim to lead the world in research and education for the benefit of society both in the UK and globally. Oxford's researchers engage with academic, commercial and cultural partners across the world to stimulate high-quality research and enable innovation through a broad range of social, policy and economic impacts.

We believe our strengths lie both in empowering individuals and teams to address fundamental questions of global significance, while providing all our staff with a welcoming and inclusive workplace that enables everyone to develop and do their best work. Recognising that diversity is our strength, vital for innovation and creativity, we aspire to build a truly diverse community which values and respects every individual's unique contribution.

While we have long traditions of scholarship, we are also forward-looking, creative and cutting-edge. Oxford is one of Europe's most entrepreneurial universities and we rank first in the UK for university spin-outs, and in recent years we have spun out 15-20 new companies every year. We are also recognised as leaders in support for social enterprise.

Join us and you will find a unique, democratic and international community, a great range of staff benefits and access to a vibrant array of cultural activities in the beautiful city of Oxford.

Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM)

The Gardens, Libraries and Museums of the University of Oxford contain some of the world's most significant collections and are an essential part of the University's wider nature and mission. They are part of its heritage as the country's oldest University and now form a resource of national and international importance for teaching, research and cultural life; they also make a major contribution to the University's outreach and access missions and represent the front door to the wealth of knowledge and research curated and generated at the University.

The Ashmolean is one of the four museums of the University of Oxford, alongside the Museum of the History of Science, the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, and the Pitt Rivers Museum. These four museums form part of the University's GLAM group, together with the Bodleian Libraries and Botanic Gardens and Harcourt Arboretum.





OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

Over the next five years we will...

- **Transform collections care and access**
Through transformative storage, gallery and documentation projects ensure the long-term safety and accessibility of our collections
- **Build our Research and Teaching**
Through a focus on enabling strategies build our research and teaching profile within the University and beyond
- **Develop our Audiences**
Engage diverse, growing audiences, reducing barriers to access and incorporating different perspectives
- **Champion Our People & Inclusion**
Develop and empower our teams, promoting equality and diversity in all we do
- **Build our Infrastructure**
Through a series of distinct projects ensure that our physical and digital infrastructure are future-proof and fit for purpose
- **Evolve Our Use of Digital**
Harness cutting-edge technology to amplify the impact of our collections, programmes and people
- **Ensure Financial Resilience**
Take an entrepreneurial approach to ensure we have the resource to deliver our ambitions
- **Improve Environmental Sustainability**
Succeed in achieving net zero carbon and biodiversity net gain by 2035
- **Build our Brand**
Continue to share the Ashmolean brand, ensuring it informs who we are and what we do

INSPIRING MINDS
SINCE 1683



CURATORIAL DEPARTMENTS AND COLLECTIONS

The Ashmolean has four major curatorial departments: Antiquities, Eastern Art, Western Art, and the Heberden Coin Room, each led by a 'Keeper'/Head of Department. The Keepers are responsible for collections, activities, and initiatives in their departments, on which they collaborate with other departments across the Museum. The Collection departments also include two cross-museum departments: Conservation and Digital Collections, the latter responsible for digitization of the collection and the collection database.

The collections and archives at the Ashmolean are a global resource comprising over 1 million objects and works of art covering almost the entire span of human history. We aim to make these accessible on site, in two new collections storage and study facilities currently being constructed, and online, and the breadth and quality of the collections make the Museum one of the most valued art and archaeological resources for research and teaching in the UK and more widely. The Museum has 28 research-active curators, most of whom also teach within the University. Doing justice to the Ashmolean's collections is impossible in such short compass, but among our world-leading holdings are the most important collection of Minoan (Cretan) antiquities outside Greece; the most significant Pre-Dynastic Egyptian collections outside Egypt; the earliest collection of Classical sculpture and inscriptions in Britain; exceptional collections of European Migration Period metalwork; one of the world's finest assemblages of Western European drawings; the most select collection in existence of C16th-18th European stringed instruments; the largest and most important collections of both greenware ceramics of the 3rd-11th centuries, and of 20th century Chinese paintings outside China; and one of the top ten coin collections in the world. The Museum also holds important 3 SB archival and documentary material, including archives relevant to local archaeology for over a century and a half; the Sir John and Sir Arthur Evans Archives; the Kish (Iraq) excavation archives and the Pissarro Family Archive.

The Ashmolean mounts a vibrant public programme including between 6 and 9 exhibitions and temporary displays a year, including two to three major (paying) loan exhibitions, the majority of which are curated internally.





THE OPPORTUNITY: KEEPER OF WESTERN ART

This is a senior curatorial and management role within the Museum. Reporting to the Director of Collections, the postholder will lead one of the Museum's four major curatorial departments and play a key role in ensuring the Museum meets its strategic objectives around stewardship, public engagement, research, teaching, digitisation and access.

The Keeper of Western Art heads a Department which holds collections of paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture, decorative arts, and musical instruments from the Middle Ages to the present day (approximately 370,000 items), incorporating numerous individual collections of high specialist importance.

The wide-ranging collection of European "old master" drawings, based on the Douce Bequest of 1834 and the purchase by public subscription in 1842 of the near-incomparable collection of drawings by Raphael and Michelangelo made by Sir Thomas Lawrence, is one of the finest assemblages in the world. The paintings comprise one of the principal collections in England outside the National Museums and are particularly rich for Renaissance Italy, for England in the 18th and 19th centuries, and for 17th-century Holland and Flanders. The Department's holdings of other European arts are nationally pre-eminent or internationally important in several specific areas. The European sculpture has been described as the most important collection in Britain outside the V&A. C.D.E Fortnum's collections of Italian Renaissance bronzes and maiolica, and of rings, are each of world importance in their fields. The English domestic silver of the 17th and 18th centuries rivals even the national collection at the V&A. The Marshall Collection is the most comprehensive assemblage of early Worcester porcelain anywhere.

The Hill Collection is one of the most select collections in existence of European stringed instruments. Other notable specialist holdings include watches from the 16th to the 19th centuries, portrait miniatures, English Delftware, English 17th-century textiles, and English 18th-century glass and pottery. Selective collections of 20th- and 21st-century British studio pottery and silver have been developed since about 2000.

Among nationally important archive material held in the Department are the extensive holdings of correspondence of members of the Pissarro family and papers belonging to two crucial Victorian scholar-collectors of sculpture and the applied arts, C.D.E. Fortnum and J.C. Robinson.

The department currently comprises five curators who cover key areas of the collection and two Print Room Supervisors. The department is supported by a full-time administrator, who also acts as personal assistant to the Keeper, and by one full time Collections Manager.

The Keeper will also curate one of the areas, in which s/he will be required to be research-active. The postholder has a Sabbatical Leave entitlement of one month's sabbatical leave for every six months of service the timing to be agreed with the Director of the Museum. The postholder will contribute to University teaching, proactively working with academic departments to develop teaching opportunities.

The post carries a college fellowship, currently a Fellowship at Balliol College.



KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

The Keeper of Western Art's key responsibilities and duties will be to...

- Motivate, manage, coordinate and lead a team
- Develop and deliver the Department's plan of activity in line with the Museum's strategic plan reporting at regular intervals to the Director and the Board of Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum
- Preparation and management of the department's accounts in line with the agreed departmental budget, with daily support from the administrator
- Active management of the entire collection, including acquisitions, the preparation of loans in and out of the Ashmolean, decisions about display and storage, conservation of the objects, documentation of the collection, access to the collection for scholars and students
- Driving the Museum's programme of digitisation within the department to meet its challenging targets
- Curatorial management of one area of the collection, with scholarly expertise in the area
- Scholarly research into the collection and wider areas within the discipline, with a requirement to research and write academic papers and other appropriate publications, to present material from the collections and research papers to students and other audiences, including academic conferences, and to make every effort to attract external research funding
- Representation of the museum at national and international level, including playing a leading or participating role in academic networks
- Teaching and supervision by agreement with the University, including examining; The Keeper holds the title of Associate Professor
- Generation and nurturing of interest and support for the

department within the museum's overall objectives

- Development of museum-wide policies and strategies for various activities, including developing displays, temporary/travelling exhibitions, storage areas, acquisitions, outreach, teaching with the collections as required by the Director
- Deputising for the Director or Director of Collections as required
- Representation of the department on museum management and faculty committees of the university
- As a Governing Body Fellow of Balliol College, the Keeper is expected to play an active role in the academic life and management of the college. S/he will also act as advisor to a number of postgraduate students

Other duties include:

- Participate in a regular Annual Review
- Undertake any necessary training identified
- Comply with health and safety regulations
- Comply with the policies and procedures set out in the Handbook for University Support Staff/Academic Related Staff
- Any other duties that may be required from time to time commensurate with the grade of the job

The Ashmolean Museum reserves the right to make reasonable amendments to the job description in consultation with the post-holder at any time.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

The successful candidate will bring most or all of the following skills and experience...

Knowledge and experience:

- Experience at senior management level in a major museum, including personnel, financial and collections management
- Experience of planning, developing and delivering major exhibitions, internally and jointly with other institutions
- Specialisation in one of the key areas curated by the department
- International scholarly reputation, ideally including service on committees responsible for managing the candidate's subject area, with appropriate recognition for the candidate's career stage
- Track record of significant publication in an area related to the collections of the department
- Experience of teaching and/or supervision at undergraduate/postgraduate level is desirable. (The University is able to provide supplementary training where needed.)

Skills, abilities and personal attributes:

- Demonstrably excellent interpersonal skills and be able to successfully manage, motivate and lead a team
- Ability to manage time to combine administrative duties with teaching and academic research
- Capacity to plan and deliver long and short-term projects
- Ability to work under pressure and in a team
- Willingness to work flexible hours, including evenings and weekends, especially in term-time
- Effective written and verbal communication skills, able to adapt approach to various audiences
- Computer literacy relevant to the needs listed above





TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

Location: Oxford

Salary: Grade 10 – in the range of £63,000 – £73,000, dependent on skills and experience.

What we Offer

As an employer, we genuinely care about our employee's well-being, and this is reflected in the range of benefits that we offer including:

- An excellent contributory pension scheme
- 38 days of annual leave
- A comprehensive range of childcare services
- Family leave schemes
- Cycle loan scheme
- Discounted bus travel and Season Ticket travel loans

More information is available at <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-benefits>

HOW TO APPLY

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to the Ashmolean Museum on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at www.saxbam.com/appointments using code **EBVGA**.

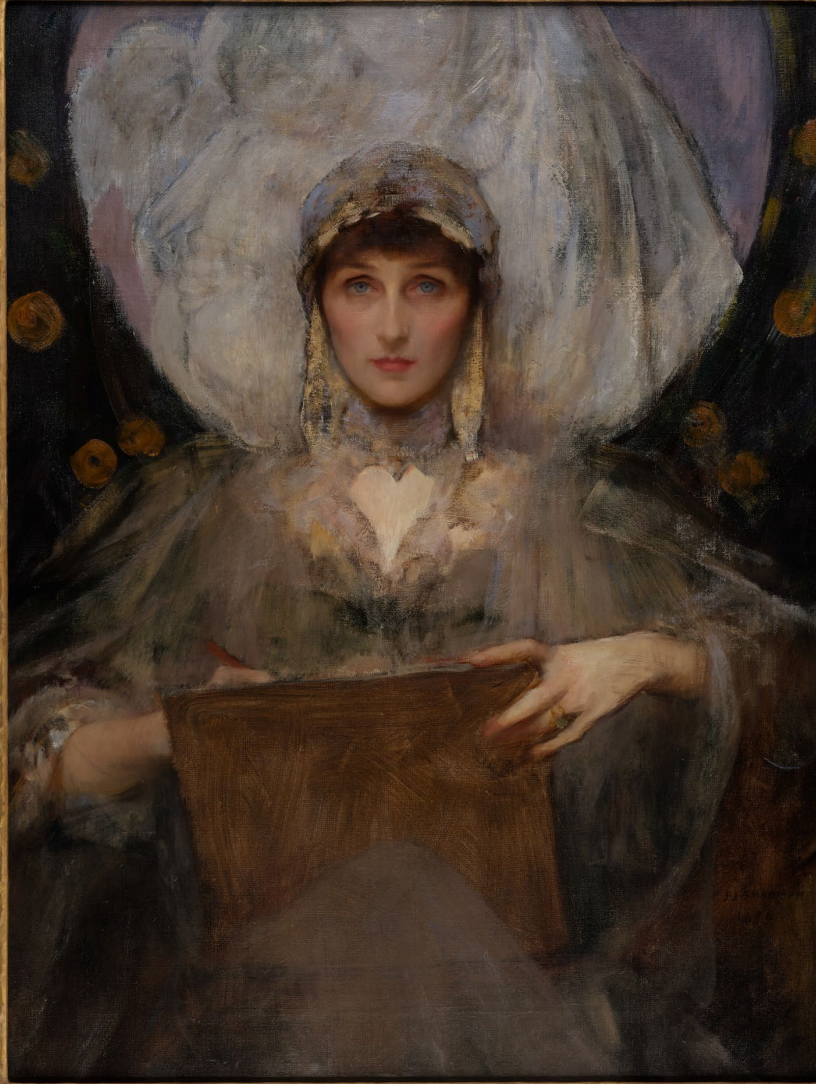
Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form.

The closing date for applications is noon on **Thursday 31st July**.

* The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.





Saxton Bampfylde