



## *The Classical Now*

Bush House Arcade and the Inigo Rooms, King's College London, WC2R 2LS

2 March – 29 April 2018

*The Classical Now*, a major exhibition pairing the work of modern and contemporary artists with classical Greek and Roman antiquities, opens at King's College London on 2 March 2018.

Presented in partnership with MACM (the award-winning Musée d'Art Classique de Mougins), the exhibition traces the ways in which Graeco-Roman art has captured and permeated the modern imagination. It examines classical presences in the works of twentieth-century artists such as Pablo Picasso and Yves Klein, and leading contemporary artists including Damien Hirst, Alex Israel, Louise Lawler, Grayson Perry and Rachel Whiteread. The show explores the myriad continuities and contrasts between the ancient, modern and contemporary, revealing the 'classical' as a living and fluid tradition.

*The Classical Now* is staged across two spaces at King's, the Inigo Rooms in the East Wing of Somerset House, and the Arcade at Bush House – a new space for exhibitions and events at King's College London.

Objects range from classical Greek and Roman artefacts to contemporary painting, sculpture, video and photography. The exhibition will feature contemporary works in which classical forms receive provocative new expression – such as the fragmentary bodies by contemporary artist Marc Quinn – alongside more oblique or suggestive uses of ancient themes, such as Bruce Nauman's landmark video performance, *Walk with Contrapposto* (1968). Paris-based artist Léo Caillard, known for dressing classical statues in contemporary attire, has been commissioned to produce a new site-specific installation for the exhibition.

Alongside ancient Greek and Roman objects, *The Classical Now* exhibits work by Edward Allington, Pablo Bronstein, Léo Caillard, Jean Cocteau, Michael Craig-Martin, André Derain, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Damien Hirst, Alex Israel, Derek Jarman, Yves Klein, Louise Lawler, Christopher Le Brun, Roy Lichtenstein, George Henry Longly, Ursula Mayer, Henry Moore, Bruce Nauman, Christodoulos Panayiotou, Giulio Paolini, Grayson Perry, Frances Picabia, Pablo Picasso, Marc Quinn, Mary Reid Kelley & Patrick Kelley, Sacha Sosno, Mark Wallinger and Rachel Whiteread. The show will also incorporate the video-installation, 'Liquid Antiquity: *Conversations*', featuring interviews with six contemporary artists (Matthew Barney, Paul Chan, Urs Fischer, Jeff Koons, Asad Raza and Kaari Upson) – commissioned by the DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art, and designed by Diller, Scofidio + Renfro.

*The Classical Now* is curated by Michael Squire (Reader in Classical Art at King's), and James Cahill and Ruth Allen (post-doctoral fellows working on the *Modern Classicisms* project, which is run in the Department of Classics and supported by the Faculty of Arts & Humanities at King's). **Michael Squire** says: 'The exhibition is intended to prompt questions: about how ancient art still captivates and provokes the modern imagination; how contemporary visual culture might help us to see the classical tradition with new eyes; and about what modern-day responses – set against the backdrop of others over the last two millennia – can tell us about our own cultural preoccupations.' **Cahill and Allen** add: 'The exhibition is about what the classical means, or looks like, now, the idea is to show that there is no one "route" between antiquity and modernity, but instead multiple interconnections.'

Those interconnections are also central to the vision of exhibition partner, MACM (Musée d'Art Classique de Mougins). The museum's collection ranges from Egyptian sarcophagi and classical bronzes of Apollo and Augustus through to works by Pablo Picasso, Andy Warhol, Yves Klein and Damien Hirst.

*The Classical Now* sees several of the works from MACM travel to London for the first time.

*The Classical Now* is also timed to coincide with the Annual Meeting of the Association for Art History in April 2018 – Europe’s largest meeting of art historians, curators and teachers, which is co-hosted by King’s College London and the Courtauld Institute of Art.

*The Classical Now* is presented by Cultural Programming at King’s College London, in partnership with MACM (Musée d’Art Classique de Mougins). The exhibition is accompanied by a book with the same title, featuring interviews with artists and essays by some of the leading voices in the fields of classics and art history.

-ENDS-

**Listings information:**

The Classical Now

Dates: 2 March – 29 April 2018

Venues: The Arcade at Bush House 30 Aldwych, King's College London and Inigo Rooms, King's College London, Somerset House, East Wing, London.

Free entry

**Press information:**

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**Notes for editors:**

**The Arcade at Bush House**

The Arcade at Bush House, which opened in September 2017, is part of the King's Cultural Quarter, and is home to a varied programme of events, installations and exhibitions, offering a forum where students, the academic community and the public can engage with each other, as well as with artists and cultural partners. Also home to a welcoming café and the KCLSU Shop, the Arcade offers a direct connection with research and collaborative activity taking place across the university, and provides a new space on the Strand for conversation, reflection and engagement.

**MACM (Musée d’Art Classique de Mougins)**

The MACM presents ancient, neoclassical, modern and contemporary art in order to highlight the considerable influence of the ancient world on the great artists from Peter Paul Rubens to Damien Hirst. Located at the heart of the picturesque village of Mougins, this private museum holds an exceptional collection of over 800 works over four floors. The museum focuses on the reciprocal influences of the ancient civilisations of Egypt, Greece and Rome, and the Graeco-Roman legacy through to the present. This narrative underlines the importance of the interaction between East to West in a series of thematic displays. Remarkable artefacts from ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome interact with drawings, paintings and sculptures by Paul Cézanne, Marc Chagall, Pablo Picasso, Auguste Renoir, Jean Cocteau, Salvador Dalí, Raoul Dufy, Antony Gormley, Keith Haring, Damien Hirst, Henri Matisse, Henry Moore, Francis Picabia, Marc Quinn, Auguste Rodin, and Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, to name but a few. MACM opened in 2011 and won *Apollo* magazine’s ‘Opening of the Year’ award; in 2013 it was the only French museum nominated for European Museum of the Year.

**‘Liquid Antiquity: Conversations’ and the DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art**

‘Liquid Antiquity’ is an experimental platform for reflecting on the relation between the classical and the contemporary, commissioned by the DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art. Conceived and developed by Brooke Holmes, in collaboration with Polina Kosmadaki and Yorgos Tzirtzilakis, the project consists of a book of essays and artist-conversations and a video installation of artist interviews (designed by architecture and creative firm, Diller, Scofidio + Renfro). The DESTE Foundation is a non-profit institution established by Dakis Joannou in Geneva in 1983, with an extensive exhibition program: it promotes emerging as well as established artists, at once broadening the audience for contemporary art and exploring connections between contemporary art and culture.

**King’s College London**

King's is one of the top 25 universities in the world (2017/18 QS World University Rankings) and among the oldest in England. King's has more than 29,600 students (of whom nearly 11,700 are graduate students) from some 150 countries worldwide, and some 8,000 staff. For more information see our King’s in Brief pages. Across King’s College London, arts and culture offer distinctive opportunities to students and academics, helping to deliver world-class education and research that drives innovation, creates impact and engages beyond the university. More information about the work of Culture is available here: [kcl.ac.uk/culture](http://kcl.ac.uk/culture)