



For Immediate Release

**REMBRANDT, VAN DYCK, GAINSBOROUGH: THE TREASURES OF KENWOOD HOUSE, LONDON**

**FOUR-VENUE NATIONAL TOUR** Begins June 3, 2012, at Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

New York, NY (January 24, 2012) — The American Federation of Arts (AFA) is pleased to announce the four-venue tour of *Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Gainsborough: The Treasures of Kenwood House, London*, commencing at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, on June 3, 2012. An exhibition of forty-eight masterpieces, this will be the first tour of this important group of works from the Iveagh Bequest and will provide a unique opportunity to see these superb paintings outside the United Kingdom. Most of these paintings have never travelled to the States before, and many of them have rarely been seen outside Kenwood.

Donated to the nation by Edward Cecil Guinness (1847–1927), 1st Earl of Iveagh and heir to the world’s most successful brewery, the Iveagh Bequest resides at Kenwood House, a neoclassical villa in London that was remodeled by Robert Adam in the eighteenth



Anthony van Dyck, *Princess Henrietta of Lorraine Attended by a Page*, 1634. Oil on canvas, 84 3/8 x 50 3/4 in. Kenwood House, English Heritage; Iveagh Bequest, 1927 (88028826)



Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of the Artist*, ca. 1665. Oil on canvas, 45 3/4 x 38 1/4 in. Kenwood House, English Heritage; Iveagh Bequest, 1927 (88028836)

century. The collection was shaped by the tastes of the Belle Epoque—Europe’s equivalent to America’s Gilded Age—when the earl shared the cultural stage and art market with other industry titans such as the Rothschilds, J. Pierpont Morgan, and Henry Clay Frick. Acquired mainly from 1887 to 1891, the earl’s purchases reveal a penchant for the portraiture, landscape, and seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish works typically found in English aristocratic collections. While the majority of the paintings in the exhibition are from the Iveagh Bequest, several are drawn from the works acquired specifically for display at Kenwood. AFA Director Pauline Willis remarked, “We are extremely proud to be able to give greater exposure to this magnificent selection of paintings while Kenwood undergoes a major refurbishment.” Simon Thurley, Chief Executive for English Heritage, commented: “The collection of works of art on display at Kenwood is one of the most important in England, and we are thrilled that works from this collection will travel across the Atlantic for the first time and find new audiences in the United States.”

***Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Gainsborough: The Treasures of Kenwood House, London* will follow this schedule:**

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston	June 3–September 2, 2012
Milwaukee Art Museum	October 4, 2012–January 6, 2013
Seattle Art Museum	February 14–May 19, 2013
Arkansas Arts Center	June 7–September 8, 2013

**Exhibition Details:** The collection is particularly strong in works by such Golden Age eighteenth-century English portraitists as Sir Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, and George Romney, whose depictions of society beauties of the Georgian era, also known as England’s “Age of Aristocracy,” held a great appeal for Lord Iveagh. Among the several fine Gainsboroughs in the exhibition is the sumptuous full-length portrait *Mary, Countess Howe* (ca. 1764), an image of both aristocratic elegance and of a landowner among her properties. Such full-length portraits of ladies in nature were very popular during this period, owing to a great admiration for the aristocratic portraits of Van Dyck. Along with such aristocratic women, the collection’s “virtual harem” of English portraits features celebrity demimondes, among them, Emma Hart—later Lady Hamilton—who served as Romney’s muse, and Kitty Fisher—one of the most celebrated courtesans in London society.

Among the works by Dutch and Flemish masters in the exhibition is Rembrandt’s sublime *Portrait of the Artist* (ca. 1665), one of the artist’s last self-portraits and one of only a few of his many self-portraits that show him in the act of painting. Fifty-two years old when he created it, he found little reason to dress formally or pretend to be something other than the great painter that he was. The several paintings of children purchased by Lord Iveagh often served as vanitas-like reminders of the fleeting innocence of youth. When painting *Miss Murray* (1824–26), a portrait of a three-year-old girl gathering flowers, Thomas Lawrence wrote to his patron, Miss Murray’s father, “All I can do is snatch (and I hope for some century or so secure) this fleeting beauty and expression so singular in the child before the change takes place that some few months may bring.”

The taste for Dutch and Italian landscapes and seascapes among English eighteenth-century collectors was inspired by their travels in Europe on the Grand Tour. The influx of such works into England influenced a number of English painters, including Reynolds and Gainsborough, both of whom collected Dutch landscape paintings. Joseph Mallord William Turner’s particular interest in Dutch Old Master seascapes is exemplified in *A Coast Scene with Fishermen Hauling a Boat Ashore* (1803–04).



Thomas Gainsborough, *Mary, Countess Howe*, ca. 1764. Oil on canvas, 95 x 61 in. Kenwood House, English Heritage; Iveagh Bequest, 1927 (88029039)

*Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Gainsborough: The Treasures of Kenwood House, London* presents a selection of exceptional paintings, among them, some of the world's great masterpieces.

Prior to the opening of the exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Rembrandt's haunting masterpiece *Portrait of the Artist* will be on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (April 3–May 20, 2012) in the installation *Rembrandt at Work: The Great Self-Portrait from Kenwood House*. It will hang near the museum's own *Self-Portrait* by Rembrandt (1660), providing a rare opportunity to compare the two works, which, although close in date, are very different in scale, format, and expression.

**Exhibition Credit Line:** The exhibition is organized by the American Federation of Arts and English Heritage. It is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities, with additional funding from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. In-kind support is provided by Barbara and Richard S. Lane.

**Guest Curator:** The guest curator is Susan Jenkins, a curator at English Heritage who selected the works in the exhibition in tandem with other English Heritage curators.



Joseph Mallord William Turner, *A Coast Scene with Fishermen Hauling a Boat Ashore ("The Iveagh Sea-Piece")*, ca. 1803–04. Oil on canvas, 36 1/8 x 48 1/4 in. Kenwood House, English Heritage; Iveagh Bequest, 1927 (88028820)

**Publication:** The AFA publication will include an illustrated checklist and texts by the guest curator; Julius Bryant, Keeper of Word and Image at the Victoria & Albert Museum and formerly Chief Curator at English Heritage; and Walter Liedtke, Curator of European Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

**American Federation of Arts:** The AFA is a nonprofit institution that organizes art exhibitions for presentation in museums around the world, publishes exhibition catalogues, and develops educational materials and programs for children and adults. The AFA's mission is to enrich the public's experience of art and understanding of culture by organizing and touring a diverse offering of exhibitions embracing all aspects of art history. The AFA has organized or circulated approximately 3,000 exhibitions with presentations in museums in every state, Canada, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa that have been viewed by more than 10 million people. For more information about its exhibitions, publications, artist talks (ArtTalks), membership, cultural travel program (ArtScapes), and online resources, including family guides and podcasts, see [www.afaweb.org](http://www.afaweb.org).

**English Heritage:** English Heritage is the government's lead advisory body for the historic environment in England and is responsible for the national collection of historic sites and monuments, as well as their contents and archives. The collection comprises more than 400 historic places and spans 5,000 years of architecture, from prehistoric sites to nuclear bunkers. It includes Stonehenge and much of Hadrian's Wall, the ruins of the greatest medieval abbeys, the world's first iron bridge, Charles Darwin's diaries and the Duke of Wellington's boots. [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)



ENGLISH HERITAGE

**Kenwood House, London:** Set in beautiful landscaped parkland in the midst of Hampstead Heath, Kenwood House is one of the most magnificent visitor attractions in London. This elegant villa, remodeled by Robert Adam in the eighteenth century, houses a superb collection of paintings that includes masterpieces by Rembrandt, Vermeer, Turner, and Gainsborough, as well as the Suffolk collection of rare Jacobean portraits. While the exhibition is on tour, Kenwood House will be undergoing a major repair and conservation program. The work will make the roof wind and weather tight—protecting the magnificent interior and important art collection from serious leaks and damp—and will also repair and revive Kenwood's beautiful exterior. The project will be complete in 2013.

# # # #

**Press Images and Media Contact:** For more information, please contact: Michaelyn Mitchell, Director of Publications and Communications, at 212.988.7700 x228 or [mmitchell@afaweb.org](mailto:mmitchell@afaweb.org) or Melanie Kress, Communications Assistant, at 212.988.7700 x249 or [mkress@afaweb.org](mailto:mkress@afaweb.org).

High-resolution publicity images are available at [www.afaweb.org](http://www.afaweb.org). To obtain a user name and password, please contact Melanie Kress, Communications Assistant, at 212.988.7700 x249 or [mkress@afaweb.org](mailto:mkress@afaweb.org).