



## V&A acquires important marble relief

The V&A has acquired a rare and significant sculptural relief by John Deare (1759-98). Considered one of the finest pieces of neo-classical sculpture carved by a British artist, it is the first marble by Deare to join a British public collection. It will go on display in the V&A's Dorothy and Michael Hintze Sculpture Galleries from 21 October 2011.

*Caesar Invading Britain* (1796) is a large, rectangular overmantel depicting a scene of invading Roman soldiers being repelled by heroic British forces on the shore. It was commissioned by John Penn to be installed above the fireplace in his Stoke Park mansion in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire. The sculpture remained at Stoke Park until the middle of last century, when it was moved to the neighbouring Stoke Manor. Recent building work on Stoke Manor necessitated the removal of the relief, enabling the V&A to acquire the piece for the nation.

Paul Williamson, Keeper of Sculpture, Metalwork, Ceramics & Glass at the V&A said: *"John Deare's artistic standing, until recently undervalued, has in the past few years been reassessed. Caesar Invading Britain is one of Deare's major masterpieces, displaying astonishing technique and narrative mastery. We're thrilled that a generous bequest has allowed us to acquire this magnificent work which will now be on permanent display in the V&A's sculpture galleries."*

The overmantel is accompanied by a marble lintel inscribed in Latin to read *'This one thing was lacking to complete Caesar's customary success'* which, taken from Julius Caesar's own account of the invasion, refers to a brief moment when the Britons managed to repulse the Roman invaders.

John Penn, grandson of William Penn who founded Pennsylvania, was a British patriot and at the same time a supporter of the American Revolution, who would have sympathised with the plight of native forces struggling to combat a dominant imperial power.

Now celebrated as one of the most innovative and gifted British neoclassical sculptors, John Deare's technique was inspired by both classical and Renaissance styles. He spent much of his career in Rome, where he created *Caesar Invading Britain* between 1791-6.

The purchase of the relief, offered for sale through Daniel Katz, was funded by the Count Caruana and Ivan Booth Bequest. In recognition of the enjoyment the V&A gave them during their lives, they left a generous gift to the Museum in their wills to fund the purchase of a work of art in their memory.

## **Notes to Editors**

### *About the sculptor*

Born into a family of jewellers, Deare began an apprenticeship in 1776 and the following year, entered the Royal Academy schools, where he became the youngest artist ever to achieve the Academy's gold medal. In 1784, Deare won an Academy bursary to study for three years in Rome, arriving in 1785. After this, he supported himself with commissions from English patrons such as John Penn - visiting Rome on the Grand Tour. Deare's most distinguished works are reliefs of historical, mythological, and allegorical subjects. He remained in Rome until his death in 1798, said to have been caused by catching a chill by sleeping on a block of marble for inspiration.

### *Legacy Gifts to the V&A*

The V&A, as a charity, welcomes legacy gifts and is grateful to Count Caruana and Mr Booth for remembering the Museum in this way. Legacies provide an opportunity to make a lasting contribution and provide an important source of funding to the V&A. [www.vam.ac.uk/legacies](http://www.vam.ac.uk/legacies)

### *About the V&A*

The V&A is the world's leading museum of art and design with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity. It was established to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, the V&A's collections, which span over 2000 years of human creativity in virtually every medium and from many parts of the world, continue to intrigue, inspire and inform. The V&A holds the National Collection of Sculpture concentrating on Western European Sculpture from the 4th century to the end of the 19th century. The Dorothy and Michael Hintze Galleries display some of the Museum's finest sculpture dating from 1600 to 1900 made by British sculptors or acquired by British patrons. [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

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