



## ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS COMMEMORATES BICENTENARY OF G F WATTS RA WITH DISPLAY OF PHYSICAL ENERGY SCULPTURE IN RA COURTYARD

### G F Watts: 'Physical Energy'

#### Annenberg Courtyard

20 November 2017 – 30 March 2018

The Royal Academy of Arts, in collaboration with Watts Gallery Trust, presents a new bronze cast of *Physical Energy*, the renowned equestrian sculpture by George Frederic Watts OM RA (1817 – 1904), 113 years after it was first displayed in the Royal Academy's courtyard in 1904.

In 2017, Watts Gallery Trust commissioned a new, fourth bronze cast of *Physical Energy* to mark the bicentenary of the birth of G F Watts. The bronze has been cast at the foundry of Pangolin Editions. Following its presentation at the RA, the cast will be installed permanently at Watts Gallery – Artists' Village in Compton, Surrey, enabled by a crowdfunding campaign through Art Fund's Art Happens platform.

Royal Academician, G F Watts is widely considered to be one of the greatest artists of the Victorian age. Sculptor, portraitist and creator of classic Symbolist imagery, he became the first living artist to have a solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and the bequest of his paintings made a significant contribution to the founding collections of Tate and the National Portrait Gallery.

*Physical Energy* was the culmination of Watts's ambition in the field of public sculpture, embodying the artist's belief that access to great art would bring immense benefits to the country at large. Having completed a commission for the Duke of Westminster for an equestrian monument to commemorate his ancestor, *Hugh Lupus*, in 1883 G F Watts set to work on a new plaster model of another horse and rider, without specific reference to any individual. Reinvigorating the rhetoric of the equestrian monument for the modern age, Watts conceived *Physical Energy* as an allegory of human vitality and humanity's ceaseless struggle for betterment.

The plaster model of *Physical Energy* was part of the artist's bequest to Watts Gallery upon his death in 1904. The first bronze cast of the model, made in 1902, was exhibited in the courtyard of the Royal Academy in 1904, as part of the annual Summer Exhibition. It then travelled to Cape Town to form part of a memorial to the founder of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Cecil Rhodes. In 1907, a posthumous cast was made and sited in Kensington Gardens, London, fulfilling the artist's intention to gift the work to the British Government, insisting that it should be 'for the nation' and displayed 'somewhere in London'. A third cast, created in 1959, is situated in the grounds of the National Archives of Zimbabwe in Harare.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### **Work in focus: Physical Energy by G F Watts**

#### **Royal Academy of Arts, Reynolds Room**

Monday 5 February 2018, 11am–12pm

The RA will present a talk by Dr Nicholas Tromans, Curator of Watts Gallery

£8, £5 concessions

### **Social Media**

Join the discussion about the exhibition online at:

Facebook /royalacademy

Instagram @royalacademyarts

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### **About Watts Gallery – Artists' Village**



In 1891 Watts commissioned a country home and winter studios, Limnerslease, from leading Arts and Crafts architect Ernest George. What followed was the creation of a unique Artists' Village, situated at Compton in the Surrey Hills. Grade I-listed Watts Chapel, an Arts and Crafts masterpiece was designed by Watt's second wife Mary and realised through a community arts project. This led to the formation of the Compton Potters' Art Guild, a social enterprise that thrived in the village until the 1950s, selling at Liberty & Co and receiving national commissions. Finally, the Watts Gallery opened to the public in 1904, the first purpose built art gallery in the UK dedicated to a single professional artist, providing, together with Tate and the National Portrait Gallery, a complete overview of G F Watts's art and aspirations. In the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the historic gallery and pottery buildings fell into disrepair, being placed on the English Heritage 'At Risk' Register. Recently restored thanks to support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and many generous donors, today Watts Gallery – Artists' Village attracts over 65,000 annual visitors.

### **About the Royal Academy of Arts**

The Royal Academy of Arts was founded by King George III in 1768. It has a unique position in being an independent, privately funded institution led by eminent artists and architects whose purpose is to be a clear, strong voice for art and artists. Its public programme promotes the creation, enjoyment and appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, education and debate.

The RA is undergoing a transformative redevelopment which will be completed in time for its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018. Led by the internationally-acclaimed architect Sir David Chipperfield RA and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the plans will link Burlington House on Piccadilly and Burlington Gardens for the first time, uniting the two-acre site. The redevelopment will also reveal the elements that make the RA unique, sharing with the public [the historic treasures in its Collection](#), the work of its [Academicians](#) and [the RA Schools](#), alongside its world-class exhibitions programme. For more information on the RA visit [www.royalacademy.org.uk/ra250#video](http://www.royalacademy.org.uk/ra250#video)

For public information, please print 020 7300 8090 or [www.royalacademy.org.uk](http://www.royalacademy.org.uk)  
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