

## **FREE Bookings open for Norfolk schools to explore masterpiece paintings**

Schools across Norfolk are being encouraged to apply for **more than 1400 free child places** so youngsters can go behind the scenes of some of the world's greatest paintings.

Booking has opened for Norfolk schools to reserve their place on one of 72 fully subsidised school visits available during 12 Wednesdays in May, June, July and September to take part in the educational programme, From Russia with Love: The Return of the Houghton Masters. Each tour can accommodate 20 pupils and three teachers per school.

Houghton Hall and Norfolk County Council secured nearly £100,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to devise and develop the educational programme, From Russia with Love: The Return of the Houghton Masters. It will support the exciting new exhibition, Houghton Revisited, which is open to the public from 17 May to 29 September.

The exhibition marks a return to Houghton Hall for the first time in 200 years for a number of paintings of international importance collected by the country's first Prime Minister, former Norfolk resident Sir Robert Walpole.

Featuring the likes of Rubens, Sir Anthony Van Dyck, Velazquez and Rembrandt, The Walpole Collection will be hung in its original setting chosen by the former PM two centuries ago.

Staff from the County Council's Children Services' Creative Projects team have designed and developed From Russia with Love, an educational programme to support the exhibition, and help Norfolk's children, young people and families learn about and appreciate the works of art and the historical figures featured in the paintings.

Each school visit will include an opportunity for pupils to participate in a workshop with the exhibition's artist in residence, Karl Foster. The children's ideas, notes, drawings, etc, will provide additional opportunities for further development back in their classrooms supported by the programme's online educational resources. Schools will also take a tour of the exhibition.

The curriculum linked educational programme supports the new social, moral, spiritual and cultural Ofsted framework, and the new history curriculum. Online resources will also be translated into Russian as Norfolk's gift to the people of St Petersburg, where most of the paintings were housed before their return to Houghton Hall.

The return of the paintings marks the end of long-held dream for Houghton Hall's current owner, the Marquess of Cholmondeley.

Sir Robert Walpole, who was an enthusiastic art collector with impeccable taste, amassed a huge collection of fine art that he displayed at Downing Street and his home at Houghton Hall.

When he died, the estate was saddled with debt and more than 200 of the most valuable works were sold to help save Houghton. Originally destined for auction, the paintings were eventually bought by Catherine the Great for her Hermitage at the Winter Palace in St Petersburg. They have remained there ever since.

To book a school visit to the exhibition, teachers are asked to **contact Norwich Theatre Royal on 01603 598582** for more details email [education@houghtonhall.com](mailto:education@houghtonhall.com)

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