

Press release: The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host, by John Martin, at risk of leaving the UK

Arts Minister Michael Ellis has placed a temporary export bar on The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host, by the British artist John Martin (1789-1854), to provide an opportunity to keep it in the country.

The watercolour is at risk of being exported from the UK unless a buyer can be found to match the asking price of £1,509,102.

The drawing illustrates the Biblical story (Exodus 14) of Moses releasing the waters of the Red Sea, after they had miraculously parted to allow the fleeing Israelites to cross, thereby drowning the pursuing Egyptian army.

Employing a panoramic composition to magnificent effect, Martin plays with the scale of the figures and the scenery to maximise the epic nature of the drama. The emotional force of this scene of deliverance and retribution is heightened by a blood red sunset below a sweeping black sky.

Although Martin is best known for his spectacular oil paintings and mezzotints (a tonal print technique that was ideally suited to capturing his bold use of light and shade for dramatic effect) illustrating John Milton's Paradise Lost and the Bible, he also created a series of framed 'exhibition watercolours', which in scale and visual impact were intended to compete for attention and patronage with oil paintings.

Martin's mezzotints of Biblical subjects, such as The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host published in 1833, were hugely popular and influential with admirers including Charles Dickens and the Bronte sisters who grew up with them on the walls of their father's parsonage.

Martin's large-scale watercolour treatment of the same subject from three years later was intended to capitalise on his popular success, and The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host demonstrates his bold use of the medium in the eye-catching brightness of the colours, with the tonal range expanded through extensive use of black pigment, bodycolour, and gum arabic.

Martin's artistic reputation did not endure – despite the influence he played in shaping the epic scale and grandeur of Biblical and historical epics in films by directors like Cecil B. DeMille – as his standing suffered from the disapproval of the art critic John Ruskin and the artist's focus later in his life shifted to planning ambitious engineering schemes to deliver clean water and an efficient sewage system to London.

The subsequent and enduring shift in taste away from the use of watercolour for grandiose narrative subjects, allied to a longstanding critical downplaying of the significance of the medium to British art, meant that

Martin's stature as a watercolourist was long overlooked, until interest in his work began to revive in the early 1950s.

Martin's importance is now more widely recognised and celebrated, and the ambition, boldness and grandeur of *The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host* exemplifies his unique contribution to British watercolour history.

Arts Minister Michael Ellis said:

This incredibly dramatic picture captures the imaginative and apocalyptic subjects for which Martin is best known.

I hope it can remain in the UK, where it can be admired and studied for many years to come.

The decision to defer the export licence follows a recommendation by the [Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest \(RCEWA\)](#), administered by The Arts Council.

RCEWA member Lowell Libson said:

Working in watercolour played a significant part in Martin's art throughout his career although he is now best remembered for his exhibition works in oil. *The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host* not only demonstrates Martin's mastery of the medium but underlines how he employed it to achieve emotional and dramatic effects of a subtlety which were impossible in his larger scale oil paintings. *The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host* numbers amongst the greatest of Martin's watercolours.

The RCEWA made its recommendation on the grounds of the picture's outstanding significance in the reassessment of John Martin – the most popular artist of his day, dismissed by the art establishment and ignored for almost a century – whose influence on the development of epic, visionary landscape painting, both in Britain and in America, is now widely acknowledged.

The decision on the export licence application for the picture will be deferred until 21 May. This may be extended until 21 September if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase it is made at the recommended price of £1,509,102.

Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the picture should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.

An image of the picture can be downloaded via our [flickr site](#).

ENDS

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Notes to editors

1. Details of the picture are as follows:
Watercolour by John Martin (1789-1854), The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host, signed and dated: 'J. Martin/1836' (lower right). Pencil and watercolour with gum arabic heightened with body colour and with scratching out; 23 x 33 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (584 x 857 mm).
2. Provenance: (Probably) J.E. Jesse, by 1876; with Agnew's, London; with Leger & Son, London, by September 1954, sold in or after 1958 to George Goyder; Sotheby's, London, 11 July 1991, lot 192, where purchased by private owner (sold for world auction record price for watercolour by this artist £107,800); Christie's, London, 3 July 2012, lot 139 (est. £300,000-500,000, sold for £758,050, also world auction record).
3. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.
4. The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. www.artscouncil.org.uk.

Immigration Department relocation of Yuen Long Office and expansion of Fo Tan Office

The Immigration Department today (February 22) announced that the Yuen Long Office (YLO) will be relocated to 1/F, Yuen Long Government Offices, 2 Kiu Lok Square, Yuen Long from next Monday (February 26). The existing office at Manhattan Plaza, Yuen Long will close the same day. In addition, after its expansion, the address of the Fo Tan Office (FTO) has been amended as Shops 405-407, 4/F, Jubilee Square, 2-18 Lok King Street, Fo Tan.

The YLO and the FTO mainly provide services to members of the public relating to the application and issue of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) travel documents, extension of stay in Hong Kong and registration and replacement of identity cards. The new YLO is conveniently

located, and with a substantial increase in floor area compared to the original office, members of the public will be able to process their applications in a more user-friendly and spacious environment. Following its expansion the FTO now has more service counters and its handling capacity has been strengthened to further improve the quality of services provided to members of the public.

Eligible applicants aged 18 or over and those born in Hong Kong and aged 11 to 17 may submit HKSAR passport applications at self-service kiosks. To meet the ever-increasing demand for HKSAR passports, the Immigration Department has set up more self-service kiosks at Immigration Headquarters and Immigration branch offices, increasing the total number from 19 to 28. Applications for a replacement passport due to loss, damage or change of personal data should be made in person.

HKSAR travel document application forms and information leaflets on application procedures and the requisite documents are available at Immigration Headquarters and Immigration branch offices. For details and application forms, please visit the website www.gov.hk/passport . Further application details for HKSAR travel documents are also available at the Easy Access of the Immigration Department YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/immdgovhkchannel). Enquiries can also be made by telephone (2824 6111), fax (2877 7711) or email (enquiry@immd.gov.hk).

News story: Emergency Services Network reaches new milestone

This is a significant milestone for the project which will provide emergency services with a new cutting-edge communication system.

Engineers performed the test on 8 February between an EE mobile mast site in Bristol and a location in Basingstoke. This is the first time Motorola Solutions' software has linked together with the live EE mobile phone network and demonstrated prioritisation of emergency services communications on a public network.

Minister for Policing and the Fire Service Nick Hurd said:

This is a complex project which will provide the emergency services with the most advanced communications system of its kind anywhere in the world – which is why successful tests like these are an excellent achievement.

Members of the public are already seeing some of the incidental benefits of the project like its improvement of the 4G mobile

network – 90 per cent of the UK is now covered.

Other progress in the delivery of ESN includes:

- the introduction of handheld devices – 130 have now been produced for testing
- the first new rapid response vehicle has been tested and more are currently in production
- Transport for London has now laid 'leaky feeder' cables in almost 100km of tunnels out of a total of 420km in the London Underground
- there have already been over 100 genuine 999 calls received through masts in place due to ESN where there was previously no coverage, demonstrating the ability of ESN to help save lives even before the roll out is complete

More information on the [programme](#).

Public urged not to buy or consume slimming product from unknown sources or of doubtful composition (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) today (February 22) appealed to the public not to buy or consume a slimming product named SIN DEN BEAUTY as it was found to contain undeclared and banned drug ingredients that might be dangerous to health.

The DH commenced investigation upon receipt of notification from the Hospital Authority (HA) regarding a female patient with a history of consuming the above slimming product.

"The patient was admitted to hospital for acute psychosis. Sibutramine metabolites were detected in her urine sample," a DH spokesman said.

According to testing results from the HA, which were later confirmed by the Government Laboratory, the sample of the product provided by the patient was found to contain the banned substances sibutramine and phenolphthalein.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the patient purchased the slimming product through a social media network platform. The DH's investigation is continuing.

Sibutramine was once used as an appetite suppressant. Since November

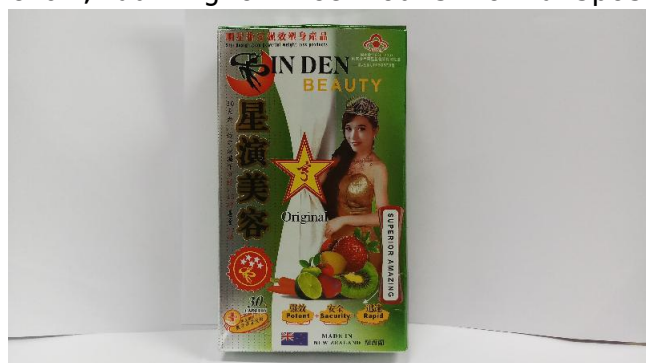
2010, products containing sibutramine have been banned in Hong Kong because of increased cardiovascular risk. Phenolphthalein was once used to treat constipation, but has been banned in Hong Kong for its cancer-causing effect.

The DH spokesman strongly urged members of the public not to buy products of unknown or doubtful composition, or consume products from unknown sources. Members of the public who have purchased the above product should stop consuming it immediately. They should consult healthcare professionals for advice if feeling unwell after consumption.

Weight control should be achieved through a balanced diet and appropriate exercise. The public should consult healthcare professionals before using any medication for weight control.

The public may visit the website of the Drug Office of the DH for health messages on overweight problem and slimming products (www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/do/en/consumer/slim.html) and information on slimming products with undeclared Western drug ingredients (www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/specMedsNews/slimming/en/consumer).

People who have purchased the products may submit them to the Drug Office of the DH at Room 1856, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, during office hours for disposal.



[Speech by CS at launch ceremony of Harbour Arts Sculpture Park 2018 \(English only\) \(with photos/video\)](#)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at the launch ceremony of Harbour Arts Sculpture Park 2018 this afternoon (February 22):

Mr Nelson Leong (Chairman of the Hong Kong Arts Centre), Mr Tim Marlow (Co-curator of Harbour Arts Sculpture Park and Artistic Director of the Royal Academy of Arts, the UK), Mr Cheung Leong (Executive Director, Charities and Community of the Hong Kong Jockey Club), Ms Kristine Li (Deputy General

Manager of Henderson Land Development Company Limited), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to this wet afternoon extravaganza here. I am honoured to join you all to witness the launch of Hong Kong's first Harbour Arts Sculpture Park today, which bears testimony to the Hong Kong Arts Centre's mission to give access to arts to everyone.

Indeed, it is a mission shared by us all. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government is committed to creating an environment conducive to arts and cultural development. As an important strategic investment in this respect, the West Kowloon Cultural District project now taking shape on the other side of Victoria Harbour will be developed into an integrated arts and cultural district with world-class facilities befitting Hong Kong's status as an international arts and cultural metropolis. Various major facilities will be gradually commissioned. In particular, the Xiqu Centre will open by the end of this year; Freespace, scheduled to open in 2019, has been topped out; and the M+ building will also open by late 2019. Furthermore, the Lyric Theatre Complex will be completed around 2021, while the Hong Kong Palace Museum is scheduled for completion in 2022.

Alongside the upgrade in architectural hardware, we will continue to strengthen our cultural software. To enrich people's cultural life, build audiences, nurture local talent and promote professional development, we organise a variety of quality arts and cultural programmes and activities. The Hong Kong Arts Month will return in March this year, in tandem with other major art fairs including Art Basel, Art Central and Asia Contemporary Art Show.

And today, the highlight of the action is right here on this side of the harbour. The unveiling of the Harbour Arts Sculpture Park will see the Central and Wan Chai harbourfront transformed into a gallery featuring large-scale, museum-quality works of 18 emerging and established local and international artists. The Sculpture Park offers a unique opportunity for the general public to appreciate world-class sculptures against the backdrop of Hong Kong's iconic skyline and energetic harbour. For Hong Kong people and overseas visitors alike, it will certainly be an impressive experience to rest, stroll, walk, jog along – and stop – to admire the masterpieces in this vibrant urban setting.

As part of our education and outreach efforts, the Sculpture Park features a mobile application with detailed information on each sculpture and a multilingual audio guide in Cantonese, English and Mandarin. Coupled with a spectrum of guided tours, workshops, symposiums and artist residency, the project pools together people from all walks of life to experience how art can be part of our everyday lives.

The Sculpture Park is the fruition of collaboration among government departments, the creative industry and the arts and cultural community. It would not have been possible without the staunch support from all parties. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the remarkable lineup of

curators, partners and sponsors for bringing out the best in creativity. I would also like to congratulate very warmly the Hong Kong Arts Centre on the 40th anniversary of its establishment and dedication to the furtherance of arts and cultural development of Hong Kong.

On this encouraging note, I wish the Harbour Arts Sculpture Park a great success and the Hong Kong Arts Centre many, many successful years ahead. Before I close, I also thank the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust Fund for also making a pitch to ensure this event is a success. Thank you so much.

