

# Tissot painting worth £2.4 million at risk of leaving UK

- Export bar is to allow time for a UK gallery or institution to acquire the painting
- Painting was never exhibited in Tissot's lifetime but in recent years has become an icon of the Aesthetic movement

Algernon Marsden by the French artist Jacques Joseph Tissot – who lived and worked in London and became known as James Tissot in the UK – is at risk of leaving the country unless a buyer can be found.

Dating from the late 19th century, the painting depicts Algernon Moses Marsden, an infamous figure in the Victorian art world who later became known for his appearances in bankruptcy courts.

The painting has become an icon of the Aesthetic movement in recent years, despite having never been displayed during Tissot's lifetime, and depicts a young man in a luxurious interior. Algernon Marsden epitomises Tissot's desire to elevate a portrait of an individual into a timeless genre painting and the sympathy between the artist, the sitter, and their surroundings is extraordinary.

Arts Minister Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay said:

Tissot has had an important influence on British art, the full extent of which is only just beginning to be explored. Algernon Marsden is a fascinating painting and reveals much about the Aesthetic movement, Victorian art dealers, and Tissot's significance for future artists. I hope a buyer comes forward so we can continue to learn about this exceptional painting.

The Minister's decision follows the advice of the [Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest](#). The Committee agreed that this is a fascinating painting, presented in Tissot's highly insightful style. It also noted the painting presents precarious, recent, and specifically Jewish affluence characteristic of this era, and emphasised this portrait's value for research into social history and as a commentary on Marsden at this time.

Committee Member Pippa Shirley said:

This languidly handsome young man, who fixes us with his direct, appraising gaze, invites us into a world which is both luxurious and deceptive. He looks completely at home in his environment, but the setting was in fact the artist's studio, and the tiger skin and some of the elaborate furnishings are actually props. Tissot,

referred to as 'the French Millais' was at this point one of the most celebrated and successful French artists on both sides of the Channel, and this portrait, painted in 1877 and very much of its time, precisely observed and beautifully painted, more than justifies that reputation. The empathy, and sense of connection with Algernon Marsden, whom he knew, is palpable, and the composition hints at the sitter's background.

Marsden's history was almost literally rags to riches and back again – his family were Jewish entrepreneurs who had risen from poverty in the East End of London through a fortune made in the ready-made clothing business, but Algernon turned his back on that to set up as an art dealer, so encountering Tissot. It was not a wise move. Some years after this portrait was painted, he was declared bankrupt three times, thanks to his addiction to gambling, and eventually fled to America. This colourful yet shadowy figure and what he represents deserves to be better understood. His activities in the art market, his social circle and his relationship to Tissot and influence of French artists in London all merit further research, and it is very much to be hoped that the portrait can remain in this country to encourage that exploration.

The Committee made its recommendation on the grounds that the departure of the painting from the UK would be a misfortune owing to its outstanding significance to the study of Tissot's influence on British art, as well as the culture of art dealers at this time.

The decision on the export licence application for the painting will be deferred for a period ending on 16 September 2022 inclusive. At the end of the first deferral period owners will have a consideration period of 15 Business Days to consider any offer(s) to purchase the painting at the recommended price of £2,430,130 (plus VAT of £72,900 which can be reclaimed by an eligible institution). The second deferral period will commence following the signing of an Option Agreement and will last for four months.

[View the image on Flickr.](#)

ENDS

1. Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the painting should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.
2. Details of the painting are as follows: Jacques Joseph 'James' Tissot (1836-1902) Algernon Marsden Oil on canvas, 48 x 72.5 cm, 19 x 28 ½ in Signed and dated J Tissot 1877
3. Provenance: commissioned by the Marsden family, who paid £50 or 1,250 FF; by descent to Robert Marsden; Sotheby's 17 February 1971 lot 59;

Christie's (or Sotheby's) 25 November 1983 lot 64, bought by Agnew's.

4. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by the Arts Council (ACE), 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.
  
5. [Arts Council England](#) is the national development agency for creativity and culture. They have set out in their strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 they want England to be a country in which everyone's creativity is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. ACE invest public money from the Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. Following the [Covid-19 crisis](#), the Arts Council developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. They are also one of the bodies responsible for administering the Government's unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund.