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## **U.S. and U.K. Cultural Agencies Sign Memorandum of Understanding for Scholarly Collaboration at Joint Conference Examining National Art and Identity**

WASHINGTON (October 23, 2008)—This morning at a joint conference, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) of the United Kingdom signed a memorandum of understanding to foster scholarly collaboration and research in the humanities. NEH Chairman, Dr. Bruce Cole, and AHRC Director of Research, Professor Shearer West, signed the memorandum of understanding, inaugurating the first of two academic conferences. Today's conference, "Picturing the Nation," featured presentations from scholars from the United States and the United Kingdom on how art can illuminate a nation's history. A second conference will take place in the United Kingdom in 2009.

"Art serves as a primary document of a civilization; it can reveal important truths about a nation's people and past," said NEH Chairman Bruce Cole. "With this in mind, The Endowment is delighted to collaborate formally with the United Kingdom's Arts and Humanities Research Council to examine how art can best be integrated in scholarship and education to enrich the understanding of history."

Today's free event in Washington, which was open to the public, featured presentations from the following scholars and museum professionals:

- **Barbara Bays**, *Art Historian and Senior Program Officer, NEH*, presented on "Picturing America";
- **Evelyn Welch**, *Professor of Renaissance Studies, Queen Mary University of London and AHRC Program Director for "Beyond Text: Performances, Sounds, Images, Objects"*, spoke on "What is National about the Nation's Art?";
- **Wilfred McClay**, *Professor of History at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga*, presented "A Complex Parade: Problems and Prospects for Picturing the Nation";
- **Laurie Norton Moffatt**, *Director and CEO of the Norman Rockwell Museum*: presented "American Chronicles: The Art of Norman Rockwell"; and
- **Gervase Rosser**, *Head of the Department of Art History in the University of Oxford and the Academic Partner of the Public Catalogue Foundation*: presented "The Public Catalogue Foundation: A National Collection of Oil Paintings and its Interpretation."

NEH and AHRC will encourage efforts to foster the development of innovative digital resources, research in the humanities, and collegial interaction between scholars, librarians, curators and other museum professionals for continued academic work on humanities subjects. Papers from each of the conferences are to be published online.

Today's conference complements both cultural agencies' special arts initiatives currently in progress. NEH's Picturing America initiative brings great American art to schools and public libraries to help students and citizens learn about the people, events, and ideas that have shaped our nation's history. Because works of art reveal important aspects of our history and culture, the artwork is designed to be used in any classroom subject and as a gateway to the broader world of the humanities.

AHRC's Beyond Text is a strategic program to generate new understandings of, and research into, the impact and significance of the way we communicate. The program addresses key issues of how people and societies communicate without using the written word; how we learn from watching and imitating others; how we learn from images and objects, and how and why we respond to performance, sound, and place.

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The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) is an independent federal agency created in 1965 and dedicated to supporting research, education, preservation, and public programs. It is the largest funder of humanities programs in the United States. NEH grants enrich classroom learning, create and preserve knowledge, and bring ideas to life through public television, radio, new technologies, exhibitions, and programs in libraries, museums, and other community places. For more information about NEH, please visit [www.neh.gov](http://www.neh.gov). For information about NEH's Picturing America initiative, please visit [PicturingAmerica.neh.gov](http://PicturingAmerica.neh.gov).

Arts & Humanities Research Council: Each year the AHRC provides approximately £100 million from the UK Government to support research and postgraduate study in the arts and humanities, from archaeology and English literature to design and dance. In any one year, the AHRC makes approximately 700 research awards and around 1,000 postgraduate awards. Awards are made after a rigorous peer review process, to ensure that only applications of the highest quality are funded. Arts and humanities researchers constitute nearly a quarter of all research-active staff in the UK higher education sector. The quality and range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK. For more information about AHRC, please visit: [www.ahrc.ac.uk](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk). Information about AHRC's Beyond Text program can be found at [www.beyondtext.ac.uk](http://www.beyondtext.ac.uk).