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PRESS RELEASE

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Landscapes of the Mind: The Art of Tristram Hillier

Exhibition to open at the Museum of Somerset

Tristram Hillier RA (1905–1983) was one of the most accomplished and distinctive 20th-century British artists. Painting for many years from a base in Somerset, he created pictures in a uniquely intense and memorable style. Now the first retrospective of Hillier's work in more than 30 years is being held at the Museum of Somerset in Taunton from Saturday 9 November to Saturday 18 April. It is one of the most ambitious exhibitions the museum has ever staged.

'Landscapes of the Mind: The Art of Tristram Hillier' brings together over 50 pictures from private lenders and from national and regional collections. Major works include *Variation on the Form of an Anchor* and *La Route des Alpes* from the collections of Tate Britain and *Pylons* and *Quantoxhead* from National Galleries Scotland.

The loans have been made possible by support from Arts Council England and from the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund. The Western Loan Programme, created by the Garfield Weston Foundation and Art Fund, is the first ever UK-wide funding scheme to help smaller and local authority museums borrow art and artefacts from national collections.

Hillier was educated at Downside School in Somerset. After two years studying at Cambridge University he dropped out and was apprenticed to a London firm of chartered accountants. But, he quickly abandoned this career to study at the Slade School of Fine Art. In Paris he met and was influenced by members of the Surrealist movement. Many of his paintings evoke an air of other-worldliness. Incongruous objects and the use of unreal perspectives

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add a surreal quality. He was also part of the Avant Garde modernist group, Unit One, led by Paul Nash. Outstanding paintings by Nash, Edward Wadsworth and Ben Nicholson, lent by Tate Britain, also feature in the exhibition.

Until 1940 Hillier lived happily in France. The Second World War forced him to flee with his wife and infant daughter to a new home in Somerset. For a time he served in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, but the upheavals of the war and a difficult early life led in 1942 to a mental breakdown.

After the war Hillier painted consistently and Somerset became the workshop of his artistic life. He returned to Spain and Portugal for long periods where he worked to create preparatory sketches. But he always came back to his home in East Pennard, overlooking the Somerset Levels. He remained there, with his wife Leda, until his death in 1983. His work is now represented in collections around the world.

Sam Astill Head of Museums for the South West Heritage Trust said: "We are most grateful to our funders and to those who have lent works for the exhibition. It's thanks to their generosity that we can bring this remarkable collection of nationally-important paintings to Somerset.

"Hillier was a fascinating man, by turns charismatic and troubled. The exhibition will explore his long and complex relationship with Somerset and will contrast it with his life in Spain and Portugal. They were places he loved and returned to again and again.

"Hillier's work is full of intriguing symbolism for the viewer to unravel. Harnesses, anchors, pylons and abandoned signs of human activity appear repeatedly in his paintings, whose subjects span landscape, architecture, still-life and religious themes."

Sophia Weston, Trustee of the Garfield Weston Foundation, said: "We are so delighted to support the Museum of Somerset and its exhibition on an international artist who called the region home. It's incredible to see how much this programme is empowering venues like the Museum of Somerset and ensuring our national treasures can be seen by people in the context of their own area and local history."

ASSOCIATED EVENTS

Drop-In Gallery Tours

Find out more about the art and life of Tristram Hillier at drop-in gallery tours.

Dates: Thursday 21 November, Wednesday 22 January, Friday 28 February, Saturday 28 March 2.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

ENDS

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Photo Captions:

1. Somerset scenes feature in the exhibition including *The Argument* on loan from Harris Museum, Art Gallery & Library, Preston
2. *Variation on the Form of an Anchor* is on loan from the Tate collection

Notes to editors

The South West Heritage Trust

The [Museum of Somerset](http://www.museumofsomerset.org.uk) is part of the [South West Heritage Trust](http://www.swheritage.org.uk), an independent charity that protects and celebrates Somerset and Devon's rich heritage. As well as the Museum of Somerset and Somerset Rural Life Museum, the Trust cares for the extraordinary archive collections of the two counties. The Trust also provides essential advice about the historic environment and manages historic sites.
www.swheritage.org.uk #SWHTdiscovery

Garfield Weston Foundation

Established over 60 years ago in 1958, the Garfield Weston Foundation is a family-founded, grant-making charity which supports causes across the UK with grants around £70million annually. It has donated over £1billion to charities since it was established.

One of the most respected charitable institutions in the UK, the Weston Family Trustees are descendants of the founder and they take a highly active and hands-on approach. The Foundation's funding comes from an endowment of shares in the family business which includes Twinings, Primark, Kingsmill (all part of Associated British Foods Plc) and Fortnum & Mason, amongst others – a successful model that still endures today; as the businesses have grown so too have the charitable donations.

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From small community organisations to large national institutions, the Foundation supports a broad range of charities and activities that make a positive impact in the communities in which they work. More than 1,800 charities across the UK benefit each year from the Foundation's grants.

Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. In the past five years alone Art Fund has given £34 million to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections. Art Fund is independently funded, with the core of its income provided by 139,000 members who receive the National Art Pass and enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions and subscription to Art Quarterly magazine. In addition to grant giving, Art Fund's support to museums includes Art Fund Museum of the Year (won by St Fagans National Museum of History near Cardiff in 2019) and a range of digital platforms. Find out more about Art Fund and the National Art Pass at www.artfund.org

Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to visual art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2018 and 2022, we will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. www.artscouncil.org.uk

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