

Escape TO...

World-class collection visits the Tyler Museum of Art

## The Devonshire Inheritance

By Randy Mallory

One of England's more prominent families, the Cavendishes, have spent the last 500 years collecting choice art and artifacts. For decades, the titled clan's dukes and duchesses of Devonshire have allowed visitors to view many of these treasures in public parts of their 16th-century country house, Chatsworth. But the family's private collections remained largely off limits...until now.

A comprehensive traveling exhibition—The Devonshire Inheritance: Five Centuries of Collecting at Chatsworth—makes its final U.S. appearance, July 30 through October 23, at the Tyler Museum of Art. It's the show's last stop (and the only one in Texas) before returning to private display in England.

The exhibition is the most ambitious of recent traveling shows hosted by the Tyler Museum of Art, which was founded in 1971 by the Junior League of Tyler. In addition to traveling shows, the museum also exhibits works from its permanent collection—including works by prominent Texas artists and photographers such as James Surls, Vernon Fisher, Luis Jimenez, Terry Allen, and Keith Carter.

The Devonshire Inheritance boasts 250 superlative pieces—paintings and statues, jewelry and gemstones, porcelain and silver, rare books and scientific instruments—which reflect the lives and tastes of 14 generations of Cavendishes.

It's natural that the pieces are arranged chronologically (by family collector) beginning with an oil portrait, silver seal, and badge of Bess of Hardwick (1527-1608). The painting (ca.

1600) by Rowland Lockey captures the steely nature of Bess, the family matriarch whose advantageous Elizabethan-era marriages acquired the wealth that built Chatsworth.

By the late 1600s, Bess's great-great-grandson, William Cavendish (1641-1707), became the first Duke of Devonshire in reward for helping bring William of Orange to the English throne. The new King William III gave the new duke a pair of intricate pilgrim bottles (silver flasks like those carried by pilgrims to shrines), which are part of the exhibition.

The second duke—also named William, as have been most of the dukes—expanded the family's collections by acquiring many Old Master drawings. Exhibited drawings include a pen and ink sketch by Van Dyck of a dying tree with brambles, an ink and chalk drawing by Rubens of a peasant girl churning butter, plus detailed pen and ink Dutch landscapes by Rembrandt.

The Devonshire dynasty doubled their holdings through inheritance after the 1748 marriage of Lady Charlotte Boyle to William Cavendish, soon to become the fourth duke. Exhibited works inherited from the Boyles include architectural drawings by Andrea Palladio (founder of modern Italian architecture) and masque costume sketches by famous English architect, Inigo Jones (masques were elaborate private performances for British aristocrats).

The Devonshire Inheritance spotlights varied works, styles, sizes, and materials.

There's fabulous 18th century furniture—including a three-foot-high oak coin coffer intricately veneered with ebony, brass, and tortoiseshell, and a three-foot-wide wood, brass, and ivory instrument cabinet of Henry Cavendish, the fourth duke's cousin and a noted scientist.

There are intriguing documents and books: handwritten letters to family members from Queen Elizabeth I, Charles Dickens, and Alexander Pope; a 1462 Latin Vulgate Bible, the first to bear the names of the printers and the date; and a 1613 copy of Galileo's diagram of celestial rotation.

Much of the exhibition glitters—from a 1768 gold Louis XV snuff box to an 1813 gold dog collar; from a massive silver soup tureen to the Kiphausen Hawk, a 14-inch-tall silver bird decorated with painted enamel and a dozen varieties of gemstones. There's even the intricately-carved, 16th-century boxwood rosary of Henry VIII, the one-time defender of the Catholic faith who, ironically, later became the first head of the Church of England.

A 17th century Italian pendant proves especially symbolic. At just over two inches long, it bears a cameo carved from banded agate depicting the Greek youth, Arion, astride a dolphin. Legend holds that the dolphin saved him from drowning, an impressive escape.

The Cavendishes accomplished an impressive escape of sorts after the 10th duke unexpectedly died in 1950, leaving the estate threatened by an 80 percent death tax. After 17 years of government negotiations, the episode cost the family nine of its most important artworks, many rare books, a residence, and thousands of acres of land.

In 1981, the 11th duke and duchess, Andrew and Deborah Cavendish, set up a charitable trust to ensure the preservation of Chatsworth and its collections. Since then, 18 million people have visited Chatsworth, with proceeds going toward the property's upkeep.

The 11th duke died last year at the age of 84, but not before he and his wife collected family portraits by Lucian Freud (grandson of Sigmund Freud) and other notable 20th century artworks, many showcased in the exhibition. The 12th Duke of Devonshire, 61-year-old Peregrine Cavendish, carries on his family's half-millennium tradition of high-class collecting.

## ESSENTIALS

The Tyler Museum of Art is at 1300 S. Mahon St., adjacent to the main campus of Tyler Junior College. Hours: Tue-Sat 10-5 and Sun 1-5. Admission: free, except major exhibitions (see below). For details, call 903/595-1001 ([www.tylermuseum.org](http://www.tylermuseum.org)).

The Devonshire Inheritance runs July 30 to Oct. 23, 2005. Admission: \$10 adults; \$8 students and seniors (65+); \$5 for 13-17; \$2 for 3-12; and free for museum members. Sept. 12 is open for seniors (65+) with free admission. A 430-page color catalog (\$59.95) chronicles the exhibition.

Exhibit-related museum events include: Aug. 5, Sept. 2, and Oct. 7, guided tours (\$13, including admission); lectures, July 30 by the 12th Duke of Devonshire, and Oct 11-13 by various experts (\$20 for each lecture, including admission); Oct. 15, an English tea (\$15, excluding admission); and Oct. 16, free Family Day with kids activities. Event admission is free or reduced for members.

Other exhibit tie-in events include: Sept. 17, English compositions performed by the East Texas Symphony Orchestra, which also co-sponsors (with the University of Texas at Tyler) the Oct. 6 performance of the Voices of London (903/526-3876); Aug. 6, 13, 20, and 27, children's science programs at Tyler's Discovery Science Place (903/533-8011); and Shakespearean theater through July 24 at the Texas Shakespeare Festival in Kilgore (903/983-8601).

(Editor's Note: In preparation for the Devonshire exhibit, the museum will be closed July 1-29, 2005.)

#### RESOURCE:

- Jan McCauley (she)—TMA marketing... [market@tylERMuseum.org](mailto:market@tylERMuseum.org)
- Re: Chatsworth:
  - exhibit catalog
  - [www.chatsworth-house.co.uk](http://www.chatsworth-house.co.uk)
- The Cambridge Encyclopedia, second edition, 1995