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ART FOUNDATION

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Ashmolean embraces blue-chip contemporary art

Oxford museum to borrow works collected by Oxford graduate who made his fortune in America

By Javier Pes. Web only
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The Ashmolean plans to show the work of leading contemporary artists thanks to a partnership with the New York-based Hall Art Foundation. Borrowing works from the 5,000-strong collection built by Andrew and Christine Hall opens the way for the University of Oxford's museum of art and archaeology to show works by blue-chip, post-war artists, such as Anselm Kiefer, Georg Baselitz, Ed Ruscha and Andy Warhol. The first display from the Halls' collection at the Ashmolean, which is due to open in



Malcolm Morley's *Winner's Circle*, 2005, copyright, the artist; photo, Tom Powel; courtesy Sperone Westwater, New York

October, will feature around 30 works by the British born, US-based artist Malcolm Morley. This and future displays are being organised by Norman Rosenthal, the leading curator who is a trustee of the foundation.

Rosenthal, a friend of the Ashmolean's director, Christopher Brown, introduced the museum to the British born, US-based Halls and suggested the collaboration. Andrew Hall, an Oxford graduate who represented the university at rowing and made his fortune trading oil, needed a little convincing, however. "He remembered the Ashmolean as it used to be," says Brown. Seeing the new Ashmolean, which has been transformed by a modernisation and expansion unveiled in 2009, helped change Andrew Hall's mind, says Brown. Rotating displays of works from the Hall Art Foundation will hang in a central, double-height space currently featuring sculpture.

"I am hugely impressed by [the Halls]. They are passionate collectors," says Brown. Since late 2012 the Hall Art Foundation has run a gallery in Reading, Vermont, where the Halls owns a 2,400-acre estate. The gallery, which is open by appointment, is housed in a converted dairy farm. It is a busy time for their foundation: in September works from the collection by Kiefer are due to go on long-term display at Mass MoCA (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art) in a 10,000 sq. ft space the foundation has converted. Meanwhile, in Germany, the Halls own the castle south of Hanover where the artist Georg Baselitz lived and worked for three decades until 2006. As well as purchase Schloss Derneburg, which they are now restoring, the Halls acquired key works from Baselitz's art collection.

Brown stresses that the Ashmolean's embrace of the art of today, which he has wanted to see happen for a while, complements Oxford's existing contemporary art gallery. He says: "There is a very happy relationship with Modern Art Oxford: in no sense are we competing. Modern Art Oxford is the place where cutting-edge contemporary art is shown."