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Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

## Pilot project: Tate

**'The long-term loan of paintings and sculptures, which have not been requested for loan in the past 20 years'**

Tate's collection consists of over 65,000 works of art encompassing the national collection of British art from 1500 and the national collection of international modern art. At any one time, around 130 works are on long-term loan and each year up to 800 more are lent to temporary exhibitions in the UK and abroad. Tate considers each loan request individually on the basis of the importance and relevance of the proposal to its loan policy and will also consider any loan venue with public access that can meet Government Indemnity standards of security and has appropriate environmental controls. Despite this flexibility and an increasingly high demand to borrow, many loan requests relate to similar areas of the collection and the same individual works, which are often already committed to exhibitions and displays either at Tate or elsewhere.

Extending the range of loans from Tate to maximise the use of works across the breadth of the collection, this pilot project for Effective Collections seeks to facilitate the long-term loan of paintings and sculptures from Tate's collection, which have not been requested for loan in the past 20 years. Working with Tate to identify works in this category which are in a suitable condition for loan, Effective Collections brokers will match objects from Tate with borrowers who have engaging ideas for use of the objects, considering at this stage three borrowing organisations receiving five to ten works each. This pilot project has presented the first opportunity for the Effective Collections programme to recruit and work with brokers in the freelance model of future projects: following a recent advertisement in Museums Journal, brokers will trial the role over the second half of 2007.

An appealing part of this pilot project is the challenge for brokers to find innovative new homes for objects, where the context for the borrowed objects adds value to the loan; for example in providing opportunities to see the collection at the borrowing venue in a new light, or for the Tate collection to reach audiences it might not normally attract. This will be a challenge for brokers, partly because they are led by availability of objects rather than demand from museums. However, piloting loans in 2007/8 will test how well this process works and just how much the anticipated demand for objects will grow.

While Effective Collections is providing brokers to coordinate activity, this pilot project also involves significant investment from Tate in terms of staff time to identify objects, conservation and art handling teams to prepare objects for loan, and the addition of this pilot project to the caseload of the loans registrars who will administer these loans for their duration. Tate has encouragingly chosen to commit existing resources to this process for the period of the pilot project, but there is a risk that without better recognition of the benefits of sharing collections by funders and governing bodies other museums may find it difficult to follow suit.