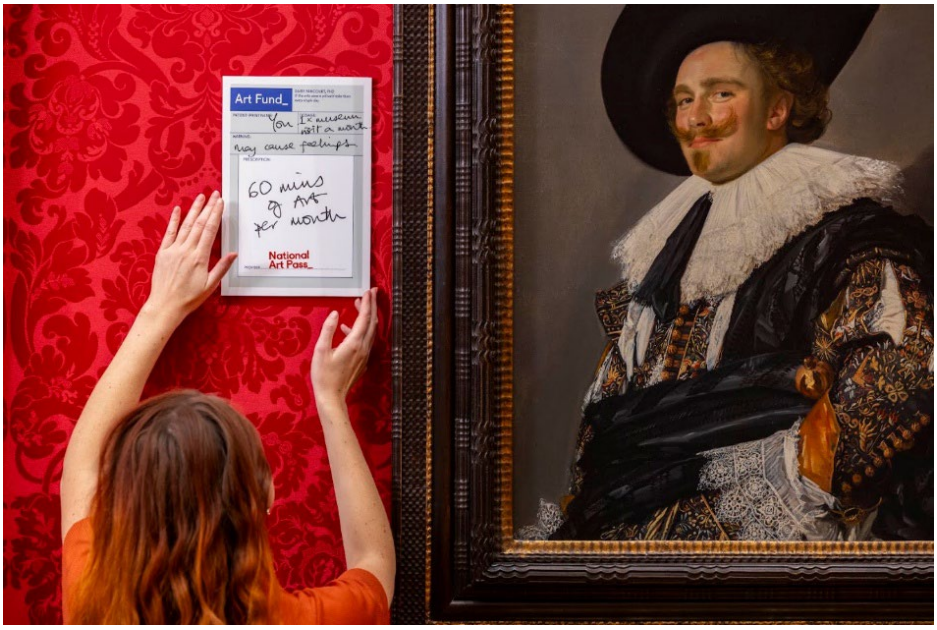
60 MINUTES OF ART A MONTH: THE NEW PRESCRIPTION FOR HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

From reducing stress to supporting brain health, a new report presented at the Wallace Collection by Art Fund in partnership with Professor Daisy Fancourt, author of Art Cure, reveals why art is an essential part of a healthy, fulfilling life.



Art can be a powerful tool for unlocking health and happiness, according to Daisy Fancourt, Professor of Psychobiology and Epidemiology at University College London. A new report, commissioned by Art Fund in partnership with Professor Fancourt, calls for a **Recommended Dose of Art (RDA)** - spending at least 60 minutes with art in a museum or gallery every month – to boost our wellbeing and enrich our lives.

On 3 November, The Wallace Collection hosted Professor Fancourt to launch the new report, 'The Recommended Dose of Art: A Prescription for Health and Wellbeing', within the museum's Great Gallery, surrounded by world-class masterpieces by Canaletto, Hals, Rubens, Titian, Van Dyck and Velázquez.

Engaging with artworks in a museum – whether alone in quiet reflection or shared with others in conversation – can be beneficial for both mental and physical health, in the same way as nutrition, rest and sunlight. The benefits include reducing stress hormones such as cortisol, lowering the risk of developing dementia and helping adults remain physiologically younger.

Professor Fancourt makes the case for creative engagement and the arts to be recognised as the Fifth Pillar of Health, alongside diet, sleep, exercise and nature. She supports the idea of art as a prescription: a revitalising tonic to help ease the stresses and strains of everyday life. This can be administered through taking time to slow down and wander through a gallery, pausing to notice, reflect and consider the objects and the collections.

Professor Fancourt said:

"Regular engagement and meaningful encounters with art are now recognised as an important contributor to our health and wellbeing, and the evidence suggests they should be viewed as health-promoting behaviours, alongside having a balanced diet, regular exercise and spending time outdoors.

"Guidelines like eating our 5-a-day of fruit and vegetables and getting our 10,000 steps have proven effective in helping us to prioritise other health-promoting behaviours in our busy lives. Adding regular arts engagement to this list could be a simple and joyful way of investing further in our health and wellbeing."

Research carried out by Art Fund among 2,000 UK adults revealed that 89 per cent (nearly 9 in 10 people) miss out on the Recommended Dose of Art. Yet the evidence suggests that the opportunity to encounter art up close should be a valuable focal point in our lives. Viewing original artworks in a gallery can have a much greater effect on people's wellbeing than looking at reproductions, as in-person viewing can lead to around a 22% greater reduction in the stress hormone cortisol compared with viewing reproductions of art.

The Wallace Collection's Great Gallery, where masterpieces such as Frans Hals' *The Laughing Cavalier*, Peter Paul Rubens' *The Rainbow Landscape* and Diego Velázquez's *The Lady with a Fan* hang side-by-side in one magnificent space, has awed, inspired, consoled and reawakened successive generations of visitors since it was purpose-built between 1872 and 1875, at the behest of Sir Richard Wallace for his family's vast art collection. The Gallery provides a remarkable setting in which to experience the restorative power of art.

Art Fund and Professor Fancourt's art prescriptions were displayed alongside some of the paintings, encouraging the slow art of looking and gently reminding visitors that a visit to a museum is one of the simplest ways to invest in our health and wellbeing.

The opportunity to experience original works of art, free to all and in a welcoming public space, has never felt more valuable.

Dr Xavier Bray, Director of The Wallace Collection, said:

"An art gallery is like a sanctuary - a place where one can leave behind the worries of life, let oneself enter different worlds, and allow the imagination to take over. We see this first-hand at the Wallace Collection in the way visitors pause, look and engage with our collection. Gazing at Fragonard's *The Swing*, coming face to face with Frans Hals' *The Laughing Cavalier*, marvelling at Rubens' *The Rainbow Landscape*… museums such as ours have become havens in a sea of digital saturation, sparking curiosity and surprise, encouraging common ground and shared experience, and allowing for genuine reflection and unhurried time.

"We are delighted to host the launch of the 'Recommended Dose of Art' and hope it inspires more people to discover their own private haven in a museum or gallery, and to make visiting part of their regular lives."

Jenny Waldman, Director of Art Fund, said:

"We often think of museums and galleries as places to visit as an occasional treat, but evidence shows they are untapped resources that can be enjoyed as part of a healthy lifestyle.

"With hundreds of museums across the UK offering free entry to their collections, everyone can get their Recommended Dose of Art without spending a penny. And the National Art Pass provides free and discounted entry to hundreds more museums, making regular visits and special exhibitions more affordable."