

Portland Font

Acquisition of the Portland Font which was commissioned by the 3rd Duke of Portland (1738-1809) a leading statesman who was twice prime minister and also a long-standing trustee of the British Museum. Humphrey Repton (1752-1818) made a rare appearance in the role of designer of 'one of the most sumptuous presents of gold plate that was ever executed in this country' and the young Paul Storr (1771-1844) was launched upon his career as a goldsmith when he was entrusted with its execution. The font is made of 22ct gold, in the form of a free-standing sculpture in the neo-classical style; low square platform with, in the centre, a two-handled bowl on winged cherub legs, chased with a band of low relief ornament round the rim and a design of lily leaves on the underside; behind the bowl stands the figure of Faith holding a cross, in the act of blessing; on the left of the bowl, the figure of Hope, seated on the edge of the platform with an anchor; on the right, the figure of Charity, seated with 3 children. London, 1796. It remained in the family of the Dukes of Portland until its sale at Christie's in July 1985. It was subsequently the object of an export licence suspension and was eventually acquired by the British Museum in April 1986 at a price of £1,275,000 to which NHMF contributed £900,000.;

Nation/region

London

Grant awarded

£900,000

Award date

27/03/1986