



cc Press Office

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PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
and
Minister for the Arts.

12th November 1980

M Pattison Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

Dear mine

MB

Prime Minister

*A satisfactory outcome
in the Wernher
collection*

LUTON HOO

MAP 12/47

In his letter to you of 11th September Nigel Brotherton reported that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster had asked Mr Nicholas Phillips to call on him on 15th September to discuss the proposed sale of a painting from the Wernher Collection at Luton Hoo. I am now writing to let you know of the developments that have taken place since then.

At the meeting on 15th September Mr Phillips explained his proposal to sell a painting by Altdorfer "Christ taking leave of His Mother before the Passion". This is universally accepted as a major monument of German renaissance painting. Although one of the finest paintings at Luton Hoo, it is not however integral to the Wernher Collection and its sale will not detract from the Collection as a whole. The Chancellor expressed the hope that the painting could be acquired by a public collection through private treaty sale and asked that the National Gallery should be given time to consider the possibility of purchasing the picture before it was sent for auction. The painting has for long been on the National Gallery's list of desired acquisitions.

I can now let you know that the painting has been acquired by the National Gallery with assistance from the National Art Collections Fund, the Pilgrim Trust and a grant of some £825,000 from the National Heritage Memorial Fund. We understand that the National Gallery will be making an announcement tomorrow and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will also issue a statement welcoming the purchase. The proceeds of the sale (about £2½m) will provide the endowment required for the preservation of the Wernher Collection at Luton Hoo.

Contd

I am sending a copy of this letter to Nigel Brotherton (Treasury), Jeff Jacobs (Department of the Environment) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

Mary Giles

Miss M G E Giles

Private Secretary
(Arts)

P.S. We are not disclosing the price of the painting.