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Friday 4 Mar 11

## Qatar and UK agree to share portrait of a former African slave from America

On loan to the NPG for five years, the work will go on view in Doha in 2013 and may tour the UK

By Javier Pes | Web only  
Published online 20 Jan 11 (News)



William Hoare's portrait of Ayuba Suleiman Diallo will remain in Britain

**LONDON.** A rare 18th-century portrait of a young man born in West Africa, who gained his freedom in Britain having been a slave in America, went on show in London's National Portrait Gallery (NPG) on 20 January.

Ayuba Suleiman Diallo (about 1701-1773), who was known as Job ben Solomon in London, was painted in his traditional dress by the artist William Hoare in 1733. The sitter, who was a Muslim of high birth, wears a copy of the Qur'an around his neck. In Britain, Diallo mixed with aristocrats and scholars, including the collector Sir Hans Sloane, who arranged for Diallo to be presented to George II. Diallo in turn helped Sloane with Arabic translations.

The portrait, which had been in a private collection, was bought at Christie's in 2009 by the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA). With contributions from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Art Fund, the NPG launched a public appeal in 2010 for £555,000 to purchase the painting while it was under temporary export ban. However, the gallery was unable to proceed with the acquisition.

A novel sharing arrangement has now been negotiated between the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and Roger Mandle, executive director of the QMA, whereby the painting has been lent to the NPG for five years and the QMA will fund research into the history of the portrait as well as its conservation. A tour of regional UK galleries is planned, while in 2013, the picture will be exhibited in Doha, capital of Qatar.

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