

## In search of the perfect setting

John Tusa voted one of the paintings in my gallery the luckiest painting in Britain. Personally I've got another work in mind ...



In the frame ... Mrs Siddons as the Tragic Muse by Reynolds. Photograph: © Dulwich Picture Gallery

When reading the blog yesterday it was a pleasure to discover that John Tusa so much admires the hanging of the National Gallery's Cima da Conegliano, as it is one of the pictures which has been central to the hang of the Sainsbury Wing ever since it opened in 1991. In fact, if you look at the back cover of Colin Amery's book on the architecture of the Sainsbury Wing (Colin Amery, *A Celebration of Art and Architecture: The National Gallery Sainsbury Wing*, London, 1991), you will find an illustration of the sequence of spaces that John Tusa describes with only the Cima hanging in an otherwise empty space.

What other works of art are so dependent on their setting? The classic example of the genre is the Winged Victory of Samothrace at the top of the monumental entrance staircase of the Louvre, as illustrated on the cover of Victoria Newhouse's recent book on *Art and the Power of Placement*, New York, 2005. I would myself nominate Reynolds's portrait of Mrs Siddons as the Tragic Muse, which normally hangs at the end of the main gallery at the Dulwich Picture Gallery (which was itself the model for Robert Venturi's design of the Sainsbury Wing), although it is currently on tour.

Posted by

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