



Thoroughly modern monarch: a slightly bemused Queen inspects an exhibit at the new gallery today

A new riff but no riffraff at royal Tate Modern opening

by RICHARD HOLLIDAY

TATE MODERN today came under the critical gaze of probably the nation's most prodigious art collector, the Queen.

She officially opened the £134 million Tate, converted from the old Bankside power station and now the largest art gallery in the world. The Queen was met by Tate director Sir Nicholas Serota, its chairman David Verey, Culture Secretary Chris Smith and Southwark Lib-Dem MP Simon Hughes.

For the second time this week, following their meeting at the Millennium Bridge, she also encountered the new London Mayor, Ken Livingstone.

The Queen entered to a specially composed Sir Harrison Birtwistle fanfare, Seventeen Tate Riffs, played by a trio from the London Sinfonietta.

Mr Verey told her: "In 1962 when you last visited this building it was a great oil-fired power station giving power to Southwark and light to London. Now, in its new guise, it will generate no less power, energy, light and electricity than the old one."

Sir Nicholas said: "This is a great day for the visual arts of this country and for European culture. We are here to open a great

building which will endure and serve for generations to come."

The Queen then pressed a button lifting a canopy to reveal an inaugural etched glass plaque. From under the shadow of a seven tonne, 30ft high steel Louise Bourgeois sculpture, Female Spider with Eggs, she travelled by escalator to the third floor to inspect works by Dali, Duchamp, Giacometti, Matisse, Mondrian, Picasso, Pollock, Rothko and Warhol.

Today's guests included fashion designer Paul Smith, architect Lord Foster, British Museum director Dr Robert Anderson, Royal Academy director Norman Rosenthal, BBC1 controller Alan Yentob, broadcaster Joan Bakewell and sculptor Sir Anthony Caro.

The former power station, opening to the public tomorrow, sits on the South Bank beside another crowd-puller, the Globe Theatre.

Its most spectacular asset is the 500ft long, 115ft high Turbine Hall, the centrepiece of tonight's opening party with guests including Mr Smith, artist Tracey Emin, Madonna and Mick Jagger.

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