

The Face of Scotland: Masterpieces from the Scottish National Portrait Gallery

15 September - 19 December 2009

A unique exhibition of portraits from The Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh is on display at The Fleming Collection this autumn. More than 40 paintings and photographs from the Gallery's permanent collection are on show and it is a rare opportunity to see a selection of Scotland's finest examples of portraiture, many of which have never been on show in London before.

The exhibition, curated by James Holloway, Director of The Scottish National Portrait Gallery, includes portraits of some of Scotland's most famous historical figures such as Mary Queen of Scots, Bonnie Prince Charlie, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Robert Louis Stevenson. It will also show some of Scotland's contemporary personalities such as Gordon Brown, the actor Ewan MacGregor, and the author J.K. Rowling.

The earliest dated portrait in the exhibition will be a painting of James VI of Scotland and I of England from 1604. Like many of the pictures in the exhibition it was not painted by a Scot, but by the Flemish artist, John de Critz. All those portrayed in the exhibition are however, Scottish and have been chosen for their contribution to Scottish history. Whether they were kings or queens, highland chieftains, writers, soldiers, actors or scientists, their life stories are essential in tracing Scotland's rich history.

The Scottish National Portrait Gallery, one of the finest Arts and Crafts buildings in the UK, was first opened in 1889. Designed by Sir Robert Rowland Anderson, it was intended not only to house the national portrait collection but also to be a monument to Scottish history and achievement.

The exhibition has been made possible because the Scottish National Portrait Gallery closed on 6 April 2009 for its biggest ever refurbishment programme and will not reopen until November 2011. The £17.6 million renovation project called 'Portrait of the Nation' will open up the building and allow much more of the extensive collection to be seen by the general public. It will double the amount of space to show works of art, improve services and provide proper educational facilities. The Gallery is however still raising funds to fulfil the project. The Heritage Lottery Fund and the Scottish government have contributed £9.9 million between them but The National Galleries of Scotland are still endeavouring to raise the remaining amount.