

THE SCOTTISHNESS OF SCOTTISH ART

12th April - 11th June 2005

Taking its title from Nikolaus Pevsner's Reith Lecture, 'The Englishness of English Art' delivered in 1955, The Scottishness of Scottish Art marks the fiftieth anniversary of Pevsner's lecture with an exhibition that explores the concerns and approaches of around forty painters, whose work is in the Fleming Collection, and who worked in different parts of Scotland over the last two centuries. Artists whose work is featured in the exhibition include Thomas Faed RA ARSA (1826-1900), John Watson Nicol ROI (1856-1926), Francis Campbell Boileau Cadell RSA RSW (1883-1937), Joan Eardley RSA (1921-1963), John Bellany RA HRSA (b.1942) and Gary Anderson (b.1960).

Scottish art cannot be constrained by generalisation; it has always consisted of far more than a tale of two cities, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Vibrant colour and enjoyment of paint have not been confined to the former and subtlety of tone and elegant decorative draughtsmanship have not been the exclusive preserve of the latter. Many talented artists with highly individual styles have forged paths for themselves outside these centres.

An obvious trait among many painters is a deep love of Scotland itself and pride in Scottish achievements. The grandeur of the Highlands, Scotland's vast and intricate coastline, the bustle of city or village life and major events in Scottish history are all depicted. But patriotism has not made Scottish artists self-obsessed or introspective. For centuries the Scots have travelled abroad and influences from all over the world can be seen in Scottish painting.

Another feature of Scottish painting is an attachment to observed reality and representational art often coupled with a continuing belief in the importance of drawing. Thanks to these foundations, Scotland has produced many great figure painters and masters of narrative art and still-life.

Today's artists have a greater variety of media at their disposal than any earlier generation but Scotland is still producing outstanding painters who use traditional media in eloquent and innovative ways to address a whole raft of subjects. They all have fresh perspectives on their heritage and surroundings and are making valuable comments on Scotland as it faces the challenges of the twenty first century.

The Scottishness of Scottish Art does not try to define any styles as being Scottish or answer the question whether there is a definite trait that defines Scottish art. Rather by re-looking at familiar genres the exhibition leaves the viewer to decide.

There are a number of lunchtime talks and evening events organised to coincide with this exhibition, for details please go to our events or telephone +44 (0) 20 7409 5733.

Images from top: D. R. Warrilow Crofts on the Isle of Jura c. 1998; S.J. Peplow Green Sea, Iona c.1920; G.S.Smith St Monance Kirk c.1930; P. Howson The Fleet .1991; J.W.Nicol Lochaber No More 1883. All copyright of the artist or artist's estate and The Fleming-Wyfold Art Foundation.