Celebrating Scotland's Art – Scottish National Gallery



Artist's impression of the National Galleries of Scotland redevelopment project, Edinburgh The National Galleries of Scotland (NGS)

The £15.3million renovation, entitled Celebrating Scotland's Art: The Scottish National Gallery Project (SNG Project), will triple the gallery's exhibition space and radically improve access to its world-class collection of Scottish art. An application to the HLF for £4.94m has now received a first-round pass.

This project will mark a fundamental change in the way the gallery presents historical Scottish art. Michael Clarke, Director of the Scottish National Gallery and the project's Director, said: "We are thrilled that this proposal has been passed to the next stage by the Heritage Lottery Fund. As holders of the world's foremost collection of Scottish art, which includes such incomparable artists as Ramsay, Raeburn and Wilkie, our focus has always been on showing its significance and making it accessible to as wide a public as possible. Extending the gallery space will transform the entire visitor experience."

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Colin McLean, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland, said: "This collection of art is one of Scotland's most precious belongings. It has the potential to delight, inspire and inform audiences from Scotland and across the world. We are

delighted to give our initial support to a project which will allow many more of these outstanding paintings to be displayed and accommodate many more visitors. We look forward to seeing the plans for the transformation of the Scottish collection galleries develop."

Designed by the Scottish architect William Henry Playfair (1790-1857) and situated at The Mound in the centre of Edinburgh, the Scottish National Gallery is the most popular UK art gallery outside of London, attracting over 1.295m visitors in 2014.

The ambition is to have the world's most important collection of Scottish art realise its full potential, thus helping the public understand both the history and impact of Scottish art nationally and internationally.

The new presentation of Scotland's art will combine a historical narrative, which will range from the 17th to the mid-20th century (including the Scottish Colourists), with dynamic and changing displays drawn from the riches of the collection.

The redevelopment will enhance visitor circulation throughout the gallery and will take full advantage of advances in digital technology, to extend the reach of the collections to new audiences across the world. The project will also include an extensive programme of activity providing a wide range of opportunities for visitors, including digital, to engage with the gallery and its collections.

Set to commence in 2016, the project will include the creation of a new landscaped public pathway and terrace, from the Princes St Gardens level, which will increase public access to the different parts of the NGS complex.

Gareth Hoskins Architects (GHA) – one of Scotland's leading architectural practices – will oversee this major refurbishment. The practice has established its reputation for its design of arts and cultural schemes, and the SNG project follows recent major GHA developments, such as the RIAS Doolan Award-winning redevelopment of the National Museum of Scotland.

During the renovation, the Scottish National Gallery will remain open to the public with access to the spaces not affected by these plans. Construction is planned to commence in 2016, with works expected to be completed in the summer of 2018.

Notes to editors

Gareth Hoskins Architects

The practice has worked with a wide range of cultural organisations including the Victoria & Albert Museum, National Museums Scotland and the National Theatre for Scotland and is currently working with the Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh, Aberdeen Art Gallery, Strawberry Fields in Liverpool and Bird College of Arts in London. Further afield, the practice designed Scotland's pavilion for the Venice Biennale in 2008 and recently won the international competitions for the Landesmuseum in Schleswig Holstein, the redevelopment of the Berlin State Library and the World Museum in Vienna.

Brief history of the Scottish National Gallery

Designed by the architect William Henry Playfair (1790-1857), the Scottish National Gallery and the adjacent Royal Scottish Academy building stand in the heart of Edinburgh. Although originally built as separate structures, their histories have long been intertwined, and since the completion of the Playfair Project in 2004, they have been physically joined by the underground Gardens Entrance.

The National Galleries of Scotland (NGS) cares for, develops, researches and displays the national collection of Scottish and international fine art and, with a lively and innovative programme of exhibitions, education and publications, aims to engage, inform and inspire the broadest possible public.

Architecture

Playfair was Scotland's leading architect of his era and was responsible for a number of Edinburgh buildings, although his two galleries on The Mound are generally regarded as his finest. His two classical temples to the arts achieved a picturesque harmony with the dramatic backdrop of Edinburgh Castle.

The latest phase in The Mound's history saw the completion of a link between the Royal Scottish Academy Building and the National Gallery of Scotland. Award-winning architects John Miller and Partners rose to the challenge of developing the two grand architectural pedigrees for modern use. The newly refurbished RSA is now a world-class exhibition space, while the underground Gardens Entrance houses a range of new visitor facilities, including the Clore Education Centre, a 200-seat lecture theatre and cinema, an IT Gallery and a 120-seat restaurant.

Other NGS redevelopment projects

The Scottish National Gallery underwent a transformation with the **Playfair Project** completed in 2004. This £32m project included the complete refurbishment of the Royal Scottish Academy and the creation of an underground link between the SNG and the RSA, with additional visitor facilities such as a lecture theatre, café, restaurant and shop. The transformation allowed the site to become one of the key visitor attractions to the city.

The **Scottish National Portrait Gallery** reopened to the public on 1 December 2011 after a major £17.6m refurbishment project. This was the first major refurbishment in the gallery's 120-year history and restored much of the architect's original vision, opening up previously inaccessible parts of the building and increasing the public space by more than 60 percent.