



George Bain, Bi-lingual Gaelic and English greeting card, The George Bain Collection, Groam House Museum © The George Bain Estate

GEORGE BAIN: MASTER OF MODERN CELTIC ART

15 October 2011 – 13 February 2012

SCOTTISH NATIONAL GALLERY, The Mound, Edinburgh, EH2 2EL

Admission free

PRESS VIEW: 11.30 am – 1.00pm, 14 October 2011

This autumn the Scottish National Gallery, in partnership with Groam House Museum, Rosemarkie, will present a unique display devoted to the Scottish artist often referred to as the “father of modern Celtic design.” George Bain was a key figure in the revival of Celtic art in the 20th century and devoted much of his life to the study of the intricate decorative designs used by ancient Picts and Celts. Demonstrating the artist’s great versatility, this display will feature a selection of some 55 items, including watercolours, drawings, sculptures and jewellery, as well as archival material and objects made to Bain’s designs. Much of the material has never have been on public display before.

George Bain (1881-1968) was born in Scrabster, in the northeast of Scotland. His family was on the point of emigrating, their ship docked in Leith Port, en route to Canada, when an

encounter with a cousin convinced his father to stay in Edinburgh. Bain went on to study at Edinburgh's School of Applied Art, Edinburgh College of Art, and the Royal College of Art, London before taking the post of Principal Art Teacher at Kirkcaldy High School, which he held until his retirement in 1946. Throughout his long career he exhibited frequently across Scotland, in institutions such as the Royal Scottish Academy as well as London and Paris.

Bain dedicated himself to studying the complex techniques adopted by Picts and Celts who produced intricate designs on rural stones, sophisticated metalwork and jewellery, as well as medieval illuminated manuscripts such as the Book of Kells. Bain cleverly devised mathematical frameworks that taught people the ancient principles which underlie these works, whilst still allowing for creative designs. Bain's applied maxim was always "*Theory may inform but Practice convinces*". His manual *Celtic Art: The Methods of Construction* is still the most influential book on this subject and has been in print continuously since 1972.

Master of Modern Celtic Art will document Bain's early artistic training in Edinburgh and highlight his experimentation with printmaking and drawing techniques. Immensely detailed sketches, watercolours and prints will be on display as well as actual objects adapted from his own designs, such as the Celtic 'Hunting' design which has featured on rugs and carpets since 1948. His manual will be on display in various editions and languages and examples of articles written by and about him will also be included.

George Bain's beautiful craftsmanship complements the work of other artists that feature in the National collection, such as Phoebe Anna Traquair and John Duncan, who shared his passion for the Scottish Arts and Crafts movement at the start of the early twentieth century. Bain's art, and in particular his teaching manual, has continued the Celtic renaissance and allows for the art form still to be practised today.

For further information and images, please call the Press Office on 0131 624 6247/ 325/ 332/ 314

pressinfo@nationalgalleries.org
www.nationalgalleries.org

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Notes to editors

Groam House Museum is a small independent, award-winning museum supported by The Highland Council. The museum is situated in the Black Isle village of Rosemarkie, fifteen miles north east of Inverness; it houses an internationally important collection of Pictish sculpture and Celtic art. The George Bain Collection was donated to the museum by Bain's family in 1998.

In 2008 Groam House Museum benefitted from a prestigious Heritage Lottery Fund Collecting Cultures Award of £99,000. These funds are being used specifically to develop the George Bain Collection and put Bain into the context of the Celtic Art Revival. Additional funds were obtained to enhance this project from: Awards for All, Highland LEADER, National Fund for Acquisitions, Art Fund, Museums Galleries Scotland and Highland Culture Programme. Groam House Museum is curating new exhibitions for venues during 2011-2012 in Iona, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Ullapool.

