



*The Mysterious Garden* (1911)  
Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh  
45.1 x 47.7cm  
Purchased with the assistance of the Art Fund

## SCOTTISH NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART ACQUIRES KEY WORK BY MARGARET MACDONALD MACKINTOSH

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The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art is delighted to announce the acquisition of *The Mysterious Garden* (1911) by Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh (1865-1933). This stunning work is a superb addition to the Gallery's holding of early twentieth-century Scottish art. The acquisition has been made in celebration of the Gallery's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary which took place in 2010. *The Mysterious Garden* was purchased for £230,000 from the Fine Art Society, London with substantial assistance of £115,000 from the Art Fund, the national fundraising charity for works of art.

*The Mysterious Garden* is a rare and beautiful work that shows a woman artist at the forefront of developments in the arts at the beginning of the twentieth century. First exhibited almost exactly a century ago, in March 1911, at the Royal Scottish Society for Painters in Watercolour in Glasgow, it is one of the artist's largest independent watercolours. Mackintosh's masterpiece evokes a dream-like state and seems to render an almost child-like interior world of the imagination. It depicts a woman with her eyes closed and perhaps asleep, elaborately clothed in a voluminous ethereal dress shaped like a petal. Above her stands a row of eight heads or masks which are, perhaps, part of her dream. It is thought that the work was inspired by the fairy play, *The Blue Bird*, by the Belgian poet and playwright, Maurice Maeterlinck, which was performed in Glasgow in 1910. This style is typical of Macdonald Mackintosh's work and the concerns of other members of the Glasgow School; however it can also be seen as part of a wider symbolist movement across Europe exemplifying the far reaching influence of the Scottish artists at that time.

*The Mysterious Garden* is the first work by Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh to enter the collections of the National Galleries of Scotland. It joins paintings and drawings by her contemporaries including her husband Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Phoebe Traquair, Jessie M. King and Annie French. The painting will now go on show from the 15 August until 16 October 2011 at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in a display which explores the Celtic revival style of the period.

Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh was born in Tipton, near Wolverhampton and moved to Glasgow in the late 1880s. In 1891 Margaret and her sister, Frances (1873-1921), enrolled at Glasgow School of Art and took day-time drawing classes. There she met students Charles Rennie Mackintosh and James Herbert MacNair (1868-1955). By 1894 the four young artists were participating in the same exhibitions and had begun collaborating on work. They soon became known as 'The Four' - also as the 'Mac group' and, more sardonically, as 'The Spook School', owing to the ghostly, spectral appearance of the figures in many of their works. As their reputations grew Josef Hoffmann, the celebrated Viennese designer, suggested that they be invited to show at the Eighth Secessionist Exhibition in Vienna in 1900. Their international reputations were cemented by the work they showed at the great International Exhibition of Decorative Art held in Turin in 1902. Their work was highly influential on many who saw it including Hoffmann and Gustav Klimt.

In 1914, owing to ill health, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Margaret left Glasgow for London. From that date onwards she spent her time looking after him and she too suffered poor health; few works were made after this date. Mackintosh died in 1928 and she died five years later. A memorial exhibition, bringing together their work, was held in 1933 and it featured the watercolour *The Mysterious Garden*.

Simon Groom, Director of Modern and Contemporary Art said: "We are delighted to have acquired this beautiful masterpiece by Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh. It is a rare and stunning example of work from an important era in Scottish art history and is a substantial addition to our collection from this period. We are extremely grateful to the Art Fund for their generosity in making this acquisition possible."

Stephen Deuchar, Director of the Art Fund said: "The scarcity of works of this kind by Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh means that it is a real coup that the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art has been able to add this haunting watercolour to its collection. It is a much deserved 50<sup>th</sup> birthday present to the gallery."

**For further press information, please contact:**

The National Galleries of Scotland Press Office on 0131 624 6247/ 325/ 332/ 314 email [pressinfo@nationalgalleries.org](mailto:pressinfo@nationalgalleries.org)

**Ends**

**Notes to Editors**

**The Art Fund**

The Art Fund is the national fundraising charity, helping UK museums and galleries to buy, show and share art. It offers many ways of enjoying art through the National Art Pass which gives free entry to over 200 museums, galleries and historic houses across the country as well as 50% off major exhibitions. Over the past 5 years, the Art Fund has given £24 million to 248 museums and galleries to buy art. It also sponsors the UK tour of the ARTIST ROOMS collection – reaching several million people each year, and fundraises: recent campaigns include bringing in £6 million to save the Staffordshire Hoard for the West Midlands and Brueghel the Younger's *The Procession to Calvary* for Nostell Priory. It is funded entirely by its 80,000 supporters who believe great art should be for everyone to enjoy. Find out more about the Art Fund and how to buy a National Art Pass at [www.artfund.org](http://www.artfund.org).