



Parallel Lives 2: See the Future

6th November 2008 to the 18th January 2009

NATIONAL GALLERIES OF SCOTLAND (see notes to editors for more details)

Telephone 0131 6246 6200; recorded information 0131 332 2266

www.nationalgalleries.org

On Wednesday 5th November 2008, an exhibition of the major community art initiative, Parallel Lives 2 opens across three National Galleries of Scotland venues. This project, launched by Robin Harper MSP in February, aimed to find ways of making works in the National Galleries' collection more directly relevant to communities living in contemporary Edinburgh.

Three visionary works of art were chosen as the inspiration for the project -

- Marcel Broodthaers' surreal sculpture 'La Tour Visuelle', 1966
- George Seurat's post-impressionist landscape 'La Luzerne, St. Denis', 1885
- James Edgar's portrait of preacher and philanthropist 'Rev. Thomas Guthrie', 1862

Parallel Lives 2 offered people the opportunity to investigate these challenging works of art and use them to express their views on contemporary life. Community groups from Leith, North and West Edinburgh worked with contemporary artists to produce creative responses that give shape and form to their views on social issues. These responses can now be seen next to the original works they were inspired by in this dramatic and innovative exhibition.

A Field of Wheat before Wester Hailes (2008)

At the National Gallery Complex visitors will be able to see a video projection of the living landscape of West Edinburgh next to post-impressionist masterpieces by Seurat, Monet and Cezanne. Participants in West Edinburgh saw the changes in their local landscape paralleled in Georges Seurat's transformative vision of the urban fringe of Paris. Led by photographer Craig MacLean, participants gathered thousands of images submitted by local residents to form a mosaic landscape representing the life of this community.

Tower of Leith (2008)

An imposing and dramatic tower of 100 MP4 players showing simultaneous videos recorded on the mobile phones of people from Leith can be seen at the Dean Gallery. This amazing Dalek-like

structure is both alien and mysteriously alive. It updates Marcel Broodthaers' 'tower' which provokes debate about surveillance and the positive and negative uses of digital imaging technology. The community's response, facilitated by video artist Gavin Lockhart, takes the form of a contemporary 'Tower of Babel'.

Does Reform Reform You? (2008)

At the Portrait Gallery, people from North Edinburgh frankly air their views about child poverty, in a video made reacting to a portrait of a 19th century missionary alongside badges and jerseys bearing activist slogans. The portrait of the nineteenth century reformer Dr. Guthrie, founder of the notorious 'Ragged Schools', raised the question of contemporary attitudes to poverty, charity and social policy among older people in North Edinburgh. Working with the artist Kevin Reid, their response includes oral testimonies and slogans coined in response to Guthrie's missionary activity.

As a result of the project, communities and individuals have learned new skills and have relished the offer to represent themselves on the national stage by interpreting and creating works of art as a focus for local issues. We hope to have proved once again that the art in Scotland's national collection can be a lasting inspiration to all the people of Scotland.

'Parallel Lives', Documentary Film (2008)

A 15 minute documentary film of the project, made by director Lou MacLoughlan of Beanland Films, is part of the exhibition reviewing the project. This ground-breaking film is a fascinating record of the people on the project getting to grips with the NGS artworks. They are seen freely expressing their opinions as part of a lively and thought-provoking appraisal of an outreach project.

Parallel Lives 2 is a partnership project with Edinburgh's Capital City Partnership, Edinburgh Neighbourhood Partnerships, WHALE, Out of the Blue Arts Trust and North Edinburgh Arts.

Following its exhibition at the National Galleries of Scotland, Parallel Lives 2 will be shown in community venues in 2009.

To find out more about the project visit www.parallellives2.org

**For further information on the exhibition, or images, please call the
National Galleries Press Office on 0131 624 6325/ 332/ 314
pressoffice@nationalgalleries.org
www.nationalgalleries.org**

Notes to Editors

Parallel Lives 2 will be exhibited across the National Galleries and can be seen at these three venues:

A Field of Wheat before Wester Hailes (2008)

National Gallery Complex, The Mound, Edinburgh, EH2 2EL

Does Reform Reform You? (2008)

Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 1 Queen Street, Edinburgh, EH2 1JD

Tower of Leith (2008)

The Dean Gallery, 75 Belford Road, Edinburgh, EH4 3DR