

News Release

Richard Wright's most complex and ambitious painting to date unveiled

The most complex and ambitious painting to date by 2009 Turner prize-winner, Richard Wright, was unveiled today, 30 June 2010. One of three major artworks commissioned by the Edinburgh Art Festival with support from the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund, the painting is located in the west stairwell of the Dean Orphan Hospital, now the Dean Gallery, which is part of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art. The striking black on white design was created in an intensive four-week period.

Thomas Hamilton's design for the Dean Orphan Hospital, which was completed in the early 1830s, is a curious mix of neo-classical and baroque features. The inward inclination of the windows makes it look as if the towers are falling in on themselves and the exaggerated height of the banisters gives an Alice-in-Wonderland effect to the stairwells. It is almost as if they had been built for giants. Wright's initial approach to work was to follow a natural instinct towards simplicity, but as the painting developed it was, as he says, *"deflected by the architecture, and the work turned out to be very complicated."*

"This building is strikingly solid as a piece of architecture," he adds, *"but it also has these extraordinary, beautiful details and little hidden elements, and it has this melancholic history as well, which has crept into my thinking."*

"I have been aware that for me the work is as much for the people who were here before, as for the people who may come here in the future. Although I wouldn't want to overload that idea by suggesting some kind of narrative, or that the work should be understood in a particular way, those aspects have definitely been occurring to me as I thought about this building over the last month, as I have got to know it more."

The work is at once a remarkable addition to the space, but also so much part of the fabric of the building on to which it is painted,

"I like the way that work is as ignorable as it is interesting - the idea that the work might have this sort of abandoned quality," says Wright. *"You may almost glance upon it absent-mindedly - you might not even register that it is there - and that sort of daydream space interests me."*

Describing his approach to making the painting, Wright adds:

"I did a lot of drawings for this work - a lot of thinking about it. I even made a model, which I never normally do, influenced in part by a sense that the work may remain."

"I tend to work with certain colours, certain materials in quite an austere or restricted way, and this entire work is made out of two small pots of black paint. That's something that fascinates me about painting: if you painted this wall solidly with that paint you might only get a very small area, but when you approach that material in a slightly different way, the possibilities are infinite."

The commission of the painting has been made possible by a grant to the Edinburgh Art Festival from the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund which was established to recognise the exceptional creative talent that exists in Scotland and provide an international platform upon which it can excel. Fiona Hyslop, Minister for Culture and External Affairs said:

"I am delighted that the Scottish Government's Expo Fund has allowed Richard Wright, last year's Turner prize-winner, to create a new artwork for visitors to the Dean Gallery, one of our National Galleries in Scotland."

"Richard's exciting new work will be a highlight of this year's Edinburgh Art Festival, appealing to both Scottish and international audiences."

Joanne S. Brown, Director of Edinburgh Art Festival, added:

"The Edinburgh Art Festival is an important platform for the capital's galleries and artists at a time when the city is the focus of both national and international attention. We are delighted that the grant from the Government's Expo Fund has allowed us to support the commissioning of new work from leading Scottish artists and to underline the pre-eminence of the Edinburgh Art Festival as Scotland's biggest celebration of the visual arts."

Simon Groom, Director of Modern and Contemporary Art, National Galleries of Scotland said:

"The Stairwell Project represents one of the most ambitious commissions the Gallery has ever undertaken, by an artist we have long wished to work with and represent on a greater scale."

Richard Wright is an artist of enormous integrity, and major international standing, and we are delighted that the Dean Gallery is now home to his most complex and ambitious work to date. The Gallery is extremely grateful to the artist and his team for their immense labour of love, and to the Expo Fund, the Scottish Government and the Edinburgh Art Festival for enabling us to bring the best contemporary art to a wider public."

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Notes for Editors

- The Scottish Government Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund exists to recognise the exceptional creative talent that exists in Scotland and provide an international platform upon which it can excel. It is available to all 12 Edinburgh Festivals to support the development of Scottish-based work. An award of £250,000 was made to the Art Festival in March 2009 for works to be unveiled in 2010.
- Two further EAF Expo commissions will be unveiled this year. Kim Coleman & Jenny Hogarth's *Staged* will be produced by Collective Gallery in the City Observatory from 30 July – 15 August 2010 and Martin Creed's permanent installation in The Scotsman Steps, curated by the Fruitmarket Gallery, will be unveiled later in the year. Meanwhile four Expo funded performances and interventions will take art out of the gallery and into the streets during this year's EAF.
- The 2010 Edinburgh Art Festival will run from 29 July – 5 September 2010. Full programme available shortly at www.edinburghartfestival.com
- The National Galleries of Scotland 2010 EAF programme includes *What you see is where you're at: Part 3*, with ARTIST ROOMS from Robert Therrien and Gilbert & George at Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art; *Another World*, a comprehensive survey of Dada and Surrealist art at the Dean Gallery; and *Impressionist Gardens*, a major international exhibition of around 100 works, including loans from collections around the world, and the first ever to be devoted to this subject, at the National Gallery Complex on the Mound.



Supported through the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund