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For further information and images please contact the National Galleries of Scotland's press office on:

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Pictured:
Steven Campbell's widow, Carol Campbell, with her grandson Nathan, examining elements of the installation *On Form and Fiction* at the National Galleries of Scotland's storage facility, November 2016
Photo: Neil Hanna

REMARKABLE INSTALLATION BY THE LATE STEVEN CAMPBELL JOINTLY ACQUIRED BY GLASGOW LIFE AND NATIONAL GALLERIES OF SCOTLAND

An historically important work by one of Scotland's most remarkable twentieth-century artists has been jointly acquired by the National Galleries of Scotland and Glasgow Life, with generous support from the Art Fund and Creative Scotland, it was announced today.

On Form and Fiction by Steven Campbell (1953-2007) is an extraordinary installation, which marks a pivotal moment in the story of contemporary art in Scotland. First shown in 1990 at Glasgow's Third Eye Centre (now the Centre for Contemporary Art), the work consists of 9 large, framed paintings hung on walls papered from floor to ceiling with 105 unframed ink drawings, and combined with a



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number of other elements (including museum-style benches and a reel-to-reel tape player) to create an overwhelming, immersive and carefully staged environment.

Campbell was one of the 'New Glasgow Boys', a group of Glasgow School of Art graduates, renowned for their figurative and narrative approach to painting, who first achieved international prominence in the mid-1980s. In its dizzying array of images, *On Form and Fiction* combines many of the themes that recur in Campbell's work and encapsulates much of his thinking; in its scale, ambition and impact it also inspired and prefigured the work of younger artists in Scotland who emerged in the 1990s.

Underlining its significance, *On Form and Fiction*, was, in 2014, re-staged for the first time at the Scottish National Gallery, where it was a highlight of the GENERATION project, a nationwide celebration of 25 years of contemporary art in Scotland.

Campbell was born in Glasgow, and worked as an engineer in a steelworks before studying fine art at Glasgow School of Art (GSA) from 1978 to 1982. In his graduating year he won a Fulbright scholarship and moved to New York, where he had a number of highly successful shows which quickly established his international career. He returned to Scotland permanently in 1986, where his continued success was seen by younger artists as a blueprint for what they themselves might achieve.

Though his approach to painting, like that of his GSA contemporaries Adrian Wiszniewski, Peter Howson and Ken Currie, the other 'New Glasgow Boys' with whom he is often associated, aligned with a broader resurgence in figurative painting in Europe in the 1980s, Campbell insisted that the roots of his art lay in 1970s British Conceptualism and the performance art of figures such as Bruce

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McLean and Gilbert & George. Indeed, his paintings retain many of the features of the performances that Campbell made as a student at GSA: exaggerated gestures, a strong narrative structure and the use of historical events and characters (often from the 1920s and '30s) to create a claustrophobic, fictional world of bizarre happenings.

In Campbell's paintings of the 1980s, solidly built, tweed-clad young men – scientists, philosophers, architects and artists – engage in a quest to find meaning and order in an Alice-in-Wonderland universe. Devoid of rational sense, Campbell's paintings are nevertheless underpinned by a perverse logic, similar to that found in the surrealist paintings of René Magritte.

On Form and Fiction projected Campbell's restless, complex vision on a grand scale, and gave it an immersive physicality. For the first installation at Third Eye Centre, he created a museum-like setting, using benches borrowed from Kelvingrove Art Gallery and dramatic lighting. In addition, a tape recorder played, amongst other things, the infamous 1969 love song by Serge Gainsbourg with Jane Birkin, *Je t'aime ... moi non plus*, together with some words spoken by the artist.

Rich in allusive detail, the paintings and drawings reflect Campbell's fascination with a huge range of art forms, from film, literature and architecture to music and dance, as well as his keen understanding of art history, and his determination to grapple in his own way with many of the paradoxes and problems that have preoccupied artists in the rapidly changing twentieth century.

On Form and Fiction is only the second work to be jointly acquired by Glasgow Life and NGS (the first being *In the Orchard*, a major work by Sir James Guthrie, which was purchased by the two institutions in 2012).

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Commenting on the acquisition, Simon Groom, Director of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, said: “*On Form and Fiction* is one of the most important and significant works made by one of Scotland’s greatest artists of the last 50 years. Although Steven made a number of installations and tableaux during his career, this is the only one that survives, and it stands out as his most ambitious. I’m utterly delighted that we have been able to secure it for the nation through this joint acquisition with Glasgow Life, with support from Creative Scotland, and am extremely grateful to Carol Campbell, Steven’s widow, for her help in making this happen.”

Chair of Glasgow Life, Councillor Archie Graham, added: “*On Form and Fiction* was first presented in Glasgow in 1990, as part of the celebrations for the city’s year as European Capital of Culture. This pivotal year shone a light on artistic practice in the city at a time of huge regeneration. Many of the young artists who were coming of age in Scotland at this time have reflected on the significant impact Campbell’s work had on them. His innovative approach towards creating a completely immersive piece, unique in its scale and ambition, proved to be a link between the work being produced at that time and the more conceptual focus that followed. We are extremely pleased that our continued partnership approach with NGS, Art Fund and Creative Scotland ensures this incredible piece remains complete and will be enjoyed for generations to come.”

Stephen Deuchar, Art Fund director, said: “We are immensely pleased to support the acquisition of the first installation by Steven Campbell to be acquired by a public collection, and we applaud this innovative partnership between NGS and Glasgow Life.”

Amanda Catto, Head of Visual Arts at Creative Scotland said: “This remarkable work reflects a pivotal moment in the story of contemporary art in Scotland and we are delighted to support this

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important acquisition as a legacy from *GENERATION – 25 Years of Contemporary Art in Scotland*. This is an influential work that holds the power to inspire and inform future generations of artists and audiences and this joint purchase is extremely welcome.”

Carol Campbell said: “Steven always said, ‘*I was one of art’s handmaidens*’. Really, that was a polite way of saying ‘gofer’ but since his passing it has given me so much joy every time his name and work were out in the world. It would make him seem alive again. So when Simon called to tell me the work had been acquired for the nation I felt the pride and joy that would have been his. He was a passionate Scot; it is an astonishing work by an artist working with international vision and a level of creativity that places it in a unique position, inspirational to generations to come. He would be immensely proud”.

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Notes to Editors

Glasgow Life

Glasgow Life is the charity which runs services and facilities on behalf of Glasgow City Council. We work in every area of the city and with every community to try and inspire Glasgow's citizens and visitors to lead richer and more active lives through culture, sport and learning. More than 18 million attendances were recorded to the facilities that we run across the city between 2015 and 2016.

Glasgow Museums is the largest museum service in the UK outside London and operates nine easy to reach, accessible and family friendly venues across the city. We are open year-round and entry is free. Glasgow Museums house an extraordinary permanent collection of fine art, historic objects and natural history exhibited in some of Glasgow's most stunning public buildings. glasgowlife.org.uk

Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. In the past five years alone Art Fund has given £34 million to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections. It also helps museums share their collections with wider audiences by supporting a range of tours and exhibitions, including ARTIST ROOMS and the 2013-18 Aspire tour of Tate's Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows by John Constable, and makes additional grants to support the training and professional development of curators.

Find out more about Art Fund and the National Art Pass at www.artfund.org

Creative Scotland

Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland on behalf of everyone who lives, works or visits here. We enable people and

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