

Scottish National Portrait Gallery – new acquisition in time for reopening



The Scottish National Portrait Gallery has announced the acquisition of a recent work by South African photographer Zwelethu Mthethwa. Untitled (2010) was purchased with the support of Art Fund, the national fundraising charity for works of art, and will go on public display when the Gallery opens on Thursday 1 December, following a major refurbishment.

The new Portrait Gallery will, for the first time, include a major space dedicated to showcasing its unparalleled holdings of Scottish and international photography, as well as newly commissioned work by contemporary photographers. Mthethwa's fascinating work will be shown in Romantic Camera: Scottish Photography and the Modern World, the inaugural display in this new exhibition space.

The photograph, from the series The Brave Ones depicts two boys from the Shembe Nazareth Baptist community in South Africa, a denomination that blends Christian and Zulu traditions. Its young male adherents – who refer to themselves as the 'Iscotch' – adopt special costumes based on the kilt for religious ceremonies often performed in the open air. The influence is drawn from Scottish regiments present in Natal in the late nineteenth century. Mthethwa's concerns lie less with religious questions than with issues of adolescent identity expressed through rites of passage. His work adds an African dimension to a well-established European tradition of depictions of young people at transitional moments in their lives.

Romantic Camera will explore for the first time the highly

charged relationship between romanticism and photography in Scotland. Showcasing over 40 different photographers, the exhibition will include works by Adamson and Hill, Julia Margaret Cameron, James Craig Annan, Bill Brandt, Oscar Reizenstein, Michael Reisch and Zwelethu Mthethwa. The Exhibition will run from the Gallery's reopening in December to 03 June 2012.

James Holloway, Director of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery said:

"I am delighted to add this vivid and memorable image, by such a brilliant South African photographer, to our great collection. It will be seen in our brand new Photography Gallery when the Portrait Gallery reopens on 1 December. I would like to thank the Art Fund whose support once again has made a highly important acquisition possible."

Stephen Deuchar, Director of the Art Fund, said:

"This is a stunning contemporary artwork and we are immensely pleased to have been able to help the Scottish National Portrait Gallery acquire this work in time for its reopening and unveiling of its spectacular new Photography Gallery."