

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art – Bellany’s gift



***Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art
12 October 2013 – 1 March 2014***

The internationally renowned Scottish artist John Bellany, who died in August at the age of 71, gifted one of his finest late paintings to the National Galleries of Scotland. The gift was made in recognition of what Bellany called one of the “truly great moments” of his career, the exhibition *John Bellany: A Passion for Life* which opened at the Scottish National Gallery last year. The artist wrote to the Director and curators at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in spring 2013 and expressed a wish to give his 1992 painting *Prague Easter* to the collection.

The painting will be on show as part of a new exhibition of works acquired over the last three years, which opens at the Gallery later this month.

Keith Hartley, Chief Curator and Deputy to the Director at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, explained why the work is an exciting addition to the National Collection:—“The work *Prague Easter* is a significant painting from Bellany’s career. This is a major work from a time when Bellany had recovered from his liver transplant operation and had been given a new lease of life. He was sponsored by the British Council to travel and paint in the newly democratised countries of central Europe – Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Germany (as the two last countries were then called). This painting shows the famous Charles Bridge that spans the River Vltava in Prague. One of the bridge’s Baroque sculptures depicts the Crucifixion. The crowds thronging the bridge look

as if they were actual eye-witnesses of the historical event. But, as the title tells us, it is Easter – a reminder that Christ rose from the dead on that day. Bellany, too, was given a new life by his operation.”

National Galleries of Scotland Director-General John Leighton added:-“This is an extraordinarily generous gift of a truly major work by the late artist; it would be hard to imagine a more appropriate image to commemorate one of Scotland’s most important and best-loved artists. Prague Easter is a monumental picture that places Bellany firmly in a great European tradition of Expressionist art, evoking masters such as Munch or Kokoschka, yet conveying a vision that is highly personal and distinctive. It is an unforgettable piece that will be admired and loved by a grateful public in Scotland.”