

Scottish National Gallery acquires new French painting



A rare painting by one of the leading French artists of the 17th century, which has recently been acquired by the Scottish National Gallery, is to be unveiled this week. Although *A Classical Landscape with Judah and Tamar* by Pierre Patel (1605-76) has been in a Scottish private collection since the mid-nineteenth century it has been shown in public on only one previous occasion. This outstanding landscape has now been allocated to the Gallery through the Government's Acceptance in Lieu (AIL) scheme, and is on display at the Gallery from today.

Like his close contemporary Claude Lorrain (1604/5?-82), Pierre Patel is celebrated for his majestic landscapes, which often feature the picturesque ruins of classical architecture and are populated by figures drawn from biblical and mythological narratives. *A Classical Landscape with Judah and Tamar*, which was painted in the early 1650s, is highly representative of Patel's work; on the left is a ruined, overgrown temple, its fine columns and entablature painted with a precision and sharpness that is a particular mark of the artist's style.

The two figures that meet in the middle foreground have been identified as Judah and Tamar, whose story is told in the Book of Genesis and who are recorded in St Matthew's Gospel as among the ancestors of Christ.

The scene is infused with a soft, Italianate light, despite the fact that Patel never followed Claude in travelling to Italy, and spent his artistic career in Paris, where he was the leading landscape painter at work in the city. Little is

known of the artist's life and *A Classical Landscape with Judah and Tamar* is one of only around 120 works that can be attributed to him.

Patel, like Claude, was much admired in Britain in the 18th and early 19th centuries, and there are examples of his work by him in the collections of the National Gallery in London, the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, and the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

Speaking of the acquisition, Michael Clarke, Director of the Scottish National Gallery, said, "*French seventeenth-century art is still under-represented in the national collection, so this allocation through the AIL scheme of a rare and beautiful classical landscape by Patel is most welcome. It joins our major paintings by Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin and Gaspard Dughet from this period and we hope to add many more such masterpieces in the future.*"

Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop added, "*The Acceptance in Lieu scheme allows the Scottish Government to accept important works of art into public ownership on behalf of Scotland's museum, gallery and archive collections. With up to 10 items allocated to Scotland each year, it is an excellent way to enrich the range of internationally renowned paintings and artefacts that are available for everyone in Scotland to enjoy. I was very pleased to be given the opportunity to allocate the Pierre Patel painting to the National Galleries of Scotland. It's an important and valuable acquisition and one which I hope gives great joy to the Galleries' many thousands of visitors.*"