

# At the Scottish National Portrait Gallery – The View from Here



The extraordinary richness of the photography collection at the National Galleries of Scotland will be showcased in a new exhibition at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery (SNPG) this autumn.

*The View from Here*, which opens on 29 October, will bring together 70 key works which chart the history of landscape photography over the course of 175 years, from the earliest days of the medium to the present day.

Stunning images of the Egyptian pyramids, taken when photography was a relatively new art form, intensely beautiful photographs of the Outer Hebrides taken by the legendary American artist Paul Strand (1890-1976) and thought-provoking landscapes by British-American photographer Sze Tsung Leong (b.1970), which address a growing uniformity in our globalised environment, will be among the highlights of this exhibition.

Many of the works on show have rarely been seen before, and there will also be a number of new acquisitions on display for the first time, including work by one of the foremost contemporary landscape photographers in the world, Thomas Joshua Cooper (b.1946), and Félix Thiollier (1842-1914), a French industrialist who gave up his business at the age of 37 to pursue photography, and whose work was influenced by the landscape painter Camille Corot.

The National Galleries of Scotland is home to an outstanding collection of photographic art, running to some 38,000 examples. *The View from Here* will be first in a series of

thematic exhibitions to be held at the SNPG over the next few years. The 70 carefully selected works on show this autumn will explore not only the theme of landscape but also the evolution of photography—from original calotype negatives and salted paper prints of the 1840s to the large-scale digital format prints of today.

The exhibition will begin with a rarely-seen daguerreotype of the Niagara Falls, taken in around 1855 by Platt D. Babbitt (d.1879), which records a group of tourists on the cliffs surrounding the famous North American spectacle. Many early landscape photographs such as this spoke to a growing audience of tourists—or armchair travellers—who were eager to see different sights and locations around the world. The early section of *The View from Here* will also include some remarkable views of the monuments of Ancient Egypt captured by Francis Frith (1822-98), Victorian Britain's most prolific photographer working in the Middle East.

Closer to home, Scotland's landscape was also celebrated in the nineteenth century by photographers such as James Valentine (1815-79) and George Washington Wilson (1823-93), whose prints of Highland landscapes and Scottish towns and villages were sold all over the world. Evoking and illustrating many of the settings described in the novels of Sir Walter Scott, these images were universal in their appeal.

Over time many international photographers came to record the Scottish landscape, including the American artist, Paul Strand, who first travelled to the Outer Hebrides in the mid-1950s to record the people and places of South Uist. Although struck by the vastness of the island views at the periphery of the North Atlantic Ocean, Strand realised his photographs as small format prints—seemingly intensifying the potency of the scene by attempting to fit the magnitude of the landscape into a small composition.

Another outstanding photographer whose work features in the

exhibition, Fay Godwin (1931-2005) began working in portraiture before focusing on landscape. Like Strand, Godwin often collaborated with writers to explore the subject of the land more fully. The photographs of Scotland's rural routes were included in a book project on *The Whisky Roads of Scotland*, with Derek Cooper providing the accompanying text.

Patricia MacDonald (b.1945) has taken to the skies to capture the Scottish scenery, recognising that the shifts and environmental changes in the landscape were often best seen from above. Her aerial views of hills, glens, forests and rivers are colourful compositions in which the viewer is completely absorbed by the seemingly abstract scene below.

Many of the works in *The View from Here* explore the concept of landscape from a contemporary perspective that addresses the emergence of a single global landscape. Sze Tsung Leong's *Horizons* series, illustrates this tendency perfectly, linking up several distinct places around the world in one seemingly infinite horizon. Other practitioners question the use and alteration of the land by utilising technology to change the photographic image. Michael Reisch, who was born in 1964 in Germany, created an intriguing monumental view of the Scottish Highlands in which he digitally removed all signs of the built roads to effectively restore the land to its original state.

From major names to lesser-known characters, views of far-off lands or scenes close to home, *The View from Here* will provide a visual celebration of the many landscape views represented in the collection of the National Galleries of Scotland.

Christopher Baker, Director, Scottish National Portrait Gallery said : "The photography collection of the National Galleries of Scotland is a wonderfully rich resource which is gradually growing with impressive acquisitions. The wealth of imagery it encompasses will be made accessible in an exciting way through the new series of thematic exhibitions of which

‘The View from Here’ is the first. They will combine iconic images with less well known works and Scottish and international practice, so inspiring a fresh appreciation of this extraordinary art form.”

*The View from Here* is part of the Institute for Photography in Scotland’s Season of Photography 2016, a lively series of exhibitions and events taking place across Scotland from September to November 2016.

**THE VIEW FROM HERE:**

**LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL GALLERIES OF SCOTLAND**

29 October 2016 to 30 April 2017

Scottish National Portrait Gallery 1 Queen Street, Edinburgh  
EH2 1JD

0131 624 6200 | Admission FREE

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