

Monet acquired by National Galleries of Scotland

✘ Exciting news from the National Galleries of Scotland who have acquired a rare pastel of outstanding quality by the great Impressionist artist Claude Monet.

The work will be unveiled this week at the Scottish National Gallery.

This subtle and atmospheric work, a quiet masterpiece produced by the artist at a crucial transitional moment in his career, has been in a Scottish private collection since the 1920s. It has been allocated to the Gallery through the Government's Acceptance in Lieu (AIL) scheme, and will be on display at the Gallery from this week.

Brought up in Le Havre, Monet was drawn at various times in his career to the sparkling light of the Normandy coast, with its dramatic limestone cliffs. He produced this work around 1885 at Etretat, famous for its outstanding rock formations such the Porte d'Aval and the Needle (Aiguille), featured in the National Gallery's pastel. This small fishing village was fast developing as a tourist site, but by the 1880s Monet had largely abandoned modern subjects in order to focus on more picturesque landscapes, often devoid of people. He produced several versions in oil of the cliffs at Etretat and this period laid the ground for his 'series' paintings of the 1890s, culminating in his famous Water Lily paintings.

Despite the Impressionist emphasis on working in oils *en plein air* (outdoors) and completing a canvas in front of the motif, Monet frequently used chalk and pastel to develop ideas for his paintings or to produce independent works of art, as here. Executed from a high vantage point, the pastel has an elegiac quality, expressed through the use of muted tones of

blue, cream and brown, suggesting the approach of evening. Monet underplayed his skill as a draughtsman and only later acknowledged that pastel played a key role in his working process.

This is an important addition to the collection at the National Galleries of Scotland, which has five works by Monet, all from earlier or later periods in his career.

Speaking of the acquisition, Sir John Leighton, Director-General, National Galleries of Scotland, said: "This is the first work on paper by the outstanding French Impressionist Claude Monet (1840-1926) to enter the national collection. It provides a wonderful complement to the major paintings in oil by the artist already in Edinburgh and is an atmospheric composition of remarkable subtlety and interest. We are immensely grateful to everyone who has made possible its transference to public ownership through the AIL (Acceptance in Lieu of Tax) scheme."

Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop said: "This Monet is a distinguished addition to the Scottish National Gallery. The Acceptance in Lieu scheme is a fantastic system that allows galleries and museums to be allocated important pieces for the public to enjoy, and I look forward to seeing this outstanding pastel piece in its new permanent home in Scotland."

Edward Harley, Chairman of the Acceptance in Lieu Panel, commented further: "This superb example of Monet's skill in pastels, every bit as compelling as his finest oil paintings, has been in a private Scottish collection for the last 80 years. I am pleased that the Acceptance in Lieu scheme has made it possible for it now to be enjoyed by all at the Scottish National Gallery."