

Dovecot Studios to launch major fundraising campaign to tell the story of significant Scottish artist, Archie Brennan

Tapestry weaver, innovator and iconoclast, Archie Brennan (1931-2019) was, and is, one of the greatest unrecognised British artists of the twentieth century.

Why unrecognised? Most likely because his medium of choice was tapestry. His incredible work and story will be the subject of a landmark exhibition at Dovecot Studios co-curated with National Museums Scotland, opening March 2021.

To bring together Brennan's masterpieces from private and public collections, Dovecot is launching a campaign to raise £20,000 in 30 days.



Archie Brennan



Chains 1977 Image © National Museums Scotland

The campaign starts on 23 June at 12pm on the Art Fund's Art

Happens platform, the only crowdfunding platform for museums and galleries.

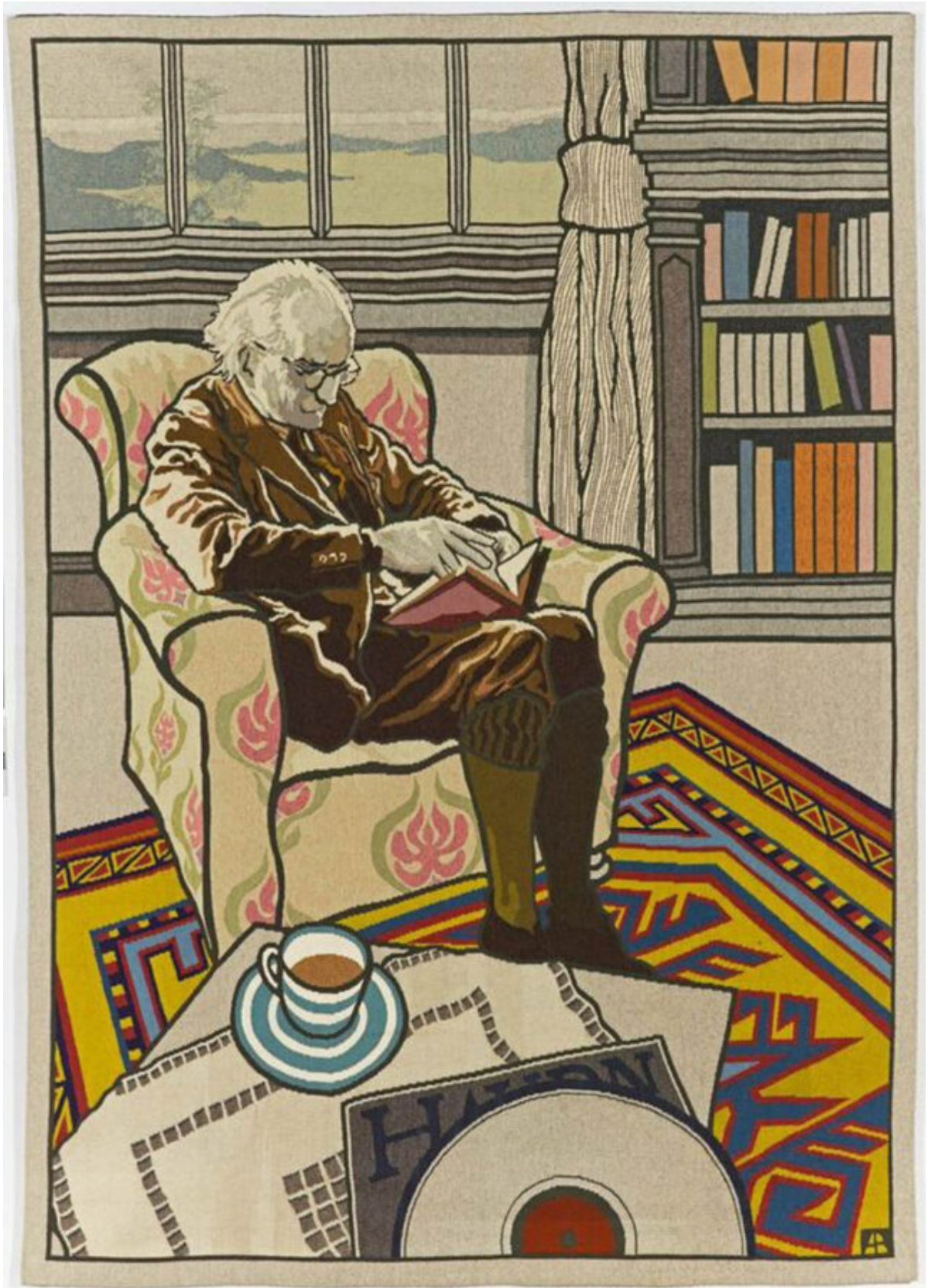
Whilst some key works by Brennan exist in Scotland and the UK, there are seminal works in private collections further afield, from North America to Australia.

The money raised through this fundraising campaign will bring these works together for the first time, giving an unprecedented insight into the life and work of Archie Brennan.

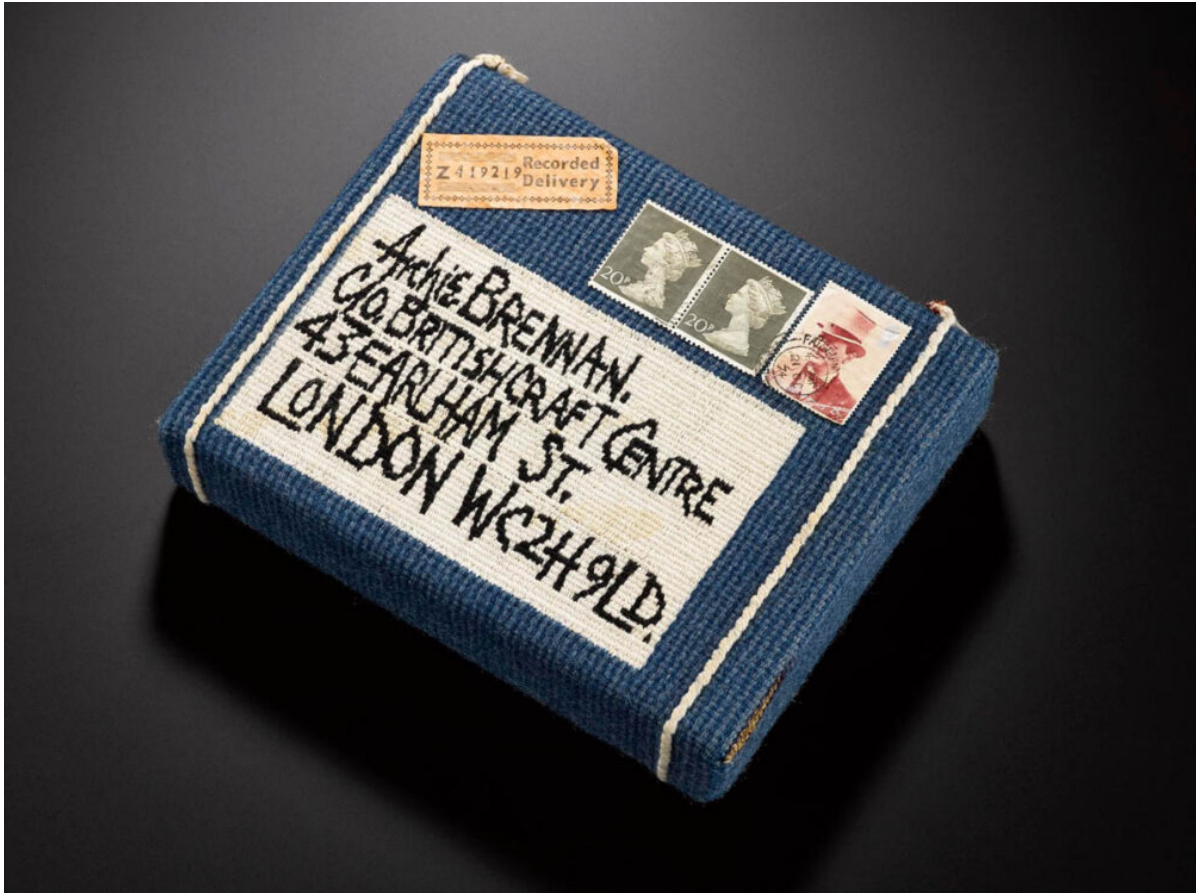
Brennan's peers, including his close friend Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005), are well established in the pop art canon. Yet Brennan's focus on the medium of tapestry has led to his significance being overlooked by many outside the field. With his unparalleled technical approach and sharp wit, Brennan designed and created tapestries which overturned the medium time and again over a 60-year career.

Depicting figures from Muhammad Ali to Princess Diana in his work, Brennan moved from being an undisputed master of modern tapestry by the 1960s to a postmodern iconoclast, deconstructing and reforming the medium from the 1970s onwards.

During these challenging times, Dovecot are committed to promoting the art of tapestry with a timely celebration of a great Scottish weaver and artist. The 30-day fundraising campaign is a chance to discover Brennan's incredible body of work and to support Dovecot.



Portrait of Mr Noble 1981



Tapestry Parcel 1974. Image © National Museums Scotland

A number of exclusive rewards will be available to donors for as little as £5, including a tote bag, an exclusive print by Scottish artist Callum Innes, a weaving kit with wool selection by artist Victoria Crowe, and a print by artist Duggie Fields.

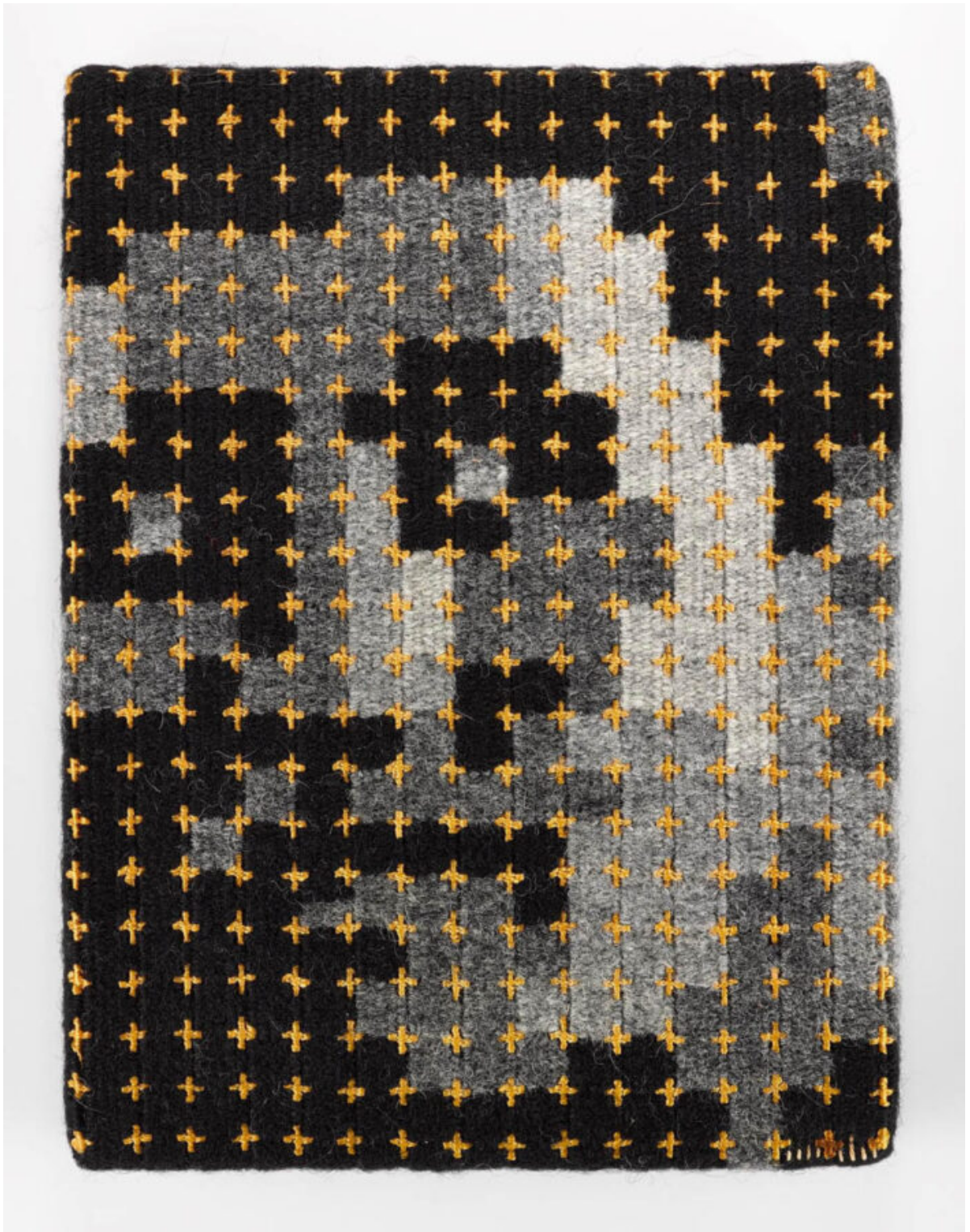
Born in Roslin, Brennan began his 60-year weaving career at Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh as an apprentice before becoming Artistic Director of the organisation. During his prolific career, Brennan established graduate and post-graduate courses in weaving and fibre art at Edinburgh College of Art, and was instrumental in founding the Australian Tapestry Workshop in Melbourne.

He taught weaving all over the world from Papua New Guinea to the United States where he spent the last 30 years of his life. A keen sportsman, Brennan had a successful bodybuilding career in his early years alongside his friend, actor Sean Connery, and a Mr Scotland title indicates his curious and

charismatic character, which extended beyond weaving.

Archie Brennan collector Prue Leith says, "I fell for Archie Brennan when I saw a TV programme in the '70s of him weaving a tapestry of Brendan Foster breasting the tape when winning a marathon. He had taken a newsprint photo of the finish as his starting point. The work was so modern, original, and alive.

"Up till then I'd thought tapestry was all unicorns and flowers. This was like Roy Lichtenstein or Andy Warhol but with more painterly skill and meaning. I had to have one."



■ Muhammad Ali 1975. Image © National Museums Scotland



Art Happens Rewards' Victoria Crowe at Dovecot Studios © Kenneth Gray

Celia Joicey, Director of Dovecot Studios says, "Although these are difficult times for the arts sector, Dovecot is committed to supporting Scottish tapestry and shining a light on the incredible work and contribution of weaver and artist Archie Brennan.

"With the support of the public we can present this landmark exhibition to celebrate a master weaver and under-appreciated Scottish artist."

Art Happens campaign by Dovecot Studios launches 23 June until 23 July 2020. Visit <https://www.artfund.org/get-involved/art-happens> to learn more

and donate.

'Tapestry Goes Pop! The Woven World of Archie Brennan' opens 26 March to 26 June 2021 at Dovecot Studios. A Dovecot exhibition co-curated with National Museums Scotland.