

Monarch of the Glen will be back on show next month

Sir Edwin Landseer's Monarch of the Glen is moving to a new home in the National Gallery.

The Scottish galleries will be ready to open to the public next month when the famous work will be back on display in a new free space along with around 150 years of Scottish art to discover.

Painted in 1851, Landseer's work of art famously depicts a proud stag imperiously surveying a majestic Highland landscape. Closely associated with Scotland, *The Monarch of the Glen* is an extremely powerful painting, and a rich source of debate about the issues of history and identity. Through its widespread use in commercial advertising and in popular culture, the iconic painting has become instantly recognisable today.

Director-General of the National Galleries of Scotland, Sir John Leighton, said: "Landseer's *The Monarch of the Glen* is one of the most potent and familiar images associated with Scotland. The proud stag is recognisable across the world from his long career in marketing, adorning just about every kind of product imaginable, from soap and whisky to countless shortbread tins. Today, it remains a compelling and contested image, viewed by some as the ultimate evocation of the romance of the Highlands, by others as a gloss on the harsh realities of life in the Scottish countryside in the 19th century. Love it or hate it, no one can deny that it is an extraordinary, powerful painting. You are warmly invited to see this incredible work of art in its new setting at the National."

Sir Edwin Landseer (1802-73) was intoxicated by the Scottish Highlands. He first visited the country in 1824 and was overwhelmed and inspired by the experience of the landscape and its people. The artist returned on sketching expeditions annually in late summer and the autumn, developing a particular affinity with the novelist Sir Walter Scott and his work. The resulting paintings range from intimate and remarkably fresh landscape studies, painted on the spot, to his most famous large-scale picture, *The Monarch of the Glen*. His works played a key role in formulating the deeply attractive and romantic image of the Highlands, which still resonates today.

The Monarch of the Glen was originally intended as part a series of three works to be displayed in the House of Lords, but the scheme was never realised and the painting was sold to a private collector soon after its completion. From the moment it was first exhibited in 1851 at the Royal Academy in London it proved immensely popular, and the admiration has continued right up to the present day. The work was widely reproduced in the nineteenth century, especially through steel engravings, and in 1916 it was purchased by Sir Thomas Dewar. From that point it was regularly used as a marketing image, first by Pears Soap, then by John Dewar & Sons Distillery and Glenfiddich, and later by Nestlé and Baxter's soup.

Following a four-month fundraising campaign, the painting was acquired by the National Galleries of Scotland in March 2017, with overwhelming support from the public, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Art Fund, private trusts and foundations, Scottish Government acquisition grant funding and by a part gift by previous owners Diageo Scotland Ltd.

All photos Jane Barlow.



PHOTO Jane Barlow Sir Edwin Landseer, Monarch of the Glen. Oil on canvas. Purchased by the National Galleries of Scotland as a part gift from Diageo Scotland Ltd, with contributions from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Dunard Fund, Art Fund, the William Jacob Bequest, the Tam O' Shanter Trust, the Turtleton Trust, and the K. T. Wiedemann Foundation, Inc. and through public appeal, 2017.



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