

Previously unseen artworks by Byrne and Gray feature in exhibition

There is a small display of works by two Glasgow School of Art graduates, John Byrne and Alasdair Gray, in Lyon & Turnbull's Glasgow showroom until 26 July.

Following the exhibition, two of Gray's paintings will be sold at auction – Portrait of the Artist Ian Fleming and The New Room (Film Sequence with Liz Lochhead), 1972. The sale will be conducted from the auctioneer's Edinburgh showroom and online on 13 August. [More details here.](#)

Two Glasgow Polymaths features works held in private collections and which are previously unseen – and the paintings will return to those collections afterwards, so this is a one-off opportunity.



Portrait of the Artist Ian Fleming by Alasdair Gray Fleming was a good schoolteacher of art and friend – drawn in 1972 and coloured in 2017 in ink and watercolour



The New Room (Film Sequence with Liz Lochhead), 1972 This is from an important series in Gray's career and a significant undertaking. Gray created artworks to illustrate Lockheed's poetry which were then filmed by Malcolm Hossick a BBC producer. The film sadly fell through.

Both of the artists were also writers, and their role as polymaths in cultural Scotland is well-known. John Byrne died last year aged 83, and Alasdair Gray died in 2019 at age 85. Both are greatly missed but also have legacies which live on – it is Gray's novel *Poor Things* which was adapted into a film released worldwide just recently.

A rare painting of The Beatles, painted by Byrne in 1969, and later used as the cover image of *The Beatles Ballads* LP 12 years later, is one of the highlights of the show.

Rumours at the time suggest the original was lost by EMI Records, which makes this unique work a surviving early version.



Pictured Jessie Lloyd Glasgow Gallery Manager
Lyon & Turnbull Ltd with John Byrne's The Beatles 1969
Photograph by Martin Shields







Some of the works on show include the study for an album cover of HMS Donovan which John Byrne created along with musician Donovan. The album was to be of children's songs and they also worked on an animated film, Donovan's answer to the Beatles Yellow Submarine. The pair went to Los Angeles for a month and Byrne's children went to appear in the film which sadly did not come to fruition.

These paintings were collected by Byrne's parish priest Father Tom Jamieson. According to Father Jamieson's niece, her late uncle would meet in Byrne in the artist's garden shed in Renfrew and discuss 'matters of great importance'. Byrne would show Father Jamieson his latest work and, as a result, he developed an interest in collecting his parishioner's paintings.

Father Jamieson's niece said: "My uncle was very proud of these paintings and of knowing John Byrne. He loved anything that was a 'one off', and I think that led him to start buying from his talented but not-yet-famous parishioner.

"Being around these paintings in my childhood gave us a gateway into Byrne's incredible world. I remember John describing his early work once as 'wee guys with big ears'. These are so much more than that, but Byrne's sense of humour walks hand-in-hand with his art and I've always loved that."

[The exhibition can be viewed by appointment.](#)

