

New show at the RSA from Saturday

The first major art show of the year, featuring 300 paintings by some of Scotland's top artists, will be unveiled in the RSA on Princes Street, Edinburgh, on Saturday.

The 144th Open Annual Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Watercolour (RSW) promises to be a showcase of the best work currently being made in water-based media in Scotland and beyond.

The free exhibition includes over 200 paintings by RSW members and a broad range of works by non-members, selected from open submission.

RSW President Anthea Gage says: "If you want to see a huge variety of approaches to using water-based media, on a big range of scales and an endless collection of subjects, this is a great opportunity to come and do that.

"I love the opportunity of scale provided by the RSA Galleries. People think of watercolours as being small, but now water-based works can be as big as you want to make them. We look forward to surprising people with the skill and ambition of this work."

"With so much wonderful, intense colour, people are guaranteed a bit of sunshine and summer in the galleries, even in January!"

Gage, who is the daughter of the Scottish artist and art critic Edward Gage, was elected RSW President at the end of last year. As well as pursuing her own career as an artist, she taught art at the Royal High School in Edinburgh for 34 years.

She says: "The RSW was set up 144 years ago to raise the profile of water-based painting, and that is still our aim, but now water-based painting is a much broader church.

"The fact that you can have two artists working on a large scale, one in a very traditional style and the other very experimental, is brilliant. We are conscious that we have a history, a tradition to maintain, but at the same time we are making exhibitions which are incredibly exciting.

"I want to try to encourage more younger artists to come and join us. I think a show like this demonstrates that innovative ideas and traditional painting skills can go very well together."

The RSW exhibition will share the RSA building with the annual show of Turner watercolours staged by the National Galleries of Scotland which this year displays paintings from the National Gallery of Ireland.

It means visitors can enjoy Turner's watercolour masterpieces and a showcase of work by contemporary watercolour painters under the same roof.

Anthea remembers being brought by her parents to see exhibitions in the RSA building. "My first memory of these galleries is from the age of six when my dad was President of the SSA. We had to stand at the top of the stairs while dad shook hands with everyone as they arrived.

"It's great to see these beautiful rooms being transformed again for a very special RSW exhibition. Our last two exhibitions have been two of the most successful we've ever

had and we're hoping to build on that this year."



Artist Michael Clark from Ayr, toasting the unveiling of the exhibition , with his diptych, "Champagne for Two".
PHOTO Colin Hattersley Photography



Leith artist Ruth Nicol's outsized landscape painting "Waternish, north from Lusta, Skye" (in background) and other works, being prepared for hanging.
PHOTO Colin Hattersley Photography



Pictured preparing the exhibition is RSW hanging committee member Claire Harkess.

PHOTO Colin Hattersley Photography



Pictured preparing the exhibition is RSW hanging committee member and Ann Cowan. PHOTO Colin Hattersley Photography



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Anthea Gage is pictured with paintings from the exhibition,

including a portrait of polymath Scottish artist John Byrne entitled "Night Owl" by Mark Mulholland from Kirkintilloch (bottom right), a self portrait by Roslin (Midlothian) artist Aine Devine (top left), June Carey's "The Promise of Love" and Leith artist Ruth Nicol's outsized landscape painting "Waternish, north from Lusta, Skye" (in background).

PHOTO Colin Hattersley Photography