

## Press Release

For immediate use

Talbot Rice Gallery,  
The University of Edinburgh,  
Old College,  
South Bridge,  
Edinburgh,  
EH8 9YL



# Talbot Rice Gallery

Exhibition open 30 July–25 September  
(30 July–5 Sept) Mon–Sat, 10am–5pm, Sun, 12pm–5pm  
(7 Sept–25 Sept) Tues–Sat, 10am–5pm  
Admission Free

Figurative painting has had a difficult relationship to modern and contemporary art, the artist Donald Judd going so far as to announce, in the 1960s, that painting was dead. However, dramatic claims like this – resurfacing with the nomination of two painters for this year’s Turner Prize – have not been borne out by historical changes and have instead given way to a continuing reassessment of painting, rather than its end. Three exhibitions of figurative painting, from very different historical periods, form the basis for the Talbot Rice Gallery’s programme during this year’s Edinburgh Arts Festival. They feature new contemporary work by internationally renowned artist Julie Roberts (b. 1963), modernist portraits and still lifes by Craigie Aitchison (1926 – 2009) and a selection from the University of Edinburgh’s Torrie Collection, including 17<sup>th</sup> Century Dutch genre and landscape paintings. It is hoped that they will provide a timely opportunity to consider figurative painting at three separate stages in its history.

### **Julie Roberts, *Child***

Developing a distinctive approach, initially influenced by the work of theorist Michel Foucault, Roberts’ painting delves deeply into the environments and apparatus through which our social experience is given shape. In the past this has included crime scenes and medical instruments, an unsettling subject matter that is represented in a colourful, graphic style. Robert’s painting has been likened to Andy Warhol and Francis Bacon, not only creating a rich dialogue with previous artists’ work, but also evoking powerful themes such as mortality, power and the body.

*Child* is a thematic point of departure for Roberts who moves to explore domestic environments and young girls’ induction into domestic labour, evacuees, refugees, school rooms and familial portraiture. As with her previous work, familiar subjects are made strange and nothing can be taken for granted: the apparent safety, warmth and comfort provided by representations of Childhood are subtly overshadowed by the uncanny effects of Roberts’ carefully orchestrated painting.

## **Craigie Aitchison**

Following the death of Craigie Aitchison last year, this exhibition is intended as a celebration of the work of one of Scotland's most beloved painters. Guided by Scottish Art Historian Bill Hare, the work has been carefully selected to offer insight into the meticulous pursuit of formal perfection in painting Aitchison strove for, which has often been overlooked.

The exhibition focuses on still lifes and portraits but also includes work with a subject matter that became synonymous with Aitchison: Bedlington terriers, the crucifixion and portraits of Black people. The apparently arbitrary nature of these subjects can be partly attributed to Aitchison's primary emphasis on form and colour, while also reflecting his desire to represent his own life, travels and friendships. With a great knowledge of the work of painters such as Matisse, Van Gogh and Giotto, Aitchison's childlike work belies a careful and intuitive response to the very building blocks of painting.

## **The Torrie Collection**

For the first time since the Georgian Gallery was refurbished a selection of works from the University of Edinburgh's Torrie Collection will be on display. The collection includes fine examples of Dutch and Italian painting from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, while the nature of the collection itself says something of the aspirations of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century collector Sir James Erskine (1772 – 1824). This exhibition overlaps with the Queen's Gallery exhibition *Dutch Landscapes* and reflects part of an incredibly significant chapter in the history of painting.

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## **Further Information**

- **Artist Talk** – Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2-3pm  
Julie Roberts discusses her new painting with Francis McKee, Director of CCA Glasgow, who has long championed Roberts' intriguing practice.
- Members of the press are welcome to join us for the exhibition **preview** on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 5-7pm.
- For **image** or **interview** requests, please contact [shawn.coulman@ed.ac.uk](mailto:shawn.coulman@ed.ac.uk)  
Marketing & Education Assistant  
T: 0131 651 4784  
F: 0131 650 2213  
W: [www.trg.ed.ac.uk](http://www.trg.ed.ac.uk)
- Visitors can access the gallery either through the University of Edinburgh's historic Old Quad on South Bridge, or by West College Street from Chambers Street.

## **Notes to Editors**

- **The University of Edinburgh**, of which Talbot Rice Gallery is part, must be mentioned in any articles. Thank you.
- **Talbot Rice Gallery** is named after David Talbot Rice, Watson Gordon Professor of Fine Art at the University of Edinburgh from 1934 – 1972 and was established in 1975. The Gallery has a commitment to showing work by Scottish and International artists. The Gallery promotes knowledge, understanding and new ideas, realised through solo and thematic exhibitions, events and publications.