

From the
Director-General

NATIONAL
GALLERIES
SCOTLAND

Director-General's office
73 Belford Road
Edinburgh
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To whom it may concern,

I am writing to confirm the support of the National Galleries of Scotland for the work the Runciman Apse Trust are progressing in relation to the restoration of the Alexander Runciman paintings at St Patrick's Church, Cowgate, Edinburgh.

Runciman (1736-1785) was an unusually ambitious artist in an era when Scottish artists often had to overcome significant obstacles to establish an international reputation. His original choice of subject matter, the impressive scale of his work and the vigorous style of their execution mark him out from many of his contemporaries. His background in theatrical scene painting and formative tour of Italy ensured a later career of great variety and impact. The National Galleries of Scotland are fortunate to hold works representative of Runciman's expansive practice including rare designs for the decoration of 'Ossian's Hall' at Penicuik House and for the murals at St Patrick's; a rich collection of Scottish landscape works; classical and modern history paintings and portraits, including one of the poet Robert Fergusson, the model for the figure of the Prodigal Son in the St Patrick's scheme.

Though Runciman's legacy, as Master of the newly established Trustees Academy in Edinburgh and as an exemplar to later generations of Scottish artists is a strong one, and research around his career well-advanced, his work deserves to be better known. The important project to restore and publish the St Patrick's works – perhaps the first devotional painting scheme since the Scottish Reformation – will greatly complement the new displays of Scottish art currently in preparation at the National Galleries of Scotland and enhance our ability to highlight the importance of this brave, path-breaking artist, perhaps the first 'Modern' artist in Scotland.

Yours faithfully,



Sir John Leighton
Director-General