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## The Scotsman

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### ROYAL SCOTTISH ACADEMY.

#### 98th ANNUAL EXHIBITION.

In two years' time the Scottish Academy will be celebrating its centenary, and one looks forward eagerly to its then giving a fine and convincing demonstration of what has been accomplished in art in Scotland under its auspices. Whether that retrospective collection is combined with the annual exhibition, or, as seems more feasible, is independent of it, is a matter for the Academy. But the Scottish public will certainly expect the occasion to be marked by an adequate display of work by the artists who have brought honour to the Academy by their achievement, rather than by a merely historical survey embracing everyone who was ever entitled to put R.S.A. after his name.

Meantime, we have the 98th Exhibition, which, inaugurated by a private view on Wednesday, opens in Edinburgh to-morrow to show the present condition of art in Scotland. While containing a considerable number of really fine pictures and much work of merit, it is less convincing than those zealous for the reputation of Scottish art would perhaps care to admit. In particular there is, one is afraid, rather a dearth of young and striking talent. Moreover some of the finest things are on loan or represent recently deceased members. That regrettably has been the case for some years past, for fate has been dealing hardly with the Academy by the removal of some of those whose art has added much and might have been expected to add more, for some time to come, to the interest and importance of its exhibitions. This year the members represented for the last time are the veteran, Mr Robert Alexander and Mr W. Y. Macgregor, whose importance in contemporary painting is demonstrated by a series of admirable examples.

#### The Sculpture.

Although the sculpture includes little of compelling charm or power, there are a number of pieces of considerable merit and importance. The most important are not, however, the most interesting, as two or three colossal models for war memorials somewhat distressingly testify. Of the more ambitious works, the group "Abundance," by Professor Derwent Wood, which stands in the centre of the hall opposite the staircase, is probably the most accomplished technically, as it is the most convincing and, with all its variety, the most closely knit in design. If not very profound in conception, it is rhythmical and pleasing in effect and delightfully modelled. On the other hand, it is the intellectual idea rather than the sculptural expression which forms the attraction of Sir Bertram Mackennal's "Eton Statue." Yet this figure of a finely formed youth, stripped of everything, stepping out with upraised arms to offer himself altogether in his country's service, tells its story in an affecting way. There is, however, a simplicity and distinction about the draped figure "Charity," holding a naked child against the broad masses of the sweeping garments, which makes this little statuette, by Mr Alfred Gilbert, a more notable achievement. He does not reach the same level in his bust "Petrus Paulus, the Belgian Painter," in which a too agitated silhouette militates against the liveliness of expression attained in the modelling of the face. This over picturesque portrait finds an admirable foil in the classic and severely sculptural bronze by Dr Pittendrich Macgillivray of Sir Rowand Anderson, destined for the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, of which he was the architect. The King's sculptor also sends his small scale model for the expressive statue of Lord Byron, recently unveiled at Aberdeen, and his animated study of a "Goat-Kid" reappears in a bronze executed for Mr J. J. Cowan's collection. Of Dr Macgillivray, who also appears in a three-quarter length picture by Mr David Alison, Mr Benno Schotz exhibits a vividly characterised bust, which, however, yields in vital artistry and unforced expressiveness to the naive and charming head of a child, "Little Betty," which attains a subtlety not always present in the work of this talented young sculptor. Another young artist, whose sculpture, if less vital and personal, has also shown promise, Mr G. W. Salvesen, sends a group of two nude dancers, poised back to back, which goes further than anything he has shown previously. While these are perhaps the chief points of interest in the sculpture section, attention should also be given to the contributions of Messrs Reid Dick, Hartwell, Portsmouth, Gamley, and others.

#### The Pictures.

In the first oil room the centres have been allotted to landscape painters, or, as Mr Forrester Wilson cannot quite be so designated, rather to pictures in which landscape forms an essential part. His "Field-Labour," if not wholly successful, is a weighty and worthy performance, rich in tone, and admirable in its combination of figure and landscape, naturalistic in origin, and decorative in treatment. Of the pure landscapes, Mr James Paterson's "Autumn Morning, Evisa, Corsica"

specially charming and expressive, rich and varied in colour, and luminous and finely modulated in tone, it expresses the mood, the very spirit of spring, indeed, in a very complete, yet most seductive, way. It was on study such as this reveals, earnest study informed by the finest perception of beauty, that Wingate built the swift and suggestive art of his prime.

In the field of historical incident, Mr Robert Gibb, choosing a passage from the "Memoirs of an Aristocrat" (1838), has illustrated in a very interesting and graphic manner, into which truth enters without unduly hampering effect, "Napoleon's Farewell." Stepping on board the pinnace, which is taking him ashore, the fallen Emperor raises his hat to the sailors who crowd the port-holes and bulwarks of the Bellerophon gazing after him. Mr Gibb also sends a pleasing fancy, "The Wounded Dove." In the domain usually called imagination, and but, perhaps, more properly, fancy also, Mr John Duncan's "Children of Lir," which is small in size, but charming in invention and design; Mr Henry Lintott's large, and, in its way, impressive "Song of Silence"; and Mr Anning Bell's scene from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" are prominent. "The Cornish Floral Dance," by Mr Gerald Moira, is, on the other hand, rather an adventure in decoration than a flight of fancy. Amongst the portraits attention may be called to a charming rendering of a child in white, "Mary Heather," by Mr W. O. Hutchison; to the best of Mr Fiddes Watt's contributions, "Portrait of a Gentleman"; and to Mr Lintott's "Study in Profile"; and, amongst the landscapes, with or without figures, to Miss Alice Fanner's bright and breezy "A Reach to the Mark," Mr M. M. Williams's formally designed "Boatmen of the Tarn," Mr David Gauld's charmingly-toned "The Ferry," Mr Whitelaw Hamilton's "Valley of the Lune," and Mr Gemmill Hutchison's "Home of the Sea-Gulls." And while Mr P. W. Adam sends two good "interiors," Mr Somerville Shanks shows a small one of fine quality, and Mr Robert Sivell an interesting picture, half interior and half landscape, with a figure, "A Window in the Country."

#### An Attractive Group.

Room 3, which follows, is in some ways the most charming of the series, and the panelled decoration, if not quite successful in spacing, gives it distinctive character. A group of sketches and studies by Robert Alexander, exquisite in suggestiveness and delightful in handling, occupies the first centre, and is succeeded by an interesting, if as usual, somewhat outré, picture, "The Red Bed," by Mr James Pryde, whom one is pleased to see again represented in an exhibition in his native city; by Mr Glyn Philpot's portrait of Sir Ludovic Grant, a weighty and scholarly, though perhaps not an inspired, performance; and by what is probably the finest issue as yet of Mr D. Y. Cameron's recent visits to Rome. The last, "The Temple of Venus," is a singularly impressive work. The great mass of building, firmly based on earth, is drawn with remarkable precision, which is yet subordinated to the weighty impression of the whole; the deep tones, broadly co-ordinated as they are, have modulation and accent to give them architectural significance, and overhead spreads a placid sky, which, if perhaps a little chilly in its blues to harmonise completely with the warm colour below, echoes the serenity of mood and age in which the buildings are steeped. While Sir David Murray's "Sunbeams o'er Snowden" is an excellent example of his later treatment of landscape, it is not in the chief places that the interest of the next gallery will be found. That lies rather in a few modest portraits—the "William Kelly, Esq., LL.D., R.S.A.," by Mr John M. Aitken; the "Meditation," by Mr W. F. Macgregor; the "Lieut.-Gen. Sir Harold B. Walker," by Mr H. J. Gunn; or in landscapes, amongst which Mr Corsan Morton's "Durham" is prominent. On the other hand, the last room (No. V.), with the delicately charming "Blossoms," by Whistler; Sir John Lavery's spirited and brilliant full-length of Pavlova dancing; and the late W. Y. Macgregor's "Durham," in centres, has the interest focused for the hurried visitor. Over the first two we cannot now linger, but would suggest that Whistler himself was surely not responsible for the very ordinary white frame which encloses the decorated flat, which hints what the original frame must have been. Macgregor's picture, which is lent by the Glasgow Gallery, is one of his finest works. At once impressive in design, and lovely in its restrained and gently modulated colour and tone, with the other pictures and drawings which represent him, it indicates the very real loss his recent death was to art in Scotland. There are, indeed, few things in the present exhibition which bear so unmistakably the impress of personality and style. Mr William Rothenstein's vividly characterised, if rudely painted, "Self Portrait"; Mr Somerville Shanks's "Patrick S. Dunn, Esq.,"; Mr Stanley Cursiter's "J. P. Croal, Esq.,"; and Mr David Alison's senator-like rendering of Dr Macgillivray in robes are amongst other noticeable things.

The water-colours include several fine drawings by Mr Edwin Alexander, particularly the delightful "Bullfinch," perched on a spray of berried sloe; two admirable portraits by Mr Henry W. Kerr; charming sketches by Mr H. J. Gunn.

scape, naturalistic in origin, and decorative in treatment. Of the pure landscapes, Mr James Paterson's "Autumn Morning, Evisa, Corsica" is the most stimulating. It reveals intention to find pictorial expression for a freshly observed natural effect, a quality possessed by neither Mr Riddell's "Early Hint of Winter" nor Mr George Houston's "Near Dalry, Ayrshire." The "Dunure Castle" of Mr Haswell Miller has also this sort of interest, and Mr Terrick Williams's "Quiet Twilight, Honfleur," a picture of houses along a quay, has the charm of a beautiful ensemble, sensitively observed and rendered reticently. Mention should likewise be made of a refined and tender little landscape, "A Spring Idyl, East Lothian," by Dr W. D. McKay. Mr de Lazlo's "Mrs Blackie," which ranks as one of the most accomplished and elegant on view; Miss Dorothy Johnstone's "Mrs E. W. Paterson," which is much superior to her "Rona" on the opposite wall; Mr Robert Hope's "The Silken Gown," and, for its subject more than for its painting, Mr Fiddes Watt's "Lord Ashmore" are perhaps the most notable of the portraits. Here, too, are an interesting sketch, "Decoration for a Music Room," by Mr D. M. Sutherland, and one of those recently amusing if affected, but now banal and tiresome, essays in wrought-iron ugliness, tubular figures, and tortured cubic forms, "Dock Gates," by Mr William Roberts. It seems late in the day to be introducing this rapidly passing phase of modernity to a Scottish audience.

The great centre room calls for big pictures; but, as the young outsider is never sure of an ambitious effort being placed, and the members, with but one or two exceptions, seem to avoid large canvases, loan pictures have usually to be fallen back upon. So this year we find Alfonse Legros's "The Pilgrimage," painted in 1871, at one end, facing, at the other, the very large "Sponsa de Libano," by Burne Jones, painted in 1891. The Legros is so fine a picture—so weighty, so grave, so accomplished, and so convincing—that one gladly sees it there, though it was on loan not many years ago in an exhibition of the Society of Scottish Artists. The Burne-Jones, if not one of his fine things, being, as the Duke of Wellington said of a colleague, "all action, and no go," has its points, and raises intriguing questions as to the actual methods of painting employed. Both belong to the Liverpool Gallery, as do the quietly impressive "Alps by Night," by the late William Stott, of Oldham, and the bright but rather dull "Richmond Castle," by Mr Friedenson, which hang pendant to one another beside the Burne-Jones allegory. From Manchester, Mr Sargent's, perhaps over literal, but wonderfully observed and vividly touched—it is a masterpiece of realism—"Albanian Olive Gatherers" has been obtained. It is in this room also that one first meets the pictures which represent that most charming and subtle of Scottish animal painters, the late Mr Robert Alexander. "Watching and Waiting" is an admirable example of his rare skill as a painter and subtlety as a draughtsman, and of the sympathetic way in which he at once interpreted and represented animal life and man's relationship to it.

#### Figure and Landscape.

Of the new pictures, a back-marker by Sir James Guthrie is one of the most interesting and beautiful. Dated 1895, and commenced some years prior to that, it has never previously been exhibited. Representing an elderly man, "The Stonebreaker," standing beside a heap of stones on a road-side, beyond which a crescent moon gleams in a richly coloured sky seen through a wooded landscape, it must be about the last of those figure-in-landscape pictures which prefaced or coincided with his absorption in portraiture, and makes one almost regret that he has never returned to those homely themes, from which he evoked several notable pictures. Sir James Wingate, elsewhere seen in two later landscapes, also appears in an early work, the lovely "Swan's Nest among the Reeds," of 1880. Drawn with extraordinary delicacy and verve, the play of the just-budding boughs of the taller trees against the gleaming sky of white and blue being