

Celebrating the 150th anniversary of The Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts (RGI), is Scotland's Makar, **Liz Lochhead**, in her role as Honorary RGI. The poet is pictured with a rare sculpture by long-serving RGI, **George Wyllie** (89), at the RGI Kelly Gallery in Glasgow.

The sculpture 'Canary with Foot Stuck in Girder' has rarely been exhibited and is unusual in that it is part of George Wyllie's personal collection, created by the artist as a gift for his late wife Daphne. Also on display is archive material stretching back to the founding of the Institute on 29 May 1861, when a group of Glasgow businessmen and artists decided to establish annual exhibitions to showcase the work of living artists.

The first exhibition was held in the Corporation Galleries, now the McLellan Galleries in Sauchiehall Street, attracting almost 40,000 visitors, many of whom came on a 'Working Man's' or 'Artizan's' (sic) ticket, introduced to bring contemporary art to the widest possible audience. Alongside work from a younger generation of Scottish painters and sculptors, work was submitted by established artists such as Sargent, Whistler, Renoir, Hornel, Lavery and Guthrie, resulting in exhibitions that were unrivalled anywhere in Scotland. The award of RGI is made to artists for artistic merit and dedication to the Institute, and there are only 50 RGI's at any given time. Current RGI's include Dame Elizabeth Blackadder, Barbara Rae and Neil MacPherson, while John Byrne and Liz Lochhead are Honorary RGI's.

The annual RGI exhibition is now held at The Mitchell, and remains to date the largest and best-attended exhibition of contemporary art.  
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**For further information, images or interviews contact RGI Kelly Gallery Curator Lynne MacKenzie Tel: 0141 248 6386 [curator@royalglasgowinstitute.org](mailto:curator@royalglasgowinstitute.org) [www.royalglasgowinstitute.org](http://www.royalglasgowinstitute.org) or Heather MacLeod on 07891144157 [words@heather.uk.net](mailto:words@heather.uk.net)**

#### **Notes for editors**

The Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts (Charity No SC044650) is the largest organisation of its kind in the United Kingdom.

The RGI's Kelly Gallery at 118 Douglas Street, Glasgow G2 4ET hosts a full programme of exhibitions, talks and events, and has recently appointed Lynne Mackenzie as Gallery Curator & Project Manager, and Amy Marletta as Assistant Curator. Gallery opening hours: Tues – Fri 10.30am – 5pm, Saturday 10.30am – 3pm.

Friends of George Wyllie have been formed to promote the artist's work in his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday year.  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-George-Wyllie/196771603699276>

