



For further information and images
please contact the National Galleries
of Scotland's press office on:

0131 624 6247

6325/6332/6314

or

pressinfo@nationalgalleries.org

Pictured:
John William Waterhouse,
The Magic Circle, 1886 ©
Tate, London Oil paint on
canvas 1829 x 1270 mm

WITCHES AND WICKED BODIES

27 July 2013 – 3 November 2013

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (Modern Two)

73 Belford Road, Edinburgh

Telephone. 0131 624 6200 | nationalgalleries.org | Admission £7 (£5)

The fascination for witches, which has gripped many Western artists from the sixteenth century to the present, will be the subject of a major new exhibition at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art next summer. *Witches and Wicked Bodies*, opening July 2013, will delve into the dark and cruel origins of the classic image of the witch,

and demonstrate how the now familiar old woman on a broomstick is just one part of a rich and very diverse visual tradition.

Witches and Wicked Bodies will highlight the inventive approaches to the depiction of witches and witchcraft employed by a broad range of artists over the past 500 years, with striking examples by famous names such as Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Cranach, Salvator Rosa, Francisco de Goya, Henry Fuseli, John William Waterhouse and William Blake. The selection will also include more recent interpretations of the subject, by twentieth-century and contemporary artists including Paula Rego, Kiki Smith and Edward Burra. The exhibition has been curated by the National Galleries of Scotland with artist and writer Deanna Petherbridge and will contain major works on loan from the British Museum; the National Gallery (London); the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; Tate; and the Victoria & Albert Museum, to be shown alongside key images from the Royal Scottish Academy and the Galleries' own collections.

John Leighton, Director General of the National Galleries of Scotland, said:

"We look to offer our public a world-class yet very distinctive programme of exhibitions. I believe that this is the first time that witchcraft across the ages has been the subject of a major art exhibition in the UK and we are delighted to be partners with the British Museum on this truly fascinating and compelling show."

Europe has a long history of witchcraft and the persecution of witches was particularly widespread in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, accounting for thousands of deaths of women and even children. Prints and drawings dating from this period will form a key part of the exhibition, showing how the advent of the printing press gave artists as well as writers the means to share ideas, myths and

For further information and images please contact the National Galleries of Scotland's press office on:

0131 624 6247

6325/6332/6314

or

pressinfo@nationalgalleries.org

fears about witches from country to country. Engravings by Albrecht Dürer will be shown alongside woodcuts by Hans Baldung Grien and many other printmakers including Bruegel and de Gheyn.

The exhibition will focus on six key themes. The centrepiece of 'Witches' Sabbaths and Devilish Rituals' is one of the most famous images of witches of all time – Salvator Rosa's *Witches at their Incantations* on loan from the National Gallery (London). 'Unnatural Acts of Flying' will include the origins of the image of the witch as an old woman riding a broomstick against a night sky, but rather than the cloaked figure wearing a pointy hat that has become so widely known to adults and children alike, this section features more sinister images of flying witches attending black masses.

In 'Magic Circles, Incantations and Raising the Dead', visitors will encounter glamorous witches cooking up spells as in Frans Francken's 1606 painting *Witches' Sabbath*. This powerful section also includes the luscious 1886 painting by John William Waterhouse, *The Magic Circle*.

'Hideous Hags and Beautiful Witches' will include the medusa-like witch with snakes for hair in John Hamilton Mortimer's drawing *Envy and Distraction*. This introductory section will also feature unsettling works depicting old crones by Francisco de Goya – the exhibition contains a significant group of works by this major Spanish artist. Some of the images are genuinely frightening and disturbing, whereas others will reveal the negative attitudes towards women in periods when they were very much seen as the second sex. Due to the particular association of women with witchcraft, these works will highlight the ways in which a largely male-dominated European society has viewed female imperfections, highlighting the concerns created by women laying claim to special powers, or simply behaving in the 'wrong' way.

For further information and images please contact the National Galleries of Scotland's press office on:

0131 624 6247

6325/6332/6314

or

pressinfo@nationalgalleries.org

Works depicting the various appearances of the witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, in 'Unholy Trinities and The Weird Sisters from *Macbeth*', will range from John Martin's theatrical large-scale painting of Banquo and Macbeth lost on the blasted heath, with the turbulent skies swirling over exaggerated mountains, through to John Runciman's striking drawing which here is interpreted as the *Three Witches* conspiring over Macbeth's fate.

This fascinating thematic survey will culminate with 'The Persistence of Witches'. Works by Kiki Smith and Paula Rego mark a sea-change with these high-profile contemporary artists' own take on a subject that had previously been almost exclusively male-dominated. In Smith's study *Out of the Woods*, the artist herself explores the expressions and attitudes of the 'witch,' whereas Rego's 1996 work *Straw Burning* relates to the famous Pendle Witch trials which took place in 1612 in Lancaster, 400 years ago.

The exhibition has been organised in partnership with the British Museum, whose loans will include William Blake's magnificent drawing *The Whore of Babylon* which will be shown alongside the National Galleries' own Blake drawing, once thought to depict Hecate, the classical witch of the crossroads.

Witches and Wicked Bodies will be an investigation of extremes, exploring the highly exaggerated ways in which witches have been represented, from hideous hags to beautiful seductresses who 'bewitch' unwary men.

-ENDS-

For further information and images
please contact the National Galleries
of Scotland's press office on:

0131 624 6247

6325/6332/6314

or

pressinfo@nationalgalleries.org

Notes to Editors.

Witches and Wicked Bodies runs 27 July to 3 November 2013.

Cultural references:

This new exhibition joins the current discussion on the history of witches, including:

- This year's anniversary of the 1612 Pendle Witch Trials in Lancaster
- Fantasy TV including *Game of Thrones* which includes detailed accounts of witchcraft in a fictional medieval world.
- Jeannette Winterston's *The Daylight Gate*
- Lyndal Roper's studies of Witchcraft.
- Maxine Peake and the [Eccentric Research Council](#)'s 2012 album *1612 Underture*, a tribute to the Pendle witches.

Images available:

- John Raphael Smith, *Three Weird Sisters from Macbeth* 1785
- William Blake *The Whore of Babylon* 1606
- Kiki Smith *Out of the Woods* 2002
- John Runciman *Three Witches* (about 1771,1772)
- John Martin *Macbeth* about 1820
- John William Waterhouse, *The Magic Circle* 1886
- Frans Francken, *Witches Sabbath*. 1606

For further information and images please contact the National Galleries of Scotland's press office on: 0131 624 6247 / 6325 / 6332 / 6314 or pressinfo@nationalgalleries.org

For further information and images please contact the National Galleries of Scotland's press office on:

0131 624 6247

6325/6332/6314

or

pressinfo@nationalgalleries.org