

New Scottish galleries at the National to open following Tilbury Douglas transformation

3 years ago



The National Galleries of Scotland will open their stunning new Scottish galleries to the public this Saturday (30 September 2023) following a comprehensive transformation, including a complete refurbishment and extension, undertaken by [Tilbury Douglas](#), a leading UK building, infrastructure, engineering and fit-out business.

A free experience for everyone to enjoy, right in the heart of Edinburgh's city centre, the new Scottish galleries showcase the very best historic Scottish art. With 150 years of Scotland's art to discover in the contemporary and fresh new spaces, visitors are sure to recognise some much-loved favourites as they travel through the galleries.

Transforming the visitor experience and more than doubling the physical display space, 12 breathtaking galleries allow visitors to dive into dramatic landscapes, encounter iconic images and be wowed by art from 1800 to 1945. Spectacular views over the city entice visitors to come in and discover the work of pioneering Scottish artists such as William McTaggart, Anne Redpath, Phoebe Anna Traquair, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Glasgow Boys.

The 170-year-old A-Listed Building sits in a challenging location, above tunnels carrying the East Coast Main Railway Line and within a World Heritage Site in Scotland's capital city. Works were meticulously planned by National Galleries of Scotland and Tilbury Douglas to minimise disruption and ensure the health and safety of the public at all times.

The Tilbury Douglas team pushed the boundaries of engineering to deliver the client's vision on what was an extremely technically complex project. One such example was the creation of a new gallery space beneath the listed façade which included the use of contiguous piling, mini piling, needling and hydraulic jacking to retain the ground and building, whilst the concrete structure was formed beneath.

In addition, the project included safe removal of asbestos deposits; unanticipated damp and water ingress issues and undocumented obstructions, which added significant complexity to the substructure work. Deeply buried layers of concrete had to be extracted, impacting on the sequencing of the works while managing the unique complexity of the engineering works.

The first phase of the project was completed successfully in 2019. This included a new accessible path in East Princes Street Gardens, a new café, a refurbished restaurant and shop, an extensive sandstone terrace, and new landscaping to improve access to the gardens and the Galleries for all.

The new Scottish galleries are easier to access than ever before, to ensure that the greatest number of people can discover the fascinating art on display. As well as an accessible path and entrance, there are new lifts, a partial changing place facility, accessible toilets and a pram store. These fresh new spaces will showcase the nation's magnificent collection of historic Scottish art in new and engaging ways. With a series of new trails, audio guides and events, there is something for everyone to enjoy.

Barry O'Hagan, Regional Director - Scotland at Tilbury Douglas, said: "We are extremely proud to have been involved in this iconic project and to have delivered the works to such high quality.

"The team has risen to the highly complex engineering challenges and has pushed the boundaries.

"There is no doubt that the project was very technically challenging. However, our team has continually developed solutions and put in so much hard work to support the National Galleries of Scotland to deliver its vision for the new Scottish galleries."

Sir John Leighton, Director-General of the National Galleries of Scotland, said: "With this project we set out to transform the experience of visiting the National and to show the world's greatest collection of Scottish art with real pride and ambition. With the new Scottish galleries at the National, we have achieved these aims and more. The gallery is more accessible than ever before and there is a stunning new display of 150 years of Scottish art in all its richness and depth. From this Saturday, everyone is welcome to discover a brilliant new experience, free, in the heart of our nation's capital."