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NEW RAMSAY EXHIBITION ARRIVES WITH A FASHIONABLE FLOURISH AT GEORGIAN HOUSE IN EDINBURGH

- **New exhibition *Ramsay and Edinburgh Fashion* to open at National Trust for Scotland's Georgian House, Edinburgh on 7 June**
- **Trust's collection of portraits by Allan Ramsay brought together for the first time.**
- **Ramsay's work used to explore the world of fashion in mid 1700s Edinburgh, with new research revealing where clothing and textile trades were located in the city**
- **Visitors have rare opportunity during first week of exhibition to see a live demonstration of the making of a replica 1760s gown featured in the artwork**

A new National Trust for Scotland exhibition of portraits by Allan Ramsay (1713–1784), at the Georgian House in Edinburgh, decodes fashion in the 1700s and the crucial role it played for Edinburgh's high society women during this period.

Ramsay and Edinburgh Fashion showcases the work one of the finest 18th-century painters of female portraits. The conservation charity brings together its fine collection of female portraits by Allan Ramsay for the first time, following a successful display of Sir Henry Raeburn's work last year. Covering a 30-year period of Ramsay's career, the exhibition illustrates his skill at capturing the clothing, accessories and popular trends of the time, while examining both the naturalistic style and imaginary elements found in his paintings.

Alongside the curated selection of portraits on display, this intimate exhibition also features a rare 18th-century dress, from Newhailes House near Musselburgh, cared for by the National Trust for Scotland. During the first week of the exhibition, Trust volunteers will recreate a replica of a 1760s gown, modelled from a garment worn by Katherine Ann Mure, who was painted by Ramsay in 1769 and features in the exhibition. This replica dress will be made in the drawing room at the Georgian House before going into the exhibition on 14 June.

Curating the exhibition is Dr Antonia Laurence Allen, a Regional Curator at the National Trust for Scotland, who said:

"We're excited to welcome visitors to our new exhibition, *Ramsay and Edinburgh Fashion*, and showcase this prominent Scottish artist, while highlighting how his career was forged in Edinburgh with the help of his father and a growing fashion for portraiture. The portraits in this exhibition reveal Ramsay's artistic skill and ability to capture real fashions

with imaginary flourishes, in a way that epitomised the true likeness of his sitters while promoting their standing in Edinburgh society.

“Fashion and clothing played an important role in communicating subtle signs of one’s status during the mid-1700s. Being well dressed in silks, satins and linens elevated women in polite society and helped portray wealth and social standing. By capturing popular styles of dress, Ramsay promoted a sitter’s cultural sophistication and their progressive ideals of taste. This meant their portrait could help them confidently present a contemporary vision of themselves to their peers.

“The exhibition was designed to highlight the National Trust for Scotland’s magnificent Ramsay collection, which has never been brought together before. At the same time, we commissioned new research to map the trades dealing in textiles, clothing and accessories in Edinburgh. This has provided a rich picture of what it was like for a woman to leave her town home and engage with shopkeepers up and down the high street. We have plotted these locations on a 1742 map, collated adverts that detail how traders promoted their wares, and created a short film that imagines a lady’s journey buying cloth and accessories.

“Today’s shoppers are concerned with sustainable fashion and will find in this exhibition similar themes that were central to consumers in the 18th century. While milliners and tailors were busy altering gowns and jackets, drapers and merchants sold cloth, ribbons and lace to upcycle old ensembles. As well as showing the content in the exhibition, we wanted to demonstrate how dresses were made to measure and designed to be altered as fashions and a woman’s body changed. There was no ideal figure, but there was an ideal silhouette. To illustrate this, a group of volunteers are being led by dress historian Rebecca Olds to create a replica 1760s gown. Throughout the opening week of the exhibition (8-14 June), they will be stitching and constructing the dress in the drawing room at the Georgian House. We hope this might inspire visitors to re-use and recycle their own wardrobe. After the exhibition closes in late November, this dress will take on a new lease of life in the Trust’s 1766 draper’s shop, recreated at Gladstone’s Land on the Royal Mile.”

The Georgian House’s popular Wednesday evening lecture series also returns this summer for *Ramsay and Edinburgh Fashion*. It includes a range of stories about fashion traders and retailers, silk dresses and linen undergarments, global and domestic trade routes, and the women and men of Enlightenment Edinburgh.

The exhibition has also provided opportunities for remedial conservation of Ramsay’s paintings and their frames and for professional development for the charity’s Edinburgh collections care staff and volunteers.

Lesley Scott, Regional Conservator at the National Trust for Scotland, explains:

“This exhibition has supported our charity’s work to ensure our collections are stable and conserved, and Ramsay’s paintings and frames have offered opportunities to upskill

our collections care teams through workshops and conservation in action at the Georgian House.

“It is thanks to the tremendous support from the specialist conservators we work with in Scotland that we have been able to achieve this, as they were willing to share their skills and experience to aid team development and understanding of how each item was made, to support each one’s longer-term care.

“This exhibition brings these mid 1700 portraits to new audiences, and I would encourage everyone to take the rare opportunity to see these collections to admire the artistry. And after the exhibition closes in November, we would very much encourage our members and supporters to see the portraits hanging in drawing rooms and dining rooms in their own homes, such as Hill of Tarvit in Cupar and House of the Binns near Linlithgow.”

Philip Long OBE, Chief Executive of the National Trust for Scotland, added:

“We’re delighted to bring together a selection of portraits by Allan Ramsay from across the National Trust for Scotland’s collections for the first time, and to invite our members, visitors and other supporters to experience the intimate exhibition and immerse themselves in the work of one of Scotland’s greatest artists and the period fashion of the time to gain a better understanding of its importance to society. I’m grateful for the continued generous support of National Trust for Scotland members and supporters, to allow us to continue our vital work to care for, protect and share Scotland’s rich cultural heritage now and for future generations to enjoy.”

Ramsay and Edinburgh Fashion opens on 7 June at Georgian House in Edinburgh and runs until 24 November 2024. The exhibition is included in admission to the Georgian House, which is free for National Trust for Scotland members. You can find out more about the exhibition, the Georgian House, and how to book for events at www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/georgian-house.

Events like *Ramsay and Edinburgh Fashion* support the National Trust for Scotland’s vision to care for, share and protect Scotland’s natural and cultural heritage and contributes to its engagement objectives to provide access and enjoyment for everyone.

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Notes to editors

Images are available here: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/133918740@N04/421iT5kGyd>

[About the National Trust for Scotland](#)

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland’s largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland’s magnificent heritage.

Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares

for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them.

In March 2022, the National Trust for Scotland launched *Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone*, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland's heritage which doesn't have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland's heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031.

Scotland's largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work.

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk.

The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.