

## Loans to the World

If a museum's importance is indicated by the loans made to other organisations, both at home and abroad, then the Smith has been of significance for a hundred years and more. The Trustees were called upon to lend to the Glasgow International Exhibition of 1901, when 27 of the most treasured items from the collection were showcased in Glasgow for a year. These included carved panels and chairs from Stirling Castle, the chair and portrait of the Reverend James Guthrie, the Stirling Jug and other measures, the cloak and axe associated with Baird and Hardie's execution in 1820, Cowane's chest and the flag of the Incorporation of Skinners.

In 1911, the Smith Institute loaned 49 items to the Scottish Exhibition of National History, Art and Industry in Glasgow. This purpose of exhibition was to fund the Chair of Scottish Literature and History in the University of Glasgow, and the Smith loans reflected the rural history of Stirlingshire (agricultural implements, the 1511 curling stone, powder horns, domestic implements) rather than the civic background of Stirling. Nevertheless, the Reverend James Guthrie's chair and the Skinner's Flag went out on loan again, and Curator James Sword undertook research for exhibition committee members in the Stirling area.

In 1938, the Reverend James Guthrie's chair was again on loan to the Empire Exhibition in Bellahouston Park, along with the 1511 curling stone, and four the Stirling Heads, of which there was a greater awareness after the Smith's fund raising campaign of 1924-25 to secure those in private hands.

1939 saw a special exhibition of Scottish Art at Royal Academy in London, for which Stanley Cursiter, Director of the National Gallery of Scotland, negotiated the loan of twelve Stirling Heads from the Smith.

In 1971, a South African bushman's bow and four Tartar arrows, taken at the capture of the Taku Forts China (1861) were loaned to the *Art of Archery* exhibition at Kelvingrove, where the 1511 curling stone was also again the star exhibit in the international curling exhibition in 1985.

In 1997, Henrietta Ronner's painting, *A Bit of Cheese* was loaned to the Kunsthall in Rotterdam for a major historical exhibition on this Queen of Cat Painters. *A Bit of Cheese* features the Scotsman newspaper on the table, and was probably exhibited in the Edinburgh International Exhibition of 1883. It came into the Smith through the bequest of Leon Jablonski Platt (1914) a connoisseur and Stirling's first resident dentist.

T.S. Smith's three portraits of black men were the star exhibits in the Edinburgh exhibition, *Roots: The African Inheritance in Scotland* in 1997. A true international appreciation of them came through their loan to Manchester and Birmingham Art Galleries, 2005-2006, for the exhibition of *The Black Victorians – Black People in British Art*. In the sumptuous book of that title, edited by Jan Marsh (Lund Humphries, 2005) they are given full page illustrations. The dignity, scale and humanity of the paintings contrast sharply with the disrespectful way in which the majority of black people were depicted by artists at that time.

T.S. Smith's collection of works by his contemporaries has been vindicated time and again by artistic assessments in recent years. When *The Convalescent* by Gustave de Jonghe (1829-1893) was borrowed for the Hunterian Art Gallery's *Fine Art of Medicine* exhibition marking the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Royal Collage of Physicians and Surgeons in 1999, it was judged to be one of the finest extant depictions of its subject. In 2009-10 the Department of Culture of the regional government of Andalusia borrowed *The Signal* by John Phillip (1817-1867) for exhibition in the Alhambra Palace for the same reason. The work expresses in paint the culture summoned up in *The Tales the Alhambra* by Washington Irving (1783-1859), who had shaped the European consciousness of Spain and Spanish identity itself in that work. Within Stirling, the picture was simply known as "Mrs Smith" by those who thought it odd that a bachelor artist should pay so much for the work of a fellow artist, and carry the picture everywhere with him on his travels.

Since it was liberated from the rafters of Stirling Castle in the 1970s, the oldest football in the world (c.1540) has been part of the Stirling Smith collections. It is enormously popular with football fans, and in 2006 was loaned to the Hamburg museum of ethnography for the International History of Football Exhibition, during the World Cup. The loan was delivered by the Provost of Stirling in person to the Mayor of Hamburg, who in turn gifted the bullet proof glass display case to Stirling at the end of the exhibition. During 2009, the ball was on loan to the Henry VIII exhibition in the Tower of London where the Smith was one of eleven international lenders, and the ball was seen by 1,052,101 visitors.

### **Leonardo da Vinci**

The Smith has borrowed extensively from other public collections to support its own exhibition programmes.

Perhaps the most memorable loan was that of ten original drawings of Leonardo da Vinci graciously loaned by Her Majesty the Queen from the Royal Collections, Windsor Castle. The exhibition ran from 8 August – 2 November 2008 and was supported by sponsorship from eleven businesses in Stirling, matched with funding from the New Arts Sponsorship Grants supported, matched with Scottish Government in conjunction with Arts & Business Scotland. The exhibition attracted 25,000 visitors, showing that with significant investment, the Smith can be a major attraction.