

# Walk in the park proves that Scottish art is alive in Venice

## REVIEW

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VENETIANS know they should never be surprised by anything that happens in their city during the Venice Biennale. But, as Scotland launched its new exhibition at the art festival yesterday, passers-by in a popular public park seemed amused by the sudden appearance of a giant sculpture of a kneeling, top-hatted gentleman.

The 20ft-high sculpture, the Stick Man, by Joanne Tatham and Tom O'Sullivan, the Glasgow artists, is one of a series of works by Scottish artists in Scotland and Venice: Selective Memory, an exhibition which showcases contemporary art.

Alongside their mischievous outdoor piece in the Parco delle Rimembranze, the duo are showing with artists Alex Pollard and Cathy Wilkes in a former religious college, the Scoletta San Rocco, at the city's historic heart.

The Scoletta is no stranger to artistic sleight of hand. The venue belongs to the adjacent Scuola Grande di San Rocco, home to a spectacular cycle of paintings by Tintoretto. Legend has it he gained the commission in 1564, by

installing his work in the building without its owner's knowledge.

All four artists in the exhibition, which is a co-operative venture between the Scottish Arts Council, the British Council and the National Galleries of Scotland, are from Glasgow. Richard Holloway, chairman of the Scottish Arts Council, said: "We are celebrating the fact that Scotland, and Glasgow in particular, is the centre of a vibrant, experimental and thrusting, frontier-busting art scene. We want to show solidarity with our artists, and let people know how active we are in the art world."

The show, curated by Rachel Bradley and Jason Bowman, is confident, playful and at times moving.

Pollard has produced an elegant series of sculptures and wall drawings, including two dinosaurs created from the forms of antique rulers. Tatham and O'Sullivan play with the monumental tradition in art, including a small bronze version of the Stick Man and two vast wedge-shaped sculptures.

Wilkes has created a raw and finely-tuned installation, *She's Pregnant Again*, incorporating paintings and found objects.

The Scottish show is part of a considerable British presence at the Biennale, which includes work from more than 60 countries and is expected to attract more than 400 000 visitors by the time it closes in November.

At the British Pavilion in the Giardini, the park where national presentations are held, another duo, the notorious Gilbert and George, are showing a series of new digital pictures. Both Wales and Northern Ireland have independent presentations this year, and Douglas Gordon, the Scottish Turner Prize winner, is taking part in a show with Anish Kapoor and John Latham, the British artists.

At the Museo Correr, Lucian Freud, the British painter, is the subject of a major retrospective.

Scottish artists first had a presence at the Venice event in 1897, when Charles Rennie Mackintosh was among the exhibitors.

