

PRESS RELEASE

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**Arts Campaigners take their Message to Parliament This Week with a Print for Each and Every MSP**

Leading lights of Scotland's contemporary art scene head to Parliament this week to champion the positive impact of visual art in our communities – and to present every MSP with a specially commissioned original print by artist Ruth Ewan.

The initiative is part of the Art in Action campaign being run by Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN), the member-led body for contemporary visual art in Scotland. The prints will be presented at a parliamentary reception tomorrow (October 1), to cement SCAN's call for art to be at the heart of decision-making.

The move follows First Minister Nicola Sturgeon's involvement in the Art in Action campaign, as she visited contemporary art space Studio Pavilion in Glasgow earlier this month. Her visit tops off a summer of activity with MSPs from every party meeting artists and art organisations across Scotland.

Ruth Ewan, an Aberdeen-born and Glasgow-based artist who exhibits worldwide, created the prints with the expertise of Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA) Print Studio, one of Scotland's leading artistic production facilities. They show the words of Dundee poet Mary Brooksbank. It is hoped that Members of the Scottish Parliament will display them on their Holyrood or constituency office walls.

The print reads:

*A richer Harvest could we reap,  
A Broader Culture, and more deep,  
Artists, Writers, Music makers,  
With Workers would be legislators*

It is an extract from the poem 'Labor Omnia Vincit'. The artist found the words handwritten by the poet in the Mary Brooksbank papers at Dundee University Archives.

SCAN director, Clare Harris, says: 'We are thrilled to take the Art in Action right to the heart of parliament, and to present MSPs with this new work from Ruth Ewan. Ruth has exhibited all over the world, with much of her art focusing on social movements and collective action – the message of the print perfectly sums up our aim to place art at the heart of decision making.'

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'The print studio at Dundee Contemporary Arts is a brilliant resource, which allows contemporary artists to produce editions of their work that go on to be held in international collections.'

Claire Baker, MSP for Mid Central and Fife, is hosting the Art in Action reception tomorrow. She also visited SCAN member and artist Lada Wilson at the 201 Telephone Box Gallery in Strathkinness over the summer. She said: 'I hope that through the Art in Action campaign, the role of art and artists in communities can be better understood so we can work to ensure better recognition of its value in decision-making at all levels.'

Mary Brooksbank was born in an Aberdeen slum in 1897, moving to Dundee as a child and working in a mill by the age of 12.

A socialist, she was an active trade unionist and founded the Working Women Guild to fight for better health and social services.

But to many she was most familiar as a poet, musician and the writer of songs about life in the mills – singing for money in the streets when times were hard.

The *Jute Mill Song* was her best-known work. A verse of the poem was inscribed on the Scottish Parliament's Canongate Wall in 2009, making Brooksbank the first and only woman to be quoted there.

Ruth Ewan said: 'Mary Brooksbank continues to be an important figure in my work, as a creative and outspoken activist she was imprisoned on multiple occasions for speaking out for what she believed in.'

'The verse from her poem 'Labor Omnia Vincit' seemed to connect well to the Art in Action campaign – to value cultural workers, to stop and consider what creative people contribute to our lives and our society and also to think about our cultural potential – although Mary is a voice from the past she was really interested in shaping the future and her voice seems as relevant today as it ever has.'

Beth Bate, director of DCA added: 'We were delighted to work on this commission with Ruth Ewan in our open access Print Studio, supporting SCAN's important Art in Action campaign. Our mission at DCA is to enrich people's lives through culture and creativity - realising art's value in society is a key part of making this possible.'

Over the summer recess MSPs were invited to see for themselves the positive impact of visual art in their constituencies. They were encouraged to share their experience via social media using #ArtInAction – and to make a public commitment to support artists and art in their communities.

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MSPs from across all political parties took part in the Art in Action campaign over the summer. Among them were the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, SNP MSPs Tom Arthur, Joan McAlpine, Stuart McMillan and Maree Todd, Scottish Conservative Finlay Carson, Labour's Jackie Baillie, Claire Baker, Rhoda Grant, Anas Sarwar and Colin Smyth, Patrick Harvie from The Scottish Green Party and Scottish Liberal Democrat Liam McArthur.

For high-res images and more information contact: Matthew Shelley on 07786 704299.

**- Ends -**

**Notes to editors**

- Scottish Contemporary Art Network (SCAN) is a member-led network committed to championing and supporting the contemporary art sector in Scotland.
- Our vision is that the role, impact and benefits of contemporary visual arts are widely recognised as central to society and that sector professionals based in Scotland are informed, innovative and supported to achieve their ambitions.
- SCAN is supported by Creative Scotland.
- See more at [www-sca-net.org](http://www-sca-net.org)

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