



Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Family donate Norman Cornish's 'Pit Road, Winter' painting

Norman Cornish's evocative painting of two miners striding to work on a cold grey morning is now on permanent display at National Glass Centre, after the celebrated artist's family donated the painting to the University of Sunderland.

'Pit Road, Winter' (c. 1995) – unveiled on 5 November – was donated by Norman Cornish's family in recognition of his long connection with the University; which includes being awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Arts in 2012.

Norman captured Dean and Chapter Colliery at Ferry Hill in 'Pit Road, Winter'; a road he walked along almost every day for over 30 years and knew very well. Although not dated, it's believed that the artist worked on the painting around 1995, during a time when mining faced an uncertain future.

Norman's son John Cornish commented: "When, in 2012, my father learned that University of Sunderland were to award him an *Honorary Doctorate of Arts* it gave him another opportunity to reflect upon his early life. His formal education had ended at the age of 14, when, as one child of seven, he was obliged to leave school and help his parents support their large family. On a dark night on Boxing Day, 1933, he began a new phase of his life working underground as a miner. So, with no college or university education behind him, many years later, the award from the University was affirmation that, despite the most difficult of circumstances, he had fulfilled his potential to learn and had been formally recognised for his achievements in life.

"My father also had another reason to thank University of Sunderland. In the 1960s he was offered a visiting lectureship, for one day a week, at what was then Sunderland College of Art. This short teaching venture came at a very important time when he had left the mines and had lost the security of a weekly wage packet. This appointment helped fund his transition from the mines to a professional art career.

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“The gift of the ‘*Pit Road*’ painting reinforces my late father’s relationship with University of Sunderland. The painting reflects Wearmouth’s strong industrial heritage. Hopefully it will be enjoyed by visitors to National Glass Centre for many years to come.”

Michelle Daurat, National Glass Centre’s Interim Director commented: “We’re honoured to receive ‘*Pit Road, Winter*’ from Norman Cornish’s family and include it on permanent display in our collection. Coal mining and glass making were two of the North East’s most significant industries for many years, so the work of this beloved artist also has important cultural significance and will be enjoyed by our visitors.”

The painting is now on display in the ‘*Stories of Glass in Sunderland*’ exhibition space, alongside a Lowry sketch of St Peter’s Church. It won’t be the first time the two works have hung together; Cornish exhibited alongside LS Lowry on four separate occasions fifty years ago. Between 1965 and 1968 the works of Cornish and Lowry hung together at The Stone Gallery in Newcastle and at Tullie House in Carlisle, as part of Border Arts Society exhibitions.

Notes to Editors

National Glass Centre has been managed by the University of Sunderland since 2010; it reopened after a £2m refurbishment programme in June 2013 and attracts over 210,000 visitors every year.

Ends/

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