

James Boyle
Cultural Commission
Broughton High School
Carrington Road
Edinburgh EH4 1EG

4 October 2004

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Dear James

I have pleasure in enclosing a report drafted by representatives of the grassroots visual art communities – artists, curators, writers and arts educators – in response to the Cultural Commission remit. I apologise for its slightly delayed arrival.

Central to our thinking has been a reconsideration of arts education, which we believe to be the key to conferring creative and critical intelligence on future generations of Scots. This report represents a genuine attempt to safeguard the thriving visual arts ecology well into the future. As outlined, this document is the result of thorough consultation with artists and other visual art stakeholders and responds directly to the needs identified. We hope that the ideas outlined here will be a starting point for the thinking of the Cultural Commission on the visual arts.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or to expand upon the discussion.

With best regards.

Yours sincerely,



Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt



On Safeguarding Excellence in the Visual Arts in Scotland

**A Report on Behalf of the Grassroots Visual Arts Communities of Scotland
For the Cultural Commission**

September, 2004

Introduction

This report has been produced in response to the Cultural Commission, set up by the Scottish Executive, which is perceived here as a genuine attempt to re-evaluate cultural provision for the future.

From a visual perspective

Perhaps more than any other artform, Scotland is internationally recognised as a centre of excellence in the visual arts. This report aims first to define a thriving 'ecology' of artistic practice throughout Scotland, the strength of which lies in its inability to be pigeonholed. Such activity is the result of decades of effort on the part of dedicated individuals and mutually supportive collaborative groups and has an impact on the international prestige and local economy of Scotland that is only just beginning to be quantified. For example, Scottish Enterprise estimates that the so-called 'creative industries' generate 70,000 jobs and £5 billion in economic activity. Every year, hundreds of students are attracted to undertake their artistic education here, thousands of artists invest in fabricating their work here and tens of thousands of Scots and tourists visit museums and galleries here.

This report is written from a visual perspective but does not intend to treat the visual arts as a closed sector. Contemporary art is not necessarily confined to the ocular and may include many other aspects such as the aural and performative. Historically, artists have collaborated across many different artforms and continue to do so. The recommendations made here may be applied across artforms.

Education

In preparing this report, the role of education is considered as paramount in encouraging the innate creativity of Scottish citizens and the recommendations outlined here are intended to be taken alongside a thorough curriculum review.

At present, a huge gulf exists between contemporary artists and their audiences which points to a systemic failure in arts education. In this regard, Scotland badly lags behind other European countries, such as Italy where taxi drivers are alleged to have a working knowledge of opera and

the Scandinavian countries which take great pride in their cultural products. The prestige of artists within society in Scotland is lower than in its European comparators such as France where artists are paid a salary by the state.

There are many issues at stake, from stimulating the innate creativity of every individual passing through the education system to facilitating and consolidating discourse within the professional communities. A large task lies ahead in providing the skills needed for the population of Scotland to access culture and in 'rebranding' culture as something with which everyone can be involved.

If the recommendations outlined here are implemented, the citizens of Scotland will benefit from improved visual literacy that will help them to better navigate the modern world. Future generations will possess heightened creative and critical intelligence. It is clear that these changes will have to come from the ground up, from primary school level and beyond. The mediation of culture to the public through the national press and broadcast media and through opinion formers will also need to be advanced so that the discussion can move beyond the age-old question 'is it art?'

About the authors

This report has been compiled by unpaid representatives of the grassroots visual arts communities of Scotland after a process of consultation with as many stakeholders in those communities as possible. The authors of this report have no vested interest in its outcomes beyond safeguarding what they perceive as a centre of excellence for the visual arts in Scotland.

On 24 May, 2004, a general meeting was called to inform visual arts stakeholders about the Cultural Commission and to draft a list of aims and objectives that would improve working conditions for visual arts practitioners in Scotland. Immediately after this meeting, a website was set up (www.artfutures.net) to re-iterate these issues and to solicit anonymous responses to a questionnaire about safeguarding the future of artistic practice in Scotland (Appendix 1). The questionnaire asked artists to re-imagine a future according to their needs, unencumbered by existing models. A flyer was produced to inform stakeholders about the website and the

opportunity to have their say and responses were encouraged in several mailouts, including those undertaken by Transmission Gallery and *Variation* magazine, and through emails to online discussion groups. Monthly steering group meetings have taken place since May to respond to the needs identified by visual arts stakeholders and to compile this report accordingly.

The status quo

As things stand, the Scottish Arts Council invests the majority of its funding (more than 93% of voted visual art funds) in an infrastructure of galleries and museums on the understanding that this will directly and indirectly support artists. As will be shown here, the arts institutions of Scotland are consistently failing to support Scottish artists and need to be made more accountable. We have a suggestion that can be easily implemented to ensure that this is achieved.

A tiny percentage of Scottish Arts Council visual arts budget goes directly to the research and development of artistic practice or to the grassroots organisations that do the most to directly support this practice. A recent study, compiled by the Scottish Arts Council, showed that 82% of visual artists in Scotland earn less than £5,000 per year from their practice, with 28% earning nothing whatsoever. Extrapolated figures show that the estimated 5,000 artists working in Scotland contribute £22 million to the economy, primarily through materials.

Consistent with the Cultural Commission request for bold suggestions to improve the cultural rights of both Scottish citizens and the creative community, this report presupposes that the Scottish Arts Council may no longer be in existence. In considering a new national organisation that would best serve the needs of the artists based in Scotland some simple recommendations are outlined here which best represent the needs identified by Scotland's artists themselves.

The bigger picture

When considering the future of state funding, it is necessary to take account of the broader economic framework for the arts. In the last few years, several commercial galleries have been established in Scotland (notably the Modern Institute in Glasgow and Doggerfisher in

Edinburgh). The SAC continues to contribute annually £10,000 to art fairs, £25,000 to a collecting initiative and £50,000 to The Modern Institute. Previously, the only option for artists seeking commercial representation was to work with galleries in London or internationally, which provided a celebrated creative freedom at home. While the arrival of these galleries has created some local success stories, their influence may also be perceived as steering the content and appearance of artwork in a direction that will be conducive to its market success. As Scottish artist Ross Sinclair noted:

When its meaning and location exists primarily for the market, the cultural activity, Art, ceases to have a wider social function other than in matters of economics.

In order to safeguard excellence in the visual arts of the future, the ability of art to retain its critical potential must be protected through the deployment of public funding to individual artists and grassroots organisations.

A brighter future

In addressing a brighter future for the cultural provision of Scotland, visual art has a vital part to play. This report aims to address the cultural rights of Scottish citizens, through improved education and access to excellence. It also seeks to demonstrate the importance of both individual artists and grassroots organisations to this process. The success of it depends on maintaining an international visual arts ecology in Scotland and to elaborate on the needs identified by the stakeholders themselves in order to safeguard a dynamic future for the visual arts in Scotland. In doing so, it argues for altered priorities in arts funding and sets out the basic criteria that any new national agency established to support artists should adopt.

Without a significant acknowledgement of and investment in the visual arts ecology that underpins this thriving art scene, there is a very real danger that it will not be sustainable in the future, that artists will migrate to other countries, museums and galleries will be left devoid of locally produced content and the people of Scotland will lose a valuable resource.

Defining and Sustaining an Ecology of Practice

While it is assumed that members of the Cultural Commission have a thorough understanding of the cultural landscape in Scotland, it is worth outlining some of the peculiarities of the visual art scene here.

The work of Scottish contemporary artists is represented in all of the significant national collections and museums around the world, not least the Museums of Modern Art in the traditional art capitals of Paris and New York. At any given time, it is likely that you can see exhibitions of work by Scottish artists in any country in Western Europe and you can even see videos made by Scottish artists for world-famous rock bands on MTV. Reciprocally, there are currently major exhibitions of contemporary work by visiting international artists at purpose-designed public galleries in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee. The first galleries to commercially represent contemporary artists from a base in Scotland have established strong international reputations.

At the same time, artists are working in schools, in hospitals, and with community groups. They are collaborating with urban planners, architects and landscape architects on buildings, parks, footpaths and urban regeneration programmes. They are participating in residency programmes around the world, and Scottish institutions in turn are hosting visitors from the US, Cuba, Japan, Brazil, Korea, Turkey. The artist-run space Transmission in Glasgow has been successfully adopted as a model by organisations in several European countries. Artists continue to creatively regenerate disused spaces of all kinds around Scotland as studios, workshops or galleries. Most importantly, they continue to produce exhibitions and projects, new contributions to Scotland's culture, that are free and open to all.

This is what culture is. It is an ecology of activity, a multitude of conversations, potential experiences, ideas and creations.

It is important to recognise that all of this activity is of a quality and diversity that is unprecedented for a country the size of Scotland. It is equally important to understand that all of this activity is interconnected - not esoterically, or conceptually, but practically and clearly - and that it is also vulnerable.



Lucy Edwards and Jenny Hermanovich, *No Testing On* at Emerged, Woodlands Road, Glasgow, July 2004

A simple example of this interconnection could begin with the education system. Good art teachers, who can engage and genuinely educate their pupils and give them the tools to develop creative thought, critical awareness and visual literacy, tools which can be applied to many disciplines, need a good art education themselves. They must be attracted first to the idea of art not only because it is something exotic and exciting but also because it is all around them. They must be persuaded to study at Scottish art schools rather than to leave for London, or Leeds, or Copenhagen. Other important components for the healthy future of the arts are the existence of successful role-models and clear opportunities. It should be emphasised that these things cannot be created on paper, or substituted by rhetoric. They must actually exist.

Current successes are the ultimate result of circumstances and actions - most often grassroots activity recognised and supported by public funding - that can be identified and encouraged.

The task of the state cannot be to impose a formula or to attempt to structurally instrumentalise this activity any more than it already does. Such an attempt would be almost certain to fail - it would not only fail to achieve its aims but could potentially undermine or reverse recent successes.

Artists tend to value openness, both intellectual and structural, and artists - sometimes described as the model workers of the knowledge economy - are also among the most mobile of cultural workers. This can be positive: fifteen years ago, Scotland was on the periphery of the European art

world, but now it is one of its centres. It can also have the reverse effect: the majority of successful young artists from the Scandinavian countries have migrated to Berlin in recent years, and it was not long ago that the first stop for a young Scottish artist, successful or not, was London.

Nor is the task of the state to simply inject capital and hope that market forces will do the rest. Due to the unusual characteristics of art as a commodity in the market - art objects are often hand-produced, one-off pieces, and the art market has no interest in the wider social good that a well-functioning art ecology produces - the outcome of this approach is likely to be that art becomes a privilege to be enjoyed only by a small sector of society. Art for a few is no more desirable than education for a few, or healthcare for a few.

So what is the task of the state? Put simply, it is to intelligently support the ecology of art as a public resource, so that this resource can grow, continue to diversify and develop.

What does this mean, practically? It means, first and foremost, support for grassroots activity: artist-run spaces, temporary projects, the development of individual artists, arts education in its widest, least patronising and most public sense, allied to support for ambitious public exhibition programmes that can present this activity in the international context of which it is part. It means increased investment in the visual arts sector as a whole, currently a disproportionately small fraction of cultural spending, in recognition of the fact that this investment will contribute not only to the modern cultural identity of Scotland internationally but to its actual future as a creative culture. It means an arm's length approach that is nonetheless supported by real knowledge, experience and engagement, that is transparent and accountable. And, once again, knowledge and experience cannot be supplanted by rhetoric or managerialism. The ecological metaphor here is not a convenience; the art world, in Scotland as elsewhere, is a complex system that is not entirely subject to simple rules. Contemporary art is, by definition, always evolving. There is no substitute for a comprehensive understanding of the situation on the ground, as mistakes made at a grassroots level can have far-reaching effects. There must be genuine, clear and direct lines of communication between those entrusted with distributing public money and those producing the public culture they are supporting.

Education, Creativity and Visual Literacy

In the world of psychology, one of the leading theories for measuring Intelligence Quotient, or IQ, (Sternberg's Triarchic Theory, 1977, 1985, 1995) assumes that there are three facets of intelligence namely:

- " Analytical (componential)
- " Creative (experiential)
- " Practical (contextual)

Creative intelligence is said to involve insights, synthesis and the ability to react to novel situations and stimuli. This is considered to be the experiential aspect of intelligence and reflects how an individual connects the internal world to external reality. Sternberg considers the creative facet to consist of the ability which allows people to think creatively and that which allows people to adjust creatively and effectively to new situations. Intelligent individuals will move from consciously learning in a novel situation to automating the new learning so that they can attend to other tasks and it is creativity that enables this ability.

Creativity is not stimulated in schools in a way which has much relevance to the real world. The big ambition, the generational change, that Scotland is seeking, is to make creativity an everyday part of people's lives and this can not be the sole responsibility of education programmes in arts institutions. Artists and those working with the arts have been frustrated by the barriers that exist in society to involvement and participation. The relatively low and marginalised status of the arts in education creates a lifelong and structural problem. This status does not endear learners to stimulate their creativity through an involvement in the arts. It also creates a problem of recognition for artists within society. Until a degree in Physics and a degree in Fine Art are valued equally, the arts will be marginalised, and artists will be poorly paid.

We live in a culture which has never been more visual - in so many respects the sign has overtaken the word as the most basic mode of communication. Brands and advertising flow internationally and are adapted locally. Design is so all-pervasive that it has become virtually invisible.

Our interactions with technology have become increasingly driven by visual media - everything has a 'graphical user interface'. There is a distinct generational dimension to this development, but we are all enjoying the benefits. Yet, visual literacy is not on the agenda. Just because all things visual are instantaneously received by the brain, it does not mean that they are immediately understood. People need the skills to decode these signals. One analogy for this might be wine-tasting; while anyone can drink and enjoy wine, with a little training and practice, a great deal more can be gained from the experience.

Visual literacy is as important as linguistic literacy for social and economic success. In fact, these different aspects of education are only distinct within the existing structure of the curriculum, and there are so many clear examples that indicate that they are complementary. It is the compartmentalisation of education that leads to the need to order and prioritise skills that actually support each other. 15% of the curriculum for the expressive arts - art and design, music, drama and PE! 17 hours per year total of expressive arts (again art and design, music drama, and PE) for trainee primary school teachers. Is it any wonder that the arts are marginalised?

In education we focus on verbal literacy and numeracy, but we ignore the need to engage critically with visual culture - television, film, advertising, printed media, the internet and all things mobile and wireless - designed culture. Within this cluster of skills, those in visual arts, design and crafts are critical. These three inter-related categories and all their subsets are at the forefront of this cultural revolution. They are driving it forward and there is a huge interplay between the different forms of practice. Focusing on visual culture is helpful because it clarifies a set of skills - creativity, critical thinking, citizenship, communication and self expression, the ability to influence decision-making, that are at the heart of the education agenda.

The priority in education and community development is tackling exclusion. This objective is pursued to the detriment of those who have talent and skills to be developed: while instrumental services are cut back, the arts are increasingly

involved in learning support and reaching out to the disaffected. It should never be either/or. The arts have a role to play in everyone's lives.

Part of the problem is one of scale - the arts operate on a human scale. Most often they are not 'stadium rock', yet the educational system is industrial in scale. Individuals are not significant within the process of educating tens of thousands of children and young people on a conveyor belt over 10 years.

The argument for involving practitioners is well rehearsed. They are not a substitute for teachers; their role is to demonstrate hands-on practice. Children and young people - in fact any learner in the arts - must understand the experience of making work, both by themselves and for professional artists. They must understand the role of the arts in society and as a career. They must develop active and independent involvement in cultural opportunities. But here we are again speaking about personal experiences and small scale - the best, most important experiences are one artist working with a few classes over some months. It is expensive and it cannot be scaled up - the industrial model does not work. In fact we don't want it to work - the arts ought to be the grit in the system that helps break apart the Victorian educational structure.

Access to the broader visual arts ecology is as vital to the training of future teachers as it will be for the pupils who go on to develop a career in the arts. At a tertiary level, art schools must be adequately resourced and able to recruit the best staff available. The job of recruitment is made many times easier if there is a strong local art community that is internationally connected, if Scotland continues to be seen as a viable place to make a career as an artist. An important point to make here is that art education does not, and cannot, take place solely within an art college. A major component of the education of art students in Scotland, particularly in Glasgow and Edinburgh, comes from what can best be described as the art scenes of those cities. Independent, artist-run exhibition spaces, public galleries, talks, debates, events: a living culture. The art world is perhaps one of the best examples of successful continuing public education.

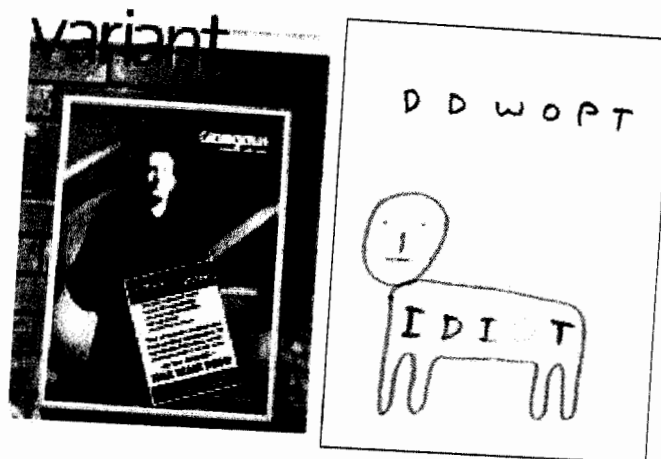
Mediation, Marketing and Promotion

While an improved relationship between arts practitioners and the education system will stimulate creativity and visual literacy from the bottom up, a top-down model must also be employed in the best possible way. In order to improve access to culture for future generations, it will be necessary to address mediation of the arts to audiences in a profound and lasting way. There are many ways in which the current system for mediating arts to the public is seriously lacking.

On a very basic level, there is no definitive guide for arts audiences in Scotland. There are many options that would work: a leaflet or a website for example. After much consultation, it seems clear that this is badly needed. In order to gain access to the arts, the audience first needs to know where to go.

The second problem is that, in Scotland at the moment, arts journalism through the non-specialist press and broadcast media is, with a few notable exceptions, completely banal. This would need to be addressed, through workshops for arts journalists and information exchanges with international colleagues. This is something that could be achieved, in part, through an active travel and residency programme and through a comprehensive archive (to be discussed later). The art schools of Scotland have strongly indicated that they would be willing to be involved in improving the critical discourse and perception of the arts.

Scotland's politicians (at a local and national level) and opinion formers are also often quoted making derisory remarks about the arts, especially contemporary visual art, Scotland's highest profile international cultural export. None of the members of the Scottish Executive count visual arts among their interests and, even when Scotland was represented at the prestigious Venice Biennale (the artistic equivalent of the Olympic Games) for the first time, there was very little interest from politicians in attending. This is something that absolutely needs to change and it is clear that not enough has been done to involve (or educate) those who make decisions about culture and



left: *Variant*, volume 2, number 20
right: David Shrigley, *Drawings Done While on the Phone to an Idiot*, The Armpit Press, 1996

therefore need to feel proud of it. Local celebrities could also be enlisted to draw attention to the visual culture of Scotland. The trickle-down effect of opinion formers who perceive the arts as a facet of their national pride is something that cannot be over estimated.

Finally, there is a great need in Scotland for more professional critical reflection within the arts, through discussions and publications. As in other areas, much of the initiative has historically been taken by artists, with internationally acclaimed artists' books for example being produced by David Shrigley and his Armpit Press and critical publications being produced by StopStop if and when funding is available. The only regular outlet for critical discourse at the moment is *Variant* magazine which is distributed widely and freely by artists. As the transparent budget scheme given in the latest issue shows, the magazine is sustained in large part through the in-kind labour of artists and modest advertising revenue with only occasional one-off grants from public funders. There is no concerted focus for art publishing or the distribution and promotion of artists' publications. This is an area that needs to be reviewed as part of a nationwide strategy. Research undertaken by the Scottish Arts Council in 2002 was recently developed further and found that, despite a range of interesting publications being produced in Scotland, primarily by those with little specialist knowledge of the publishing field, little has been done to develop the national and international market for these publications.

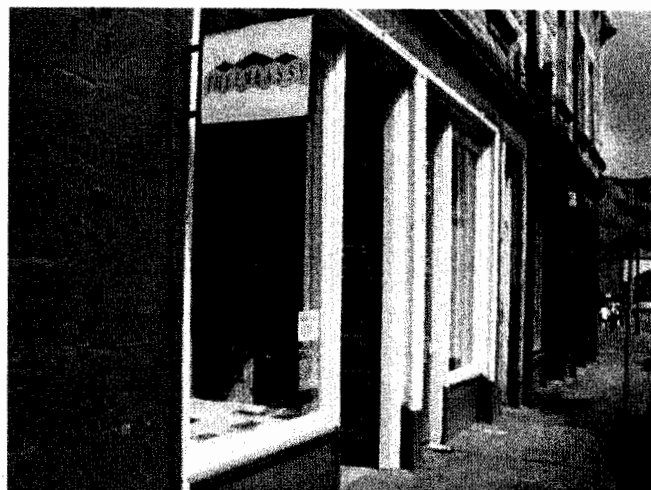
One very positive outcome for this consultation process would be a new national publishing/distribution house for Scotland's art publications. This would be invaluable in focusing critical discourse in Scotland, stimulating critical practice and mediating such practice to audiences in Scotland and beyond. Again, there is much interest within the art schools for this kind of development and it could be linked to the discursive role of a new agency, considered later. Such a publishing and distribution venture could do much to raise awareness of Scottish artists, as smaller literary publishing houses like Canongate have done in recent years.

Institutional Accountability

Gaining access to excellence is the cornerstone of Jack McConnell's cultural policy. The encouragement and provision of that excellence must first be addressed. The fact that Scotland is rich in cutting edge contemporary art is not something that is widely recognised by 'specialist' public bodies, as the recent threatened withdrawal of the visual arts programme at Tramway by Glasgow City Council demonstrated. This lack of faith in Scottish contemporary art has also been demonstrated in the collecting policies of certain institutions, notably the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow, a trend which is only now beginning to be reversed. This means that the audiences of Scotland are often deprived of seeing the very best of Scottish and international contemporary art that they should be able to expect.

In addition to direct support and better resources, there are also ways in which artists can be protected and encouraged through the institutions.

Following the recommendations outlined when considering a new national agency provided later in this report will go some way towards nurturing and sustaining excellence in artistic practice through direct support and better resources. There are also ways in which artists can be protected and encouraged through the institutions.



The Embassy in Edinburgh
an example of an artist-run gallery/grassroots organisation

Arts institutions in Scotland invariably operate on subsistence budgets that often cause them to call their existence into question. The future of institutions in Scotland lies outside the scope of

this report addresses the arts from the perspective of the artists and grassroots organisations, it must consider how to make the institutions more accountable to the artists they represent. The existing institutions vary widely in their approach towards local and international artists and their treatment of artists.

this report and will no doubt be dealt with by the institutions themselves and the Visual Arts and Galleries Association (VAGA). As this report addresses the arts from the perspective of the artists and grassroots organisations, it must consider how to make the institutions more accountable to the artists they represent. The existing institutions vary widely in their approach towards local and international artists and their treatment of artists. We are not for a moment suggesting that institutions take the retrograde step of becoming less international in their focus in order to provide more opportunities for local artists as it is crucial that artists based in Scotland are considered alongside their international peers. Rather that the institutions acknowledge that they are the interface between the artists at the face of

culture and the audiences. While they have a responsibility to audiences, their primary responsibility lies with the artists who provide content for the institutions. Without the artists being supported, there will be no future for the institutions and without nurturing a public for exhibitions, there will be no meaningful dialogue.

The most obvious way in which institutions can support artists is through the regular provision of fees for exhibiting as part of the best practice of those institutions. While the Scottish Arts Council makes recommendations for fee levels that are still pitifully low and these are not necessarily implemented by the institutions. Therefore, as we saw in the introduction, a huge majority of artists make less than £5,000 from their artistic practice every year while arts administrators make several times that much and budgets are consumed by overheads. The perpetuation of this model is fundamentally flawed.

make the provision of fees to artists a matter of honour amongst the institutions and something at which they would all want to be seen to be excelling.

One simple solution to this problem would be to insist that all publicly-funded arts institutions include a line in their budgets that clearly states the amount of money disbursed to artists in fees. Not equipment or installation costs or publicity but fees i.e. the money that goes into an artist's account for rent, food, bills etc. This could then be calculated as a percentage of the total budget for the institutions. In this way, at the end of each financial year, easy comparisons could be made publicly between the institutions. This would then hopefully make the provision of fees to artists a matter of honour amongst the institutions and something at which they would all want to be seen to be excelling.

Of course, there are many other ways besides exhibition fees in which institutions can support artists if this becomes their priority, such as publications, talks and events and direct grants for research and development. But, there is still plenty

Yes, everything in the garden is lovely. Maud ... and the tree will support the artists.



of room for a co-ordinated, nationwide strategy to improve the living wage of artists and our group would be happy to consult further on this.

As an aside, for the purposes of comparisons such as these and to ensure better communication between the institutions intended to support artists, it would be very beneficial to have all galleries and museums funded in the same way, from the same pot of money. For example, at the moment, the National Galleries are funded directly by the Scottish Executive and Tramway is funded through a combined arts/dance fund compared to other venues receiving SAC visual arts funding. This creates a problem with accountability and often precludes opportunities for co-operation between venues.

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Towards a New Agency for Supporting Artists

As stated at the outset, this report presupposes that the Scottish Arts Council will no longer exist. From the results of our consultation among artists and grassroots organisations, it is clear that any new agency should be established with the explicit priority of supporting artists. Many precedents for such an agency are available that our group would be happy to recommend.

It almost goes without saying that any new national agency should make the support of artists its primary concern. It should review the percentage of funding that goes directly to artists within the overall budgets. The existing tiered structure of awards, which presumes a false ladder of achievement, could also be re-evaluated.

One immediately obvious example would be the International Artists Studio Programme in Stockholm (IASPIS). At its core is a programme of inviting international artists to undertake residencies in Sweden alongside local artists. It also provides direct support for artists and their projects and works to promote Swedish artists in their international relations. IASPIS offers one-year grants for Swedish artists wishing to work abroad as the assistant to a more established artist, which greatly benefits their professional practice and networks and is invaluable to the artist that they are employed to assist. Scottish artist Roderick Buchanan recently benefited from this scheme.



Nicholas Poussin, *Massacre of the Innocents* (detail), 1630-1

Any new agency established to support artists should be:

- " **Supportive**
- " **Artist-led**
- " **Flexible and fair**
- " **Transparent**
- " **Discursive**
- " **Interpretative**
- " **Educational**
- " **Responsive to Artists' Needs**
- " **Inexpensive to administer**
- " **A resource**
- " **National**
- " **International**
- " **Arms' Length**
- " **Archival**

Supportive

It almost goes without saying that any new national agency should make the support of artists its primary concern. This presumes the right of artists to a living wage (a minimum of £12,000 per annum, index linked). Any new agency should review the percentage of funding that goes directly to artists within the overall budgets. As we have seen, the policy of supporting an infrastructure in the hope that it will reach artists is flawed and needs to be re-assessed. Individual support for artists could best be deployed in the areas of research, production and fees. The existing tiered structure of awards, which presumes a false ladder of achievement, could also be re-evaluated.

Artist-led

There was a time when artists were much more involved in committees at the Scottish Arts Council but now they seem to have been all but squeezed out of the decision-making process. In the future, artists should be much more involved in the decisions that affect their future, including policy making. Decisions about funding should be taken on the basis of peer review and selection, the rationale being that the only people being able to assess artists' activity are other artists. It is understandable that certain artists would not wish to be involved in panels if it meant being excluded for consideration for those awards but it could be made a condition of receiving an award that the artist would serve on a future panel on the understanding that they would not be eligible for consideration for another award immediately afterwards.

Flexible and Fair

In order to avoid the kind of nepotism that is likely to arise in a small country, the new national agency should have a committee that rotates every two to three years.

Transparent

The new agency should promote honest discourse and the sharing of information regarding levels of and competition for funding and the economic position of artists.

Cheap to Administer

The new agency should operate with a small staff paid no more than the average wage and in premises with no more than a peppercorn rent (to be based wherever such premises can be found, perhaps not Edinburgh this time around).

Responsive to Artists' Needs

As outlined at the start, this report was compiled after consultation with artists and grassroots organisations about a better future. This kind of process should be continued by those genuinely interested in creating a better cultural landscape, not expensive consultants.

A Resource

One of the requirements many of the artists consulted had was for a resource centre where they could go to receive advice on professional practice, from the drawing up of a standard



Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937

contract to recommendations about fees. The new agency needs to be more accessible and provide the information that artists can use in developing their practice. One proactive example that was mentioned was the former Artists' Association in Ireland.

Discursive

Scotland is badly lacking a concerted focus for discussion within and about the arts at an international level. Any interpretative events happen sporadically and usually in response to institutional exhibitions. In the Scotland of the future, artists and grassroots organisations should have much more scope to programme talks and events with their international peer group. This brings together many of the ideas already proposed, including improved education, mediation and publication within the arts.

The following criteria for a new agency need to be considered in more detail:

A National Approach

One avenue currently being explored is whether the Scottish Arts Council can persuade local government to take up the burden of strategic arts funding. One only has to look at the mistakes made in England by devolving control to regional bodies to see that this would be a mistake. The reasons why devolution of funding to a local level would be counterproductive to sustaining the visual arts in Scotland are outlined here.

Organisations have been formed by practitioners and now represent a critical network in many parts closer to the practitioners than to the large institutional structures.

Firstly, local government in Scotland is characterised by a paternalistic attitude derived wholly from being legitimised by the electoral process. Local authority officers derive an unassailable sense of certainty from the fact that the policy that they develop and implement is authorised by elected members. The arts, and in particular the contemporary visual arts, deploy two strategies: 'to make strange' and 'to challenge'. Local government is never going to strategically support organisations whose key role is to challenge authority and structure, let alone to make it strange and uncomfortable.

Secondly, local government places little or no value on the arts in relation to the large social, educational and economic issues. Those social, educational and economic issues are targeted by large scale top down 'strategic' programmes. The programmes are conceived centrally and consultation is at the development end of the process. In some cases, the arts are used to support the objectives. Local government is fundamentally hierarchical. The arts, particularly the contemporary visual arts, operate in a networked culture, 'an ecology of practice' as seen above. Increasingly, participation and engagement are vital to practice. Fundamentally, contemporary practice does not assume that it knows the answer, only that it can pose some interesting questions, whereas contemporary local government still believes that it knows the answers.

Thirdly, the visual arts sector in Scotland has developed in significant part out of practice. Organisations have been formed by practitioners and now represent a critical network in many parts closer to the practitioners than to the large institutional structures. A tiny minority of these organisations have been fostered by some support from the Scottish Arts Council. Over a period of 30 or more years some of these methods of support have developed into a partnership between the Scottish Arts Council and local government. There is proven strength in this partnership approach, with the arts council bringing artistic knowledge and local government bringing vital local knowledge. The Scottish Arts Council places a high value on the partnership, probably because it lends credibility through the electoral process. The reality of this is that local government support to the smaller arts organisations is usually given as a

OVER MY DEAD BODY



Mona Hatoum, *Over My Dead Body*, 1988-2002

voluntary grant. It mostly adds up to less than 20% of the Scottish Arts Council's commitment and it is always under threat. A few organisations have established strong working relationships with local government, primarily through key individuals. Unfortunately this 'partnership' is unequal in terms of the value placed on the organisations. The local authorities are the minor partners both in relation to the level of their support to the organisations, and in relation to their own budgets. The Scottish Arts Council wants them to become major partners but this should be avoided at all costs.

The single biggest threat to the arts would be to look to local government to play the major role in supporting the strategic network of grassroots organisations as there is no consistency of approach at a local level. In the best cases, notably Dundee and Aberdeen, local government has worked actively in creating a better cultural environment and promoting an understanding of culture for its people. In the worst cases, notably Edinburgh and Glasgow, influential members of culture departments are not interested in challenging work. They cannot deal with, let alone support, networks, they are not capable of being major partners because they do not have the interest or expertise. At the worst extreme, arts officers are marginalised within culture departments and their opinions disregarded, anti-intellectualism is rife and specialist knowledge is derided in favour of making a virtue of ignorance.

While it would equally be a mistake to have a future arts agency that was wholly centralised with no local expertise, it is vital that any future agency set up to support the arts in Scotland operates at a national level.

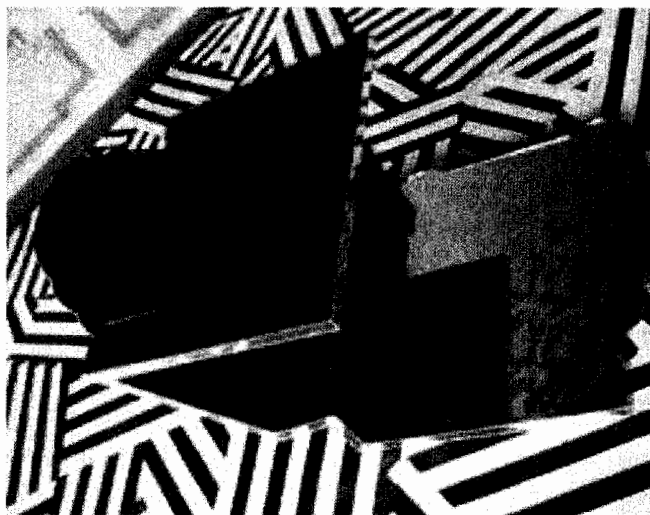
An International Approach

A vital element in maintaining the pitch, ambition and health of the Scottish contemporary visual arts grassroots is its refusal to become mired in parochialism or to play second fiddle to major metropolitan centres such as London. Indeed, during a recent visit to Transmission Gallery Andre Schlechtriem, Curator of Drawing at the Museum of Modern Art in New York spoke of the UK having two centres for the visual arts: London and Glasgow. This kind of recognition of Scotland's standing as a major player in the international arts scene was not achieved without considerable effort and talent on the part of the grassroots arts communities who support and generate the kind of activities for which Scotland has become internationally renowned.

These activities have become formalised through large showpiece exhibitions such as the Scottish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale and a major Scottish presence at the main international art fairs such as Basel, Switzerland (with The Modern Institute this year representing two artists in the Art Unlimited section and one artist in the Statements section as well as their stand), the Liste young art fair also in Basel (Doggerfisher) and Frieze Art Fair, London (The Modern Institute, Doggerfisher and Transmission). Equally, major institutions commonly bring international artists to Scotland, programming them alongside their local counterparts.

Of far greater importance than international spectacles such as Venice, and central to the development of a home-grown internationalism as exemplified by the programming of major public institutions or the development of a commercial venture such as The Modern Institute is the international focus at the core of the grassroots visual arts community. Rather than dwelling on past

The proposal for an ongoing programme of travel to Scotland by international curators would best be taken in conjunction with the proposal for a substantial archive of the work of artists based in Scotland



Jim Lambie exhibiting as part of Zenomap, the Scottish Pavillion at the Venice Biennale

achievements here, Appendix 2 outlines some concrete examples of international exhibitions, travel, networks and residencies undertaken within 2004, with a particular emphasis on the artist-initiated, or those activities undertaken by individuals outside the matrix of larger institutions such as museums and centres for contemporary art. Many of these activities were carried out on an extremely low budget and all were managed by artists with little or no institutional support.

One way in which to support and develop the international strand of artist-initiated practice would be to have a broader residency programme than exists at present. The Scottish Arts Council currently offers high profile residencies in New York and Amsterdam for six months or a year at a cost of £10,000 or £23,300+ (respectively). Each residency benefits just one artist in each financial year and is notoriously under-subscribed. This model, of single artists visiting the established artistic centres, is a very traditional one that is being challenged by organisations around the world. In this regard, the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art (NIFCA - see www.nifca.org) - an organisation responsible for artists in the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, each with a population similar to Scotland) - may be seen as pioneering. In addition to a programme of residencies throughout the Nordic and Baltic regions, NIFCA recently implemented residencies in India, Japan, Taiwan and Brazil, all of which have served to extend the global perspective of a relatively homogenised region, through culture.

Contemporary thinking also places a high emphasis on exchange, as opposed to one-way 'cultural imperialism'. This was experienced in Scotland during the Network North programme, whereby twenty one artists from Scotland had the opportunity of a residency of one to three months in the Nordic region (see Appendix 3). In addition to this, Scotland benefited from the arrival of ten resident artists from the Nordic region and, as a result of this exchange, very many micro-networks have developed and exhibitions and other opportunities resulted. As the accommodation was provided on an in-kind basis, each residency cost only £500 per month, all of which went directly to the participating artist. In partnership with NIFCA, the total Scottish Arts Council contribution to this programme was in the region of £20,000, less than the cost of one residency in Amsterdam, and very many more artists benefited both directly and indirectly.

Another area that could be extended greatly to the benefit of artists and audiences in Scotland is that of curatorial travel. At the moment, very little concerted effort is made by any official body to invite international curators to Scotland to look at the work of Scottish artists on a regular basis. This means that it is often a matter of chance whether Scottish artists will be considered in the research phase of major overseas exhibitions. There are several ways in which this could be addressed, most obviously by co-ordinating a dedicated curatorial travel programme and inviting interested curators from institutions and artist-run spaces around the world to visit Scotland. This kind of approach was also employed during the Network North programme, at the cost of £500 per curator to cover travel and expenses, and resulted in many opportunities for Scottish artists and curators. The British Council in Scotland and Bavaria recently co-ordinated a visit to Scotland by Bavarian curators which again showed that opportunities for collaboration can arise from this kind of activity. But, in both these cases, the initiative was taken by parties outside Scotland and, on the latter occasion, the visits were confined to institutions, with no scope for making individual studio visits.

The proposal for an ongoing programme of travel to Scotland by international curators would best be



Tarransay pods, situated at Cove Park, overlooking Gare Loch, used to house artists from all disciplines as part of a residency programme

taken in conjunction with the proposal for a substantial archive of the work of artists based in Scotland that is made later in this report.

In some cases, visits by overseas curators and academics could be extended to a residency to study the Scottish art scene in detail at first hand. Judging by the experience of Network North, there is a great deal of willingness on the part of several Scottish institutions and art schools to be involved in both artists' and curators' residencies. One example where longer, cross-disciplinary residencies are proven to be a success is Cove Park in Argyll and Bute. The networking dinners that have become a regular feature of their programme have proved invaluable for making international contacts by the arts practitioners in residence.

In the same way that trips to Scotland by overseas curators are limited, trips abroad by Scottish curators are largely confined to the large institutions and undertaken on an ad-hoc basis. In recent years, it has become increasingly difficult for artist-curators working on their own initiative and on behalf of grassroots organisations to secure funding for overseas travel. As a result, most of the international collaborations listed in Appendix 2 were self-financed. The situation is such that even the most established artist-run gallery in Scotland, Transmission, is unable to undertake international travel on a regular basis, leading to their participation at the Frieze Art Fair in London as the only viable way to make and maintain contacts. In an efficient publicly-funded landscape, non-commercial artist-run spaces should never be forced to participate in commercial ventures in this way.

An Arms' Length Approach

Throughout history, there are various examples of regimes misappropriating culture, from Mao's China to Nazi Germany. Also throughout history, there are examples of artists undertaking a critique of society. As Tony Blair recently acknowledged in an interview with *Time Out*, in a free and fair society, art has a role to challenge that society.

Writing in praise of the visual arts ecology of Scotland, in the recent *Scotland Now* publication, Glasgow-based writer and curator Francis McKee described the role of art to:

acknowledge the darker dimensions of human nature, our anti-social tendencies, our unspoken fears and our moments of extreme ecstasy. Art at this level is a form of truth-telling about national cultures and the broader community of western culture. It is dangerous and unpredictable. It clearly unnerves Scottish politicians.

The place for art to realise its critical potential is not in commercial galleries. Neither is it in museums and institutions. As Andrew Brighton, former Senior Curator of Public Programmes at Tate Modern has said:

The tradition of institutional critique has much of its origins in the idea of cultural hegemony. The idea that in the first instance it is through cultural institutions, schools, the law, universities, museums and so on that a dominant class and its interests are perpetuated. In such a view any form of dependence on cultural institutions, be it on commercial or public sector, will come to determine cultural practise, it will structure perception. *In these circumstances, critique, in the sense of questioning the conditions of cultural production, including one's own, becomes complicit, inhibited or impossible. Alternatively, existing at the interstices of institutions, holds at bay settled conditions of practice. A different critical space is opened up in an otherwise homogenising culture.*

(emphasis added)

The single most significant threat currently facing the arts in Scotland is that the Scottish Arts Council, as a developmental agency for the arts in Scotland, increasingly aims to be more strategic. In practice this means releasing more of the annual budget to be deployed against political objectives and ring-fencing core funding. The Scottish Arts Council is so concerned with being responsive to the demands of the people's elected representatives - the Scottish Executive - that it has no capacity to improve the working conditions for the artists and, by extension, the audiences, of Scotland.

It is therefore vital that any future national agency for supporting the arts should operate an arms' length approach to avoid the arts becoming instrumentalised and should invest in the grassroots where genuinely radical critical practice is being undertaken.

The Need for an Archive in Scotland

A vitally needed resource for the visual arts communities in Scotland is a comprehensive, well managed archive, which could serve as a one-stop resource for artists, curators, gallerists, writers and the general public with an interest in the visual arts in Scotland.

Transmission Gallery already has an extensive archive documenting its own considerable activity over the past 20 years. The redevelopment of King Street offers the potential for this archive to be decently housed in dry and safe conditions for posterity and enhanced access. The Zenomap team, responsible for the first Scottish Pavillion at the Venice Biennale, also produced a substantial archive during their research throughout Scotland. This is currently housed at Glasgow School of Art. Private individuals like Richard Demarco in Edinburgh and Pete Horbin with his Data Project, have substantial archives while organisations like New Visions and Variant have amassed a multitude of useful material. Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design (DJCAD) in Dundee has just received a significant amount of Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) funding to develop a video archive.

It seems desirable that these archives be combined, perhaps as a networked series of archives, and expanded to encompass a broader range of grassroots visual arts activity in Scotland. Following the example of DJCAD, this could perhaps be undertaken in collaboration with a higher education institution(s) and the AHRB. It would then need to be resourced and managed, probably by a paid part time member of staff - ideally a trained librarian or archivist.

The disparate archive of visual arts activity in existence is invaluable but is extremely difficult to access, being spread between many different sites and often in poor repair. Much material that is of great historical significance and potential public interest is in danger of being lost or buried. This material needs urgently rehousing, collating and presenting in a form that is freely accessible to all. There is massive potential for Scotland to be a pioneer in this field, having as it does a relatively coherent and visible visual arts sector. The material that this sector generates needs to be saved for posterity before it is lost. It needs to be preserved both in a physical sense, and in a way which allows optimum public access, ideally in both a real and digital format (the latter would then be accessible over the internet.)

Scotland needs an impartial way of representing its visual arts to visitors. At the moment, this task generally falls to commercial galleries such as The Modern Institute. The British Council, for example, will automatically direct visitors to Scotland to The Modern Institute as the main information resource. Commercial galleries are necessarily unable and unwilling to provide an objective overview of visual arts activity.

Such an archive, once established, could easily be tied to a curators' residency programme, whereby international curators would be invited to Scotland to spend time in the archive and then make studio visits and meet artists as a direct result of their research. The archive would be an invaluable resource for anyone travelling abroad from Scotland to talk about Scottish art. The existence of this resource would also create opportunities for increased professionalism in arts journalism.

Conclusion

This report is a first step in identifying a vibrant ecology of individual and collective artistic practice across Scotland in order to harness and safeguard it for future generations.

Scotland already benefits immensely from having a proactive and internationally recognised visual arts sector, primarily in terms of economics and prestige. If the series of recommendations outlined here is heeded, the advantages of this thriving sector may be capitalised upon by the citizens of Scotland, primarily through increased visual literacy and heightened critical and creative intelligence. This report begins to consider how that may be achieved through education, from primary to tertiary level, through contact with practitioners on an intimate scale and with relevance to contemporary practice, through well resourced art schools and through better mediation of the arts at all levels.

This report also aims to show how a thriving grassroots ecology is integral to that process. It considers the rights of artists to a living wage and proposes certain safeguards that can make state funding more responsive and institutions more accountable to those artists and grassroots organisations. It also aims to bridge the gap that currently exists between artists and audience.

In response to the invitation of the Cultural Commission for bold suggestions, this report pre-emptively a better cultural landscape by making radical proposals for the future of arts support. It indicates areas where existing funding could be better deployed to safeguard artistic practice. It includes proposals for a more concerted international approach, through residencies and publications, that would contribute to the cultural diversity of Scotland. This report also identifies a need to protect the future of the arts through a proper archive. These recommendations are made directly on behalf of the stakeholders that will be affected by them and take into account the broader context for this discussion, namely the wider economy of the art world and the need to protect critical artistic practice from the ravages of the marketplace.

The prospect of a brighter future for the arts is the driving force behind this report. We acknowledge that this is only the beginning of a long process, but it is a process with which we would like to be involved.

Appendix I: Questionnaire to Safeguard Artistic Practice

Imagine a world without the Scottish Arts Council, a world in which valuable funding sources would be lost but new priorities for funding the arts could be established from scratch, dictated by the artists themselves. Through the process of the Scottish Executive Cultural Commission that future could be just around the corner. This is your chance to help shape the future according to your needs. Please take a moment to answer the following five simple questions bearing in mind the following:

Your need to make a living wage

Your wish list of facilities and resources

How you would like your work to be mediated to the public through the Scottish Executive, galleries and museums, the art market, education (at school level and beyond), the media and other publishing channels in an international context.

Completed questionnaires should be returned to artfutures2005@yahoo.co.uk

For background information and to view the anonymous results of this survey, see www.artfuture.net

1. As an individual artist, how could funding be made more responsive than at present? For production of new work and professional development, what kind of annual support would make a vital difference to your practice and safeguard its continuation in Scotland?
2. What kind of facilities and resources would enable you to continue practicing in Scotland?
3. What do you expect from the Scottish arts institutions at all stages of your career, from the artist-run (e.g. Transmission, Collective), to the medium-sized public venues (CCA, DCA, Fruitmarket) to the National Galleries? What is missing in the approach of Scottish institutions showing/commissioning your work?
4. What do you feel are the limitations to the public understanding of your work?
5. In the current climate, what, if any, are the constraints on your artistic autonomy? What do you think would help you to achieve the full critical potential of your work?

Appendix 2

International Collaborations #1

Listed below is a small selection of artist-initiated projects involving artists from Glasgow exhibiting internationally in the past year. The list is selective and does not include projects initiated by museums, commercial galleries or larger contemporary art institutions with a permanent, paid staff such as CCA, Tramway or the Fruitmarket:

Transmission Gallery at Grazer Kunstverein

In January/February 2004 Transmission exhibited the work of Michael Wilkinson, Lucy McEachen, Laurence Figgis, Iain Hetherington, Sophie MacPherson, Fred Pedersen and Matthew Noel-Todd at the Grazer Kunstverein in Austria.

Haute Street

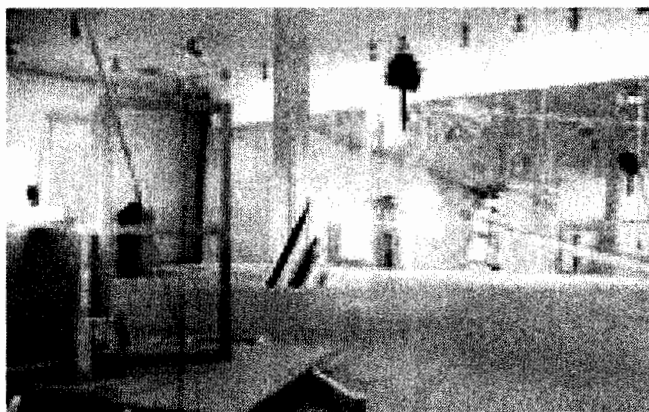
In April 2004 Scott Myles organised an exhibition with Alan Michael and Sue Tompkins at Galerie Diana Stigter in Amsterdam

Brittania Works

In April 2004 Camilla Løw, David Shrigley, Rosalind Nashashibi, Toby Paterson and Nick Evans were included in a major British Council survey exhibition of emerging artists from Britain in Athens.

Synth

In May 2004 Karla Black, Alex Frost, Stuart Gurden, Iain Hetherington, Jim Lambie, Camilla Løw, Sophie MacPherson, Alan Michael, Scot Myles and Yvonne Twaddle showed in B2, a contemporary artspace in Leipzig.



Scottish artists in Britannia Works, Iliana Tounta Contemporary Art Gallery, Athens, March-May, 2004

Transmission Gallery, Sorcha Dallas, Fireworks, GSA and Independent Studios at Bazouges la Perouse in Brittany.

Lee O'Connor, Hannah Robinson, Gregor Johnstone and Sue Tompkins (Transmission) Henry Coombes, Kate Davis, Alex Frost, Clare Stephenson, Craig Mulholland (Sorcha Dallas Gallery), Katy West, Bill Brown, Al Dearie, Siobhan Tobin and Dawn Youll (Fireworks studio) and Hideko Inoue (Glasgow School of Art MFA) and Ruth Mulvie (Glasgow Independent Studio) exhibited in Bazouges La Perouse in Brittany.

Invisible Fields

A group of 12 artists working with the moving image was shown in Tallinn, Estonia. This included Belinda Guid, Anna Berge-Hansen, Jane McNally and Rosalind Nashashibi.

Appendix 2 International Collaborations #2

Listed below are examples of a small selection of artist-led initiatives in the central belt that have brought internationally acclaimed artists and writers to Scotland in the past year, again with little or no budget or institutional support:

Glasgow Sculpture Studio Gallery

Daria Martin (London/USA) who showed alongside Sophie MacPherson.

Glasgow Sculpture Studio Residencies

GSS have recently played host to artists from Kenya and Cuba.

Variant Magazine

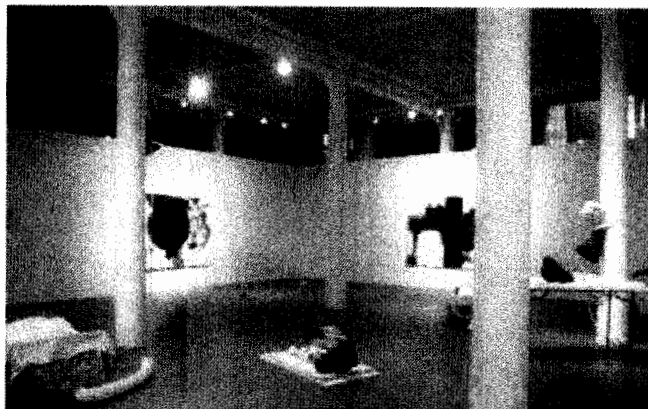
Variant continues to profile internationally acclaimed writers from the fields of art, culture, politics and activism. Recent examples include Grant Kester (U.S art critic) and Noam Chomsky.

Transmission Gallery

Transmission place internationalism at the heart of their programme, showing internationally established names alongside their local peers and emerging talent.

The Collective Gallery

During 2004 the Collective hosted an exhibition curated by Michael Beutler and Lucy Stahl, both ex MFA students at the Glasgow School of Art. The exhibition featured the work of 12 emerging German artists.



Piotr Janas at Transmission, November-December, 2003

The Embassy

The Embassy's current exhibition (August 2004) features the work of Chris Burden, the seminal West Coast American conceptual and performance artist.

Flourish Studio

During a women-only night at the end of 2003 Flourish Studio featured a performance by the Glasgow based artist Lucy McKenzie and the Polish artist Paulina Olowska.

EmergeD

This shopfront space on Woodlands road presented in September 2003 the results of a collaborative exhibition between students of the MFA course at Glasgow and students of the art academy in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Glasgow Project Room

During 2004 Glasgow Project Room have hosted exhibitions by Florian and Michael Quistrebert from Nantes and Martin Wohrl from Germany.

LookLook

Sue Grierson organised a visit to Scotland by 13 visual artists from the Baltic states.

Appendix 3: Map of the Network North Residency Programme

