

Glasgow International 2014 by Maria Fusco

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Having recently relocated from London to Scotland, I am very keen to hoke about in Glasgow's more intimate nooks and crannies. The sixth iteration of Glasgow International, with Sarah McCrory as its newest Director, made the city visible as archive by kicking through doors, jimmying vaults and mining what has been misplaced, to expose esoteric findings in more than seventy exhibition sites. This reviewer, then, is experiencing a problem about which forced doors to show you behind, dear reader: much occlusion is necessary.

Young Glasgow-based artists Lauren Hall and Jay Mosher's *Comfortably Warm* at Friends basement-flat gallery was a fragile enunciation of consumer objects. The artists' five new interpolating works attempted to articulate changes in the quality of life between the residents of the lower and upper floors of tenement housing. This was an obscure exhibition. Its plastic contents were deeply abstracted, with branded products such as two Nomex IIIA ponchos, an engraved Zippo hand warmer, Epsom Salts emptied (literally) of their use value, but patient nonetheless for us to find a way to use them. An epilogue: on leaving the gallery I stood blinking across the Clyde towards the buildings on the opposite bank, all I could see were signs reading TO LET, demonstrating Miguel Ángel Asturias's poetic assertion that 'the stiffness of death lurks behind every living thing.'

The McLellan Galleries – a disused Victorian museum building on Sauchiehall Street – is a big flaking beast, a wee part of the ceiling dropped onto my head while I was watching one of the works. Hudinilson Jr, Charlotte Prodger, Avery Singer and Jordan Wolfson were curated together as one part of McCrory's Director's Programme, each having separate, substantial bodies of work in the cavernous space. Here I can focus only on two, but each one of these artists could merit a whole review, for they muster the spirit of volatile collective subjectivity I love about Glasgow.

Wolfson's eight films at the McLellan are insanely perfect and peculiar. The artist often uses commercial producers and animators – the surface of his work is

highly polished, slippery. Several are gripped by penile passion – *Animation Mask* (2011) murmurs Richard Brautigan’s poetry and young lovers’ discourse through an animated caricature of an orthodox Jew. Wolfson’s work is often front-loaded but *Perfect Lover* (2007) acts as a coda, in that it makes perfects the hopelessness of real-time of living. A short 16mm film of apparently stock footage of crows in North American rural settings, it takes a while to realize that the crows’ beaks are subtly animated, Disney-red inside as they count the passing of the hours – nine, eleven, ten, midnight, one etc. – getting confused, coughing and resuming. As time passes, syntactic mistakes increase, we listen, nothing is learnt, they count, mate and die.

Extramundane animals also fizz in Prodger’s work. Trancing bull terriers ripped from YouTube are shown as one element of the beefy installation *Nephatiti* (2014) in a room bifurcated by a huge haulage tarpaulin used on the side of articulated lorries. The bull terriers prance dainty paws round pot plants, their backs soothed by the plants’ leaves. As I watched, I heard the first person narration from another work, *AAB* (2014), a yoga teacher adjusting another’s posture. It leads me to wonder: Who can train these dogs? Prodger is precisely excising one element of the animals’ behaviour, to help us to clearly comprehend that what is natural is not necessarily what we might expect, and there’s nothing we can do about it.

I missed the one-off performance of Glasgow-based Lucy Reynold’s *A Feminist Chorus* at Glasgow Women’s Library, but I did hear it in the ‘Hen Run’ (a top floor corridor in Glasgow School of Art so named because of the proliferation, or ghettoization, of women students in adjacent studios). Reynold’s tripartite score bangs about the space, compressing historic and contemporary time by inviting women-only chorus members to select and perform extracts from three rich archival sources, including: the occupations of GSA female students and their fathers (1900-01); the biblical text in which the Queen of Sheba sees ‘all the wisdom of Solomon’; *Glasgow Herald*’s feature on the Lady Artists’ Club Tableaux Vivants (1895). Paced to individual breath, the deliberately amateur (and I mean that in a good way) chorus embodies collectivity, I can hear the compassion in everyone’s voice.

Non-representative list of other highlights for me: everything in *Reclaimed: The Second Life of Sculpture* at the Brigade; *The Burning Sand*, a semi-annual magazine edited by Sarah Lowndes; Counterflows festival of experimental music, nestled like a hungry eaglet; Aleksandra Domanovic’s open access DVD library at Gallery of Modern Art; Khaled Hourani’s *Picasso in Palestine* (2011) at Centre for

Contemporary Art; Stephen Kaltenbach's *Artforum* adverts (1968-69) at Ohio gallery; Fiona Jardine's stain resistant performative lecture *Spark for Artists* on the role of art in the surface of Muriel Spark's writing, at Gilmore Lecture Theatre; Christina Ramberg's blown felt-tip drawings at 42 Carlton Place; Michael Smith's everyman avatar 'Mike' seems nice at Tramway; Sue Tompkin's use of the pilcrow, sunk as calligraphic fiction, in *Come to Orzak* (2014) at Gallery of Modern Art.

The staging of large-scale contemporary art events in deprived, former industrial cities, seems to have accelerated over the last ten years. Derry's hosting of the Turner Prize last year, the Liverpool Biennale and Glasgow International are all UK-based examples happening now in cities that are still undeniably tough, infrastructurally malnourished and shamefully socially derided. I'm not sure what all this art means collectively. But. A large amount of the many GI spaces I visited had lots of folk in them looking at the work – and seemingly not all with a professional interest, like me – this strikes me as a good thing, citizenry celebrating and enjoying their own city, but only if they choose to.