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Collection Significance Report: Scottish Art: 21st Century Collecting

Ben Harman and Sean McGlashan, March 2008



About this Document

This document is extracted from a report by Glasgow Museums submitted to the Scottish Executive's Recognition Committee as part of its recognition scheme for non-national collections.

Overview

21st Century collecting includes work in all media acquired since the year 2000. Almost all of these works are by graduates from Glasgow School of Art who, over the past fifteen years, have achieved international acclaim for their innovative practices.

Collection Size

Approx. 75 objects: drawings, paintings, photographs, prints, sculptures, installations and video works.

The Collection

This collection includes cutting edge works in all media acquired since 2000. There are significant pieces by artists living and working in the Glasgow area including recent graduates of Glasgow School of Art. Many of these artists have international reputations.

The collection has notable examples of works that can be categorised as painting or sculpture but also contains installation and audiovisual works highlighting current trends in international artistic practice.

The artists represented are Douglas Gordon, Christine Borland, Ross Sinclair, Roderick Buchanan, Claire Barclay, Hanneline Visnes, Toby Paterson, Martin Boyce, Simon Starling, Richard Wright, Lucy Skaer, Victoria Morton, Ilana Halperin, Chad McCail, Graham Fagen, Jane Topping and Daphne Wright. Most are firmly established and have exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally.

Collection Significance

This is the outstanding civic collection of contemporary art in Scotland and is of international significance. It includes work by recent Turner Prize winners and rare, unique examples of work by some of the key Scottish artists to have contributed to Glasgow's reputation as an international centre for contemporary visual arts. This is exemplified by the inclusion of artists in celebrated exhibitions abroad such as Munster Sculpture Project, Germany (Martin Boyce), The Venice Biennale, Italy (Simon Starling, Claire Barclay, Douglas Gordon) and MoMA, New York, USA (Douglas Gordon).

Highlights of the collection include Simon Starling's *Tabernas Desert Run* which was displayed in the Tate Britain exhibition with which he won the Turner Prize in 2005. It demonstrates the varied role that an artist can play in the making of a contemporary work (in this case: researcher, painter, performer and mechanical engineer). This work makes an important comment on global warming and on the history of film.

Toby Paterson's *Black Elegy* consists of framed works hung on a large mural painted directly on the gallery wall. It is a homage to modernist concrete architecture found in and around Glasgow including the iconic Catholic seminary at Cardross. Ross Sinclair's probing *Real Life/Dead Church* is a walk-in size 'church' toppled on its side. A video shows the artist, bare-backed, singing hymns making us question the place of the church in society today.

Martin Boyce's evocative *Our Love is Like the Earth, the Sun, the Trees and the Birth* is a research-based installation. This multi-layered work comments on film noir (particularly Alfred Hitchcock), on suburban parks and the blurring of interior/exterior space. It also refers to the utopian visions of the early twentieth century designers Ray and Charles Eames.

Graham Fagen's controversial *Weapons* consists of photographs of objects he used as a teenager such as balloons filled with urine and catapults. His social observation is made more powerful by his use of deadpan, ethnographic descriptions. Ilana Halperin's works comment on geological activity and time. One audio piece documents the sound of icebergs disintegrating while other works include photographs of fault lines in Iceland and of 330 million-year-old fossilised trees in Victoria Park in Glasgow.

Drawings and paintings include Chad McCail's *We Are Driven by the Desire for Pleasure*, which comments on the failures of modern education. Works by Lucy Skaer, Hanneline Visnes and Victoria Morton challenge our perception of the meaning of art and elicit multiple interpretations.



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