

3 + 3 + 3

Exhibition 25 January – 19 February 1994

Admission Free

3 + 3 + 3 is a gathering of three aspects of Scottish culture: the visual arts, poetry and music. Within each medium there are three practitioners, each having a different starting point. This can be illustrated with reference to the poets. Between them they write in the following languages: Gaelic, Scots, Shetlandic and English. Yet along with this glorious linguistic diversity – which mirrors, at least in part, the cultural diversity of Scotland – is international common ground: a shared involvement in translation from European languages. This pattern of diversity is repeated by the visual artists and musicians, and just as the poets illuminate each other's works, further illumination takes place between those working in each medium and, of course, between those in different media.

3 + 3 + 3 is thus a demonstration of the current resurgence of the Scottish tradition of generalism, which depends on the notion that all intellectual and cultural activities are essentially independent and that each activity is only complete when complemented by the others. From this point of view a culture which advocates specialisation at the expense of such general perception is no more than a little heap of boxes. This is a particular problem in monoglot cultures, which deny reference points other than their own. Far be it from me to suggest that the culture of the English ruling elite (which, incidentally, for some inexplicable reason, also rules Scotland) is remotely like that.

This intrinsically comparative essence of Scottish culture and character has often been stereotyped into a simple duality, Jekyll and Hyde being an obvious example. But to stick with Robert Louis Stevenson, the necessary and creative interaction of the Presbyterian David Balfour and the Jacobite Alan Breck helps to break this stereotype. This contrast can also be seen as a contrast between the classicism of the enlightenment Edinburgh of David Hume and the Celticism of the Highland culture. And this Celtic / classical complementarity is also fundamental to any understanding of that national icon, Robert Burns, who was explicit in his references both to the Celtic, bardic tradition and to the philosophers of Glasgow and Aberdeen. His quality as a poet and thinker re-emerges every year however much he is stereotyped by those who have hardly read a line of him and understood even less.

So 3 + 3 + 3 is rooted in a long-standing, essentially social, Scottish approach, namely that the activities of one person must illuminate, and be illuminated by, the activities of others. But, obviously, it has a wider application also, for it suggests the way in which all national cultures have the potential to illuminate one another. This is the reverse of the widely held 'airport lounge' theory of world culture (which often claims, quite falsely, to be internationalist) which sees no further than the globe trotting individual artist and the fawning critic.

Murdo Macdonald. December 1993

3 Visual Artists

Michael Windle, Graeme Todd and Ross Sinclair

Michael Windle was born in Dunfermline in 1958. He moved around the world before returning to Scotland to train at the School of Painting at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee from 1979 to 1984. A year later Michael won an Artists in Industry residency in Halifax and this culminated in an important exhibition at Leeds City Art Gallery. Several group and one-person exhibitions followed and Michael moved to London in 1987. He describes securing a two-year residency at Delfina Studios in 1990 as influential because he found himself working with sculptors, and in time began to see his paintings as sculpture.

His canvases are evocative of landscape and are constructed from a grid of flat acrylic colours interspersed with blocks of irregular modulated paint. The canvases are human in scale. Their content and effect are a balance between geometry and atmospheric painted surfaces, and as installations the images play on the environment in which they hang. Michael has exhibited widely in London, and continues to live and work in the East End. In 1994 he will spend three-month residencies at the Virginia Centre for Creative Art and in Delfina's newly acquired studio in Soho, New York.

Graeme Todd was born in Glasgow in 1962. He was brought up in Cumberland and describes himself as 'stumbling into' Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee, at the age of seventeen. By his final year he discovered he had to go on painting. In 1989, he was awarded a one-year John Florent Stone Scholarship to be artist-in-residence at

Edinburgh College of Art. The year culminated in an exhibition at the College and participation in the exhibition *Scatter* at The Third Eye Centre. Following the residency, Graeme was offered part-time teaching at Edinburgh College of Art's School of Drawing and Painting, and currently teaches life drawing.

In 1991 Graeme was one of six artists in the exhibition *Walk On* which first showed at the Jack Tilton Gallery, New York, and later at The Fruitmarket Gallery. It was working towards several shows in quick succession, which helped Graeme to abandon the obsessional 'cover the canvas' style of his Dundee days.

The paintings in this exhibition span the period 1991 – 1993. Fluid watercolour washes seep into unprimed canvases and act as a backdrop to a friction of layers. Finely drawn calligraphic lines feature recognisable 'characters' such as the devil or a beetle which struggle for perception under globules of thick oil paint which have been thrown at the canvas. Carefully painted landscapes in the tradition of Horatio McCulloch vie with textures created with slat and liquid leaf suggesting the alchemy and magic of an imaginary world.

Ross Sinclair was born in 1965 and educated in Glasgow. He completed his MA Fine Art training at Glasgow School of Art's Environmental Art Department in 1992. During his degree, Ross spent six months studying at the California Institute of Arts and before graduation was involved in seven shows, from exhibiting at Glasgow's artist-run Transmission Gallery to contributing to the 1991 Bellgrove Station Billboard Project.

Ross is an outspoken advocate for artist-initiated, selected and curated projects. In one such project, he joined an international group of like-minded conceptually-based artists, and he was an instrumental contributor to the acclaimed *Windfall '91* exhibition in Glasgow. Due to this ethos of self / co-determination, he has exhibited widely over the last year.

His installation in this exhibition is concerned with 'opening up the gallery' by tapping shared histories. Serried ranks of t-shirts with incongruous slogans provide a common language, and his rock 'n' roll recollections come at you from DIY karaoke-style videos. Personalised 'postcards' record recent travels and big black flags commemorate fictional nations. There is no hierarchy; all the different elements are mixed up together – t-shirts on hangers, photos on the floor – an installation not to miss!

3 Musicians

Simon Thoumire, Martyn Bennett and Sheena Wellington

Simon Thoumire has been acclaimed as a 'concertina genius' and a 'concertina wizard' with his magical accomplishment of 'concertina fireworks'... Aged only 22, Edinburgh-based Thoumire is hailed as Scotland's most innovative folk jazz concertina musician. In 1987 he joined the well-known folk band 'Seannachie' and went on to win the BBC Radio 2 Young Tradition Award in 1989. Simon recently formed a trio, the 'Simon Thoumire Three', with Brian Shiels, double bass, and Kevin MacKenzie, guitar, and last month saw the release of their well-received CD *Waltzes for Playboys*. Simon's exciting concertina sound fuses traditional Scottish folk and jazz styles and more recently he has introduced vocal effects. Don't miss 'the cheekiest, wittiest, most agile concertina in the land' (The Scotsman).

Martyn Bennett was born in Newfoundland in 1971, and has lived in Scotland since the age of six. He studied performance in classical violin and piano at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, graduating in 1993. However the Highland bagpipes and the Scottish small pipes occupy a prominent place in his music, as he continues to uphold a generations-old family tradition. As a composer, he has written works for the pipes in honour of Sorley Maclean and Hamish Henderson, as well as composing songs, a string quartet, music for the theatre and a piece for Pipes and Techno dance. Along with solo recordings, he has recorded with such leading musicians as Aly Bain, Kathryn Tickell, and Martin Swan and Talitha MacKenzie of Mouth Music. He has performed throughout Scotland, Canada and Scandinavia, and on Broadway.

Sheena Wellington, one of Scotland's finest traditional singers, was born in Dundee in 1944, into a family of singers who gave her many of the songs and ballads, which she sings today. Frequently heard on Radio Scotland, she also writes for several publications including *The Scotsman* and is much in demand as a lecturer, song teacher and consultant on traditional music. She has appeared at all the major clubs and festivals in Scotland, toured exclusively in the USA and Canada, and recently appeared at the Festival of Celtic Music held in Barcelona. Her acclaimed recordings feature both traditional material and her own fine

songs. She is a passionate and articulate advocate for the cause of traditional music, and has played a major role in the fight for recognition, status and improved funding for Scotland's traditional arts.

3 Poets

Robert Alan Jamieson, Christopher Whyte and Edwin Morgan

Robert Alan Jamieson was born in Lerwick, Shetland in 1958. He was educated there and at Edinburgh University, where he studied literature as a mature student. He has published three novels and a volume of poetry, *Shoormal*. Much of his poetry is written in Shetlandic, a combination of English, Lowland Scots and Norroena, or Norn, which was the language spoken in the islands from their settlement by the Norsemen in the early Viking age until well into the eighteenth century. Using this language, weakened in recent years by the high-tide of English, his poems often deal with notions of tradition, both its strengthening and its limiting aspects. He is currently writer-in-residence at the William Soutar House in Perth.

Christopher Whyte was born in Glasgow in 1952, and educated there at Pembroke College, Cambridge. He writes poetry in English and in Gaelic, learning the latter language during a decade spent in Italy. He has translated poetry from Italian, German, Polish and Croatian, including works by Pasolini and Rilke, and is the editor of *An Aghaidh na Siorraidhheachd / In the Face of Eternity*, an anthology of eight Gaelic poets, including Whyte himself. His gay love lyrics form part of a wider movement extending the use of Gaelic into areas traditionally unfamiliar to the language. He is currently a lecturer in the Department of Scottish Literature at Glasgow University.

Edwin Morgan was born in Glasgow in 1920. After military service from 1940 - 1946, he graduated from Glasgow University, where he subsequently became Titular Professor of English. Having published work for some forty years now, his poetry remains experimental and fresh, and he provides one of the main links between MacDiarmid's Scottish Renaissance of the pre-war period, and the work of practising younger poets today. As well as many volumes of his own poems, he has published translations of work from many European languages, and

essays on a wide range of writers and literary topics. While his own work is generally in English, he uses Scots successfully in his translations, particularly from the Russian of Vladimir Mayakovsky. A sophisticated poet, Morgan is also enormously popular, and is widely taught in Scottish schools and universities.

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The writers, artists and The Fruitmarket Gallery

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