

GLASGOW INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

11-27 APRIL

Curator Hans Ulrich Obrist labelled it the 'Glasgow miracle' – a thriving, artist-led art scene featuring a handful of artist-run spaces and a taste for exhibiting in derelict surroundings. That was the 1990s; now with an established commercial scene, Glasgow has a biennial too, evolving out of the Glasgow International Festival and comprising a huge number of commissioned and curated events across the city.

Curated by CCA Glasgow director Francis McKee, the GI Festival strikes a balance between an inward and outward gaze. There is a strong mix of important Glasgow School of Art graduates – Jonathan Monk, Simon Starling and Jim Lambie – with international artists who have made work specific to Glasgow. The festival's theme – 'public/private' – is vague at best, though perhaps legitimising of Glasgow's private galleries – Mary Mary, Sorcha Dallas and the Modern Institute – as part of the festival programme. That said, many of the independently run spaces and projects may well be best served left alone, without strong thematic interference, to do what they do best. Most effective is McKee's commitment to exhibitions outside the usual venues for exhibitions, taking advantage of rundown tenements, warehouses and basements far outside the city centre, playing to the strengths of a scene well-versed in improvisation and site-specificity.

The most remote sites involved are Glasgow's Red Road tower blocks to the north of the city. Designed and built between 1962 and 1969, they were the stuff of architects' utopian dreams, at the time the highest development in Europe. The 1970s, however, saw the high-rises riven with social problems. And so in *HIGH WIRE* (2008), Catherine Yass's installation at CCA Glasgow (cocommissioned by Artangel), we see vertiginous film projections of highwire artist Didier Pasquette as he attempts a tightrope walk between two of the towers. A short way out, Pasquette falters: he can't make it. The headcam lurches from side to side, and he gingerly steps backwards to safety. The failure of the grand spectacle occurs at the exact intersection between horizontal and vertical – between hope and reality – creating a perfect expression of social, architectural and artistic Modernism.

Back on the ground, and south of the river, Jonathan Monk has covered the tramlines running across Tramway gallery's floor with gold leaf, and his exhibition, *Something No Less Important Than Nothing / Nothing No Less Important Than Something*, delicately references familial suburban personal history as much as the history of conceptual art. His *Blue Peter* (2008), a newly made *Blue Peter Book* from 1969, is filled with contemporaneous private view invitations to exhibitions of work by Ed Ruscha and On Kawara, among others, creating an art scrapbook as personal as a family album.

Jim Lambie has also created a new floor, this one at the Gallery of Modern Art. Entitled *The Strokes* (2008), it is made of curving monochrome stripes reminiscent of Lichtenstein's *Brushstrokes*, and also recalls the pillars of the surrounding architecture. The associated sculptures, all by Lambie, are a mirror-ball melange, employing trashiness to different degrees of success. Awkwardly placed in an awkward space, the best work is the most formal. Concrete blocks made from vinyl album covers seem as though they are sinking into the pulsing floor – 1960s minimalism and music at once slipping out of sight, recalling the 1967 Love album from which the exhibition takes its title: *Forever Changes*.

At Collins Gallery, artist Alex Frost has pulled early scientific equipment out the University of Strathclyde's archives and placed it alongside works by local and international artists to explore a compelling relationship between technology and traditional craft processes. At Ten til Ten, a mucky warehouse space south of the river, Sean Edwards, Charlotte Thrane, Alhena Katsof and Ruairiadh O'Connell find beauty in their treatment of: Page 3 girls, magnets, buckets and clamps. At an unnamed space on the Saltmarket, Katri Walker and Dani Martin's selection of videowork sees Australians dissecting the contemporary artworld over tinnies in the desert, men making love in a cupboard and a man who says that god has made him a sculptor, in an exhibition that is humorous, bitter and charming.

Under a floor this time, Wilhem Sasnal's site-specific installation *The Other Church* (2008) is made in memory of Angelika Kluk, a Krakow student who was raped and murdered in Glasgow in 2006, and buried under a church. In a dark yet horribly shallow basement, a noisy projector screens two different performances of a song written about the murder, one by a punk band and one by a naked actress, creating an atmosphere making one desperate to rush up to the streets for light and air. The piece is as specific to Glasgow as the Red Road towers, and plays on the opposed axes of hopeful dreams and stark realities. Clutching at the stomach of a man walking high above the clouds, or at the heart for a girl buried beneath the ground, are private expressions and engagements with public events and political stories, from a moving city. *Laura McLean-Ferris*



Jim Lambie, *Forever Changes*, 2008, multimedia installation, Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow.
Photo: Angela Catlin. Courtesy the artist

