

Various venues, Glasgow, UK

Glasgow International (known as 'Gi') is an inclusive biennial - but how can that possibly work? The art map is spattered with metaphorical bloodstains from skirmishes between curatorial paratroopers and local partisans. Curated by Francis McKee, who understands this town well enough not to foist any overarching curatorial overview on it, the festival's theme, 'Public/Private', is, in effect, a non-theme - basically a support opportunity for everyone in the city (galleries, artists and curators) to do twice as much as usual, with everything opening at the same time and with equal billing. It's hard to imagine other biennial organizers putting such trust in the local art scene.

And yet it worked. Rather than a big thematic central show, there were many solo or small group exhibitions in a variety of venues: big museums, small galleries and temporary spaces. Jim Lambie once again displayed his talent for spectacle by transforming the Glasgow Museum of Modern Art into a trinket box with a light peppering of implacably decorative objects on an Op-art black and white floor while Jonathan Monk's work at Tramway was a cool echo of Lambie - he gold-leafed the residual tramlines that traverse the gallery's vast space; and Adel Abdessemed had his first solo show in the UK in Douglas Gordon's house, part of which has been turned into a gallery by new commissioning agency The Common Guild.

Along the Saltmarket, among the pawnshops and new Polish cafés, Katri Walker and Dani Marti showed seven videos in a space that retains features of shop-front and office. It was blacked out and painted black; you could stand in one room and see the video in the next through internal windows. Marti's meditation on opinionated men in the Australian outback was compelling, as was Walker's scrutiny of one Mexican man's faith in God. The function room of The State pub on Holland Street comes from a different era (Guinness £1.80 a pint!). In this



Alasdair Gray
Credit Panel (Film Sequence With Liz Lockhead)
1972
Pencil, biro, oil, watercolour and acrylic on paper
106×127 cm

Dani Marti
Still Under
2008
DVD still

wood-panelled, low-ceilinged cellar, artists known collectively as A. Vermin added to the accumulated pub jumble, enhancing old photos, aluminium-plating objects and painting supine figures beneath the bar. They picked up on the more disconcerting aspects of the place and emphasized them. Kalup Linzy's R & B drag act was an opening weekend highlight at a temporary space created by the artist-run collaboration Washington Garcia to showcase the New York artist's soapy video vignettes and tidy gouaches.

At the Centre for Contemporary Arts Catherine Yass' *High Wire* (2008) - co-commissioned by Artangel and Gi - comprised of four large projections of French high-wire artist Didier Pasquette attempting to walk across a thin wire stretched between the top of three 1960s' tower blocks in Red Road, north Glasgow. He fails to complete the crossing and retreats in the face of high winds - a failure that, in a sense, liberates the work.

Alasdair Gray is a touchstone for the Glasgow art scene, partly because his biggest and best novel, *Lanark* (1981), seems to contain everything today's artists might strive for. He is represented here by a show at Sorcha Dallas' gallery of work from the 1970s - a group of paintings that look like coloured-in drawings, intended as a backdrop

for a television drama. Gray's illustrative style, like his writing, is singular and unambiguous. Dallas builds on the cross-generational picture in a thoughtful show 'run run' co-curated with artist Alex Frost at the Collins Gallery of 13 artists. The brief - an analysis of the relationship between art, science and digital technology - was sufficiently elastic to include both a John Latham book and plaster work from 1964 and a couple of Rob Churm's recent extravagantly meticulous pen and ink drawings.

Equally attentive to detail is Calum Stirling's solo show 'Rostra Plaza' at the Mitchell Library - five miniature worlds on wooden turntables, each with an array of tiny cameras trained on it. The turntables move intermittently, and the images from the cameras are projected on a big screen, combined in an ever-changing montage that recalls a past vision of what the present might look like. At Transmission, Melanie Gilligan's show 'Prison for Objects' attempted to dissect the transformative forces behind everything everyone else seemed to be doing.

I once co-curated a show of artists in Manchester for 'anyone who's any good'. There were 11 artists in it, and they weren't all good. In Glasgow, McKee has pulled off a top-notch biennial with a similar premise.

Martin Vincent



Glasgow International