



Art all around: the floor of Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art presents a striking pattern of stripes in Jim Lambie's 'The Strokes'. Below, Alasdair Gray's 'The New Room' (film sequence with Liz Lochhead), 1972. Courtesy of the artist/Sorcha Dallas. Main photograph by Murdo MacLeod



Glasgow makes a show of itself

The city's international art festival is back in fine style with stunning events including a scary high-wire act and a leather Sputnik



LAURA CUMMING

Glasgow International Art Festival

Various venues; until 27 April (some events extend into May)

GLASGOW IS GALVANISED. The banners fly high in the breeze. Everything from a public bathhouse to a derelict factory may be a venue. Artists have flown in from as far as New York and Shanghai and the place is thick with international curators pounding the streets. The Gi, as they call it, is once again active.

There was no festival last year. Things faltered; biennials were discussed. But new money was found for commissions. And these are now the backbone of an event that combines big, public shows, smaller ones in private galleries and assorted weird spots, plus a succession of performances, debates and parties of the sort for which the Glasgow art scene is undeniably famous.

At the astounding Centre for Contemporary Arts – where a row of Alexander 'Greek' Thomson's grand houses is glassed over, a neoclassical street turned inside out – the space is made terrifying in Catherine Yass's new work. Yass filmed high-wire artist Didier Pasquette preparing to walk the wire between two

towerblocks at Glasgow's Red Road flats last year. She shows him from four perspectives. You see him way above you, from the top of the opposite building, close-up, and then you see what he saw – a horrifying void, with the wind swaying the high wire as if taunting him with instant death.

Time compresses and you are back there, like the tiny crowd far below, heart thudding as Pasquette steps out into space. Then your heart stops as he suddenly wavers. Glancing back and forth between the screens, you eventually deduce that he is stepping backwards to safety, a retreat that looks even more frightening than continuing forwards. His failure becomes Yass's success.

Her installation is appallingly vertiginous; I saw one spectator topple to the floor. But it also crystallises the beauty of the moving image in art, the way it may take one back and forth in time as well as space, multiplying your view, letting you see through the mind's eye of both artist and subject.

Yass is a Turner nominee; Simon Starling, who won the prize in 2005, was commissioned by Gi to make a silver sculpture that may or may not epitomise the decline of Trongate – for technical reasons, the piece can't yet be shown. But in the local bathhouse, you can see another of his maddeningly laborious yet elegiac projects: the resurrection of a boat called Dignity from the bottom of Windermere which is lovingly restored only to be fed into its own furnace spar by spar on the waters of Loch Long. Dig-

nity becomes its own pyre in a burial, so to speak, at sea.

The trouble with Starling's work or, rather, the visual record of it, in this case, dull slides, is that it never adds anything to the original idea, whereas Jim Lambie keeps on recycling his idea, applying sticky tape to gallery floors to create optical and spatial illusions.

Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art has been done out in black-and-white, wind-screen-wiper stripes so that the floor

Then you see what he saw – a horrifying void, with the wind swaying the wire, as if taunting him

seems to ripple and whirl. Shipwrecked on this tide are old LPs entombed in concrete blocks – Harry Secombe, David Bowie – a Sputnik made of the sleeves of stuffed leather jackets and sundry references to the art of the past (Donald Judd, Robert Gober). It's a retro-environment, a late-pop milieu and, given that Lambie is in his mid-forties, wryly autobiographical.

Which is exactly the undertow you should – but don't – feel across the Clyde in Jonathan Monk's nugatory show for the Tramway. Monk has gilded the tram-

lines so that the vast, white terminus feels a yard closer to heaven, but his display of other people's works ('questioning notions of originality' and so forth), for all the wit of its titles, strikes as simply secondhand.

Go instead to Stephen Hurrell's wonderful installation next door in which data from seismic events coming in live from around the world are transformed into a modern son-et-lumière: an abstract topography of alps and glaciers, endlessly reforming on screen, visualises a soundtrack that sounds like Brian Eno crossed with supernatural ambience. It's the world beneath our feet, if only we had eyes and ears to perceive it.

See the festival and you see Glasgow. Alasdair Gray's collages are down by the quayside. Dani Marti's fine film of a beggar's worldview reduced to receding feet on concrete is next to the Saltmarket pawnbroker's where wedding rings sell for a tenner.

Kalup Linzy, all the rage in Manhattan, is showing his blaxploitation-cum-hip hop parodies in a disused shop by the Tron. Up a dark tenement, hard by the private detective and the Highland factor's office, the Modern Institute has a post-postmodern show of texts and photographs.

In the sweeping splendour of Woodlands Terrace, Douglas Gordon's townhouse is home to an Algerian artist's films, which almost miss a trick by being so lightsome in their political nuance. In St Mungo's museum, you can see the sublime landscapes of the American

photographer Thomas Joshua Cooper. Cooper teaches at Glasgow School of Art; Starling and co, so internationally successful, still live here. What you experience throughout Gi is the strength of the city's art community.

But the most haunting work here concerns a Glaswegian tragedy – the rape and murder of Polish student Angelika Kluk. Her compatriot, the award-winning painter Wilhelm Sasnal, wrote ballad about her death and then filmed it, performed first by a Polish punk and then by a poor naked girl.

The song is powerful enough, but the film is shown in the dark cellar of a desolate printworks. Kluk was buried beneath such floorboards; going back up through the decaying limbo above feels terribly melancholy. This is a deathless memorial and does exactly what it should: it makes Angelika Kluk unforgettable.

>> THREE TO SEE

Howard Hodgkin Gagosian Gallery, London WC1; until 23 May New paintings from the senior British star, taking titles from 'Home on the Range'.

The Twentieth Century: How it Looked and How it Felt Tate Liverpool; until April 2009 Terrific display of 20th-century art from the Tate collection.

Against Nature Henry Moore Institute, Leeds; until 5 May Some of the strangest hybrid figures in sculpture.