

Free Association

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www.glasgowinternational.org

Edited by Street Level's Malcolm Dickson, *Free Association* anointed the second coming of the 'Glasgow International' at Easter. Its mission: to examine the local within a globalised context, to uncover rich Scottish historical perspectives that are rapidly fading from view as cultural managers blindly pursue social inclusion and fly to where no artist has ever flown before. The pilot issue features art works by Jim Colquhoun, Pavel Buchler, Angry Artworks, Peter Kennard and Cat Picton-Phillipps; writing on the Scottish landscape art, Scottish criticism, socially engaged art and biennale-isation. There is also a timely debate on art education (which *Frieze* has joined) via a round table featuring David Harding, Sam Ainslie and Sandy Moffat and a reprint of an article by Cordelia Oliver from the *Scottish International (SI)* in 1971. *Free Association* principally resurrects the *SI*'s political project – it even features an autobiographical article by Alasdair Gray, one of the *SI*'s main contributors. While not all of the content is equally rigorous or engaging, it is at least tainted by Gray's optimism, ambition, inquisitiveness and commitment to improving the lot of Scots; moreover some of the commissions commendably demonstrate creative and collaborative approaches to the contextualisation of practice.

Founding editor of *Variant*, Scotland's most distinguished culture magazine, Dickson has the experience, knowledge and, crucially, the determination to reinvent

these critical traditions in an imaginative way. Dickson's vision and resourcefulness is something that is distinctly lacking in the Scottish Arts Council's official art magazine *MAP*. *Free Association* is fully attuned to the fact that many artists live and work in Scotland because of the political and cultural resources and challenges that it offers. It is scratching their itches. Born of necessity and fuelled by a frustration with the lack of tolerance for critique that state orthodoxies of cultural devotion encourage, *Free Association* has so far avoided lazy declarations of faith in the self-authenticating gestures of artists. It is not a platform for art fans. This epistemological issue isn't unique to Scotland; it is international in significance. By prodding around in less triumphalist narratives and cobwebbed representations, *Free Association* will undoubtedly encourage new dialogues and narratives to emerge. *Free Association's* charge is to make the nuances of vernacular practices visible, vernaculars that don't stem from divisive binaries associated exclusively with ethno-history or nationalised ethnicity. It will foster a neighbourly cosmopolitanism, an argot that informs the lingua franca, which freely associates with cultural resources that are abundant and varied, in order to secure political rights regionally, nationally and internationally.

Nell Mulholland

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Angry Artworks, Angry Artworks.