

John Beagles
CANNONEERS

J.P. Munro, Alex Pollard, Tony Swain
Transmission Gallery,
Glasgow, 10 February – 13 March

Ouroboros – the music of spheres
Roger Ackling, David Alker & Peter Lideell, Jim
Lambie, Julio le Parc, Peter Lynch, Christian
Marclay, Jonathan Monk & Dave Allen, Steven
Renshaw, Robert Smithson, Calum Stirling
CCA Gallery, Glasgow, 7 February – 4 April

Look out for my love it's in your neighbourhood
Hranfnhildur Halldorsdottir
Intermedia Gallery, Glasgow, 7 –14 March

Kraftwerk at the Carling Academy,
Glasgow, 16 March

In 2001 Beagles and Ramsay organised a seance with Glasgow's premiere spiritualist and medium Madame Shirley Grange. The aim was to contact the deceased Belgium artist James Ensor. The intention, to produce a collaborative painting and video by Mr Ensor and Beagles and Ramsay. All went to plan and Mr Ensor made contact through Shirley.

Unfortunately, after the completion of the work, Mr. Ensor's spirit was cut adrift in our mortal world. Unable to return to his spectral lair he chose instead to penetrate the body of the nearest host available. Repelled by the imperious matted layer of ungodly black hair that protects and incubates Graham Ramsay's slender frame, he settled instead for boring into the consciousness of the far more gullible and accessible John Beagles.

Consequently since 2001 Mr Ensor has been co habitating with John Beagles, periodically dominating what's left of Beagles' shattered and torn consciousness. Since December 2003 Ensor has completely taken control. The consequences for Beagles have been professionally disastrous.

What follows is Mr Ensor's review of the current crop of Scottish cultural highlights on offer to the discerning visitor to the north.

Ever since 1882 I've known what I am talking about. Time and tedium may have dulled by acuity, but my bitter malevolence towards those shabby in spirit and parasitic in ambition has abated little. O the dubious meanness that favour the conformists of art! How once again narrow minds demand old beginnings, identical continuations.

And so to start.

Let me present my claims fully and philosophically, and if they seem to have the dangerous odour of pride, so much the better. By the by, I have no doubt that my musings will arouse the enmity of my snail-like followers, who I have continually passed on the road. I toss their petty, venal hate away – be gone you infernal wee gastropods, snivelling and sliming around the slippers of fools.

First things first. I salute you Glasgow, concrete tenement of slab house horror and intoxicating merriment. Such a powerful magnet, all the big stars of London are repelled by your business acumen. Oh how I remember my first mortal day in this Calcutta of the North. With wondrous optimism and joyous hope I stood a top the necropolis gazing out over the Tennents brewery and smashed headstones of the cemetery and cried out – “Glasgow, fetish, I have brought my own little star, show me your best profile.”

And so to business. Here are the definite and proven results so far. My unceasing investigations into the civil-

ising institutions and individuals of this rubbish strewn second city of British culture, Glasgow, have thus far produced the following findings.

I drifted first of all into that cursed cube of sterile piety the CCA. I feel compelled to condemn the wretched architecture of this northern palais d'art. An oddly cold and soulless environment. Apparently the mediocrity of the design was financed by dipping the public hand into the swollen public purse, bloated by the desperate gambling habits of the weary people of the north.

I confess I was deliriously at a loss to what baleful purpose these works were 'arranged'. A dizzying collection of circles dominated, and soon my fatigued brain was spinning downward into a vortex of these damn spirals. What, in the name of curatorial creation I cried, was this damned love of the circle for?

On reflection, and after studying the explanatory exhibition text, I discovered this infatuation with the ring was due to the curatorial 'theme'. "Ouroboros – the music of spheres" was, so it was written by the mediators and sanctioned interpreters of this art, an exhibition which explored our fascination with the form of the circle. Hence the somewhat banal echoes of the gramophone disc in the vacuous formal preponderance of circles. I wondered if visits to the library had been prompted by vain searches for spheres in art.

As it always was, the curator must repeat his little works and all else is condemned. That is the advice of the managerial strata of classifying censors who segregate artists like oysters in an oyster bed. I pity the artist today. Their individual efforts are not without merit, intuition or imagination, but as always, how they are dragged under by the lead weight of the theme. Woeful and wretched. All the rules, all the canons of art vomit death exactly like their bronze-mouthed brothers of the battlefield. Truly I had hoped to see the last of these

curated theme shows by suited curators. I have seen born, pass and die many schools and promoters of intellectual epherma... and so, I have cried with all my lungs; the louder these bullfrogs croak the closer they are to bursting.

Where next did I wander? Oh yes to the cultural hub of this crumbling town, the bohemian enclave of King Street. Here resides a curious collection of specimens. As a man of sartorial elegance I readily confess I was somewhat aghast at the cornucopia of stylish deviancy paraded up and down the King Street boulevard. From my vantage point I watched the comings and goings, in and out of the Transmission Gallery for a good two earth hours. What sights I saw! Even as one educated in the vulgarity of the grotesque, the excesses of the carnivalesque, I was unprepared for the aberrations of style paraded before me. One such fellow, a spindly peacock, full of the preening vanity of youth, strutted before me resplendent in an intoxicating mix of wool, leather and plastic. All of the frankly shabby items stamped with such stylistically incompatible patterns that I ventured he was intoxicated by a miraculous cocktail of narcotics. Studying his other worldly appearance, my mind raced back and forth, my brain expectant regarding the hot house of intellectual and artistic endeavour that must nurture such deviants. After all, as my feverish mind conjectured, if the art were half as good as this parade of incoherent, random, juxtapositions of cloth and material it would vanquish the woeful experience of the CCA. I must confess I skipped expectantly to the gallery's doors, my heart a flutter at the possible objet d'art on show.

But again, the promise was tempered by the reality. How modest and polite, how unambitious and comfortable was the work. So at odds with the appearance of the denizens of this cultural enclave, and the hyperbolic

claims of the press release. Admittedly my vanity got the better of me when confronted by J.P. Munro's 'febrile canvasses'; quite clearly this young man had studied my oeuvre – his gothic tableau's were populated with skeletal presence's well known to myself. But even here, my swell of pride subsided. Why such a singular obsession with the past?

Wearily I treaded back along the boulevard to the Intermedia Gallery. The exposition's title *Look out for my love it's in your neighbourhood* intrigued me. I needed some love; such is the physical monstrosity of my host, sexual favours have been few and far between. But there was no love. Just pieces of thread, sheets of tissue paper crumpled together, distressed pieces of cardboard and tiny discrete balls of beads. I see this everywhere. It is the official sanctioned art of Glasgow. It makes my spirit weary.

Thankfully a long-term social engagement arranged prior to my possession of my host provided me with a miraculous tonic. On a dark, wind swept night, I crossed the snot green Clyde to attend a sensational night of exotic modern music. Although I was initially perturbed by the sea of bespectacled, slightly rotund gentleman (I saw few woman) attending this concert, the nights entertainment was such a wondrous, reinvigorating experience it banished for good the paucity of culture I had hitherto been painfully exposed to.

Within the venue, a cavernous Victorian hall, four Teutonic, balding, aging men, resplendent in fine sharply tailored suits beguiled and delighted the escastic hordes of Glaswegians, with a mesmerising performance of 'electronic' sound and vision. What a night of art it was. I could not of asked for more. How archly intelligent, so perceptive and insightful were these largely expressionless chroniclers of society. So simple, yet so razor like in their choice of subjects. How entertaining

and crafted was the symphonic spectacle of light and sound; the pulsating other worldly melodious music perfectly counter balanced by the splendid projection of hypnotic images of cyclists, trains, narcotics, computers and robots. And oh how wryly amusing, were the deadpan gestures and deceptively simple lyrics – “I’m pressing down a special key it plays a little melody”.

The heights these future pioneers took us. The sight of the menacing robotic versions of these wizards of circulatory and masters of the ohm and amp, was a truly memorable moment, filled with promise and foreboding. So rarely does one get to use the phrase genius, but surely such a show warrants its use. Finally I skipped home.

Cannoneers, to your guns. We must fire our salvos to glorify the genius of artists of this calibre, and fire blanks at artists too fond of succour and comfort.