

Scottish contemporary art

# Expanding universe

A good time to celebrate a burgeoning artistic scene

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Room with a view

IT WAS always going to be a big year for things Scottish: 2014 marks the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn, when the Scots beat the English in the first war of independence. It is also the year in which the Scots will take on the world, or at least 52 parts of it, at the Commonwealth games in Glasgow. Long before the date was set for the referendum on independence on September 18th, Scotland's main museums, its corporate culture vultures and those who approve Scottish public funding for the arts decided this was the year to host a retrospective showing the art the country had produced over the past 25 years.

Over the next few weeks 60 galleries across the country—from the grand old Scottish National Gallery in the centre of Edinburgh to An Lanntair, an arthouse in the Outer Hebrides—are preparing to display work by 100 artists, covering paintings, drawings, photography, film, sculpture and conceptual installations.

Spanning decades of artistic study, GENERATION shows the many different ways the Scots imagine the human universe. Across all four walls of one room in the National Gallery, Steven Campbell has recreated "On Form and Fiction" (pictured), a landmark exhibition that many remember seeing at Glasgow's Third Eye Centre in 1990. In it, characters from history and literature seek meaning and order in a topsy-turvy world. Benches in the middle of the room enhance the museum atmosphere of the installation,

in stark contrast to the tape of Serge Gainsbourg's steamy 1969 love song with Jane Birkin, "Je t'aime...moi non plus".

In "Earth—Moon—Earth", **Katie Paterson** has taken a version of Beethoven's melancholic "Moonlight Sonata" from 1802, translated it into Morse code and transmitted it using EME—a form of radio communication through which messages are sent from Earth, reflected from the surface of the Moon and then sent back to Earth. On its return, the code is translated back into musical notation which has been changed—losing track of notes and extending the pauses—as a result of its contact with the uneven surface of the Moon. In an installation at Jupiter Artland, an innovative sculpture park created five years ago by Robert and Nicky Wilson in the garden around their Jacobean manor house west of Edinburgh, Ms Paterson broadcasts the Moon-altered music through a digital grand piano. How small man is, it breathes; how long his journey.

Mr Campbell and Ms Paterson may come from two different generations of Scottish contemporary art, but they are part of an expanding universe. Mr Campbell started out as an engineer in a steelworks before enrolling at the Glasgow School of Art. From the late 1980s he and the other New Glasgow Boys turned decaying industrial buildings into cheap studios; soon the city was nurturing a number of Turner-prize nominees and Glasgow was named European capital of culture. Ms Paterson left school, went to Edinburgh School of Art, and then briefly to London to complete an MA, before starting work as a full-time artist. She now divides her time between Berlin and Edinburgh.

Art has thrived in Scotland's post-industrial atmosphere. Edinburgh galleries, such as Ingleby, are now stalwarts of the art fairs in Basel and Hong Kong. Elsewhere in the UK public funding to the arts has shrunk by as much as a third in the last two years, but Creative Scotland, which distributes funding for the Scottish government and the National Lottery, has managed to keep cuts to just 10%. The munificence shows. This summer, no Scot will be far from a GENERATION show.

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