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Foreword.

Act Two, Scene Three. Enter Macduff.

In presenting to you this group of artists and their considered works and ideas, my thoughts refer to the potential visual territories being described by the extremes of fantasy and realism in literature and art, historical and contemporary, where fiction is and has been a commonly used device to engage with the reader or viewer.

“Scottish fiction has its roots in a tradition where stories were told to entertain. The imaginative pact between speaker and audience...”¹

Although not exclusive to Scotland, these two positions have nonetheless been used time and time again by artists, filmmakers and writers to create illusionary territories for the viewer or reader to engage with, to entertain and stimulate. The descriptive and imaginative, opposing or aligned threads of consciousness deployed to create maximum effect; it's what we try do to after all?

At the core of this survey, or visual mapping, is the challenge of presenting contemporary art within the historical setting of Duff House, a work of art itself. A William Adam tour de force. A gem of Scottish enlightenment architecture and interior design. The unenviable task of competing with beautiful interiors, paintings, books, objects and architecture, attempting to create new contexts to experience work being made in the twenty-first century, work normally viewed on the white space of the gallery wall. A different kind of formality perhaps. An opportunity to stop and take stock, to consider possible pathways and reflect on critical strengths and weaknesses. To keep going forward with ideas. To keep alive Duff House's long tradition of patronage and partnership, the house at the centre of its locale but internationally important.

The artists and writers within this group were selected because of their connection to books, texts, apocrypha, description and illusion. Common goals to story tell and build new narratives around the real and the fantastic, trying to excite the imagination in terms of pictorial language and critical thought. A collective of practitioners celebrating extremes and asking the viewer participates and forms opinions regarding the work put forward. Definitely a two-way relationship. To agree and disagree. To love and hate.

“However naturalistic my paintings might sometimes be, the key to my work is fiction. Fiction is not real but might be true, so painting in being up front as a medium of illusion can in a double-think kind of way be true and false at the same time.”²

Hurricane Lamb is a working title for a project born out of conversations between core members of the Cultures of Representation research group and external partners. An open dialogue between artists, writers, curators, teachers, researchers and more to engage with work addressing issues surrounding making, context, representation and meaning. A selection of creative practitioners who have pedigree in terms of production through engagement with critical structures and who apply invention wherever possible. Not to make works set to a rigid brief but to articulate ideas under an umbrella of thinking around the topic. To honestly address ideas and confront issues that may be uncomfortable, to challenge emotional extremes. Sean Ashton and Iain Irving's invited contributions must be looked at as works in their own right, expressions of creative thinking, invention, ideas and contemplations, sitting alongside the physical outputs created by the eight artists.

Our ambition is that the ideas and works on display will be the starting points for dialogue toward the production of a print portfolio in the future. A discussion around utilising the history and expertise within the north East of Scotland, in printmaking terms, to articulate a body of new ideas that demonstrate innovation through concept and methodology. The opportunity to build dialogues with partners and further the ongoing debate surrounding Creative Cultures and its importance to the sociopolitics of the region and the nation.

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1. Carl McDougall. *The Devil & The Giro*. Canongate Classics, Edinburgh.
2. Andrew Cranston.

Michael Agnew RSA.

