

# The Map:

## The Nation waits

Leigh French

On 01/04/2004, the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) web site ambitiously announced:

“A new magazine to promote the *strength* and *diversity* of Scotland’s contemporary visual arts scene will soon appear on newsstands worldwide.

“Thanks to a three-year investment from the Scottish Arts Council, totalling £170,000, the publishers of Scotland’s leading arts and entertainment magazine The List will launch a new visual arts magazine at the end of the summer.

“Editorially independent, the magazine will be in a ‘compact’ format (similar to the women’s monthly Glamour magazine) and published four times a year. The first issue is expected in September.” [Emphasis added in all quotes.]

Lurching from a stress on its editorial independence, at a time when there was no editor, to institutional collective responsibility, we’re told: “The magazine forms part of the Scottish Arts Council’s Visual Arts team’s aim to raise the profile of contemporary visual art through a range of initiatives...”

The magazine-to-be was similarly announced in The List at the same time, under an untitled installation shot of Douglas Gordon’s work, “at the Hayward Gallery, London”, stressing its location over its title. Acknowledging sustained criticism of the SAC from practitioners through to the Scottish Executive, the “fiercely independent” List came to the defence of its new found bed fellow, as they put it. We’re also told that “ads for the post of editor will appear in The List ... as well as in The Guardian”. It didn’t make the Summer or subsequent Autumn announcement, but is now expected to appear in late February 2005, under the title of The Map.

**The map is not the territory—it is rather a tool of intentionality, or a suitable lie**

We need to know how the culmination of over a decade of SAC Visual Arts and Lottery spending on research, surveys, focus groups, consultations arrived at this ‘market solution’? Just how many consultations have there been to address the perceived lack of critical writing and publishing on the visual arts in Scotland, and at what cost?

As a recipient of project funding Variant has a stake in the allocation of SAC funds. To briefly plot the situation: Variant first launched in 1984 and in 1990 received SAC funding for a consultancy by Nick Spice of London Review of Books to assess the viability of SAC funding it. The report ultimately hinged around a business plan where SAC support would decrease over time—this is something that would form the premise of SAC core funding of magazines. On the back of this, Variant were ‘teased’ into applying for SAC support, leading to the eventual withdrawal of revenue funding in 1994.

Variant relaunched in its current format in 1996, received stops and starts of SAC Visual Arts project funding but resisted attempts for yet another ‘business planning exercise’. In 2002, Graham Berry, Director of the Scottish Arts Council, set Andrew Brighton (then Tate Modern) the remit of an “objective appraisal” of all aspects of Variant. The resulting independent report was

‘glowing’, yet to our knowledge nothing of substance came of it either.

From 1995, the SAC Visual Arts’ favoured term for avoiding talking about publications became ‘Critical Writing’. This was elevated to an SAC priority in the absence of what Visual Arts perceived to be an arts magazine, at least one explicitly reflective of their own world view or departmental interests. To this effect, in 1996 SAC funded a Scottish Supplement to the Irish arts magazine Circa, “distributed by the British Council to embassies and consulates worldwide”—a privilege not extended to others.

The Arts Council of Wales undertook a review of arts publications across the UK in October 2001. At the same time in Scotland a ‘Critical Writing’ consultation process started, from which significant critical commentators were initially excluded.

Sculpture Matters was the newsletter of the Scottish Sculpture Trust, started in 1997. In 1999 it undertook subscriptions as “a biannual magazine about sculpture in Scotland”. By 2000 it had dropped its explicit ‘Sculpture’ remit to become Matters and provide a “broader appeal to artists working across media”, with the appointment of guest editors. The Trust received £5,000 in 2000/01 from Visual Arts to commission “a lead curator/writer to work with the magazine... for one year.” The Trust then received £4,000 in April 2002 from Literature “towards publishing issues 11 - 13 of Matters magazine”. Encouraged by the SAC, the Trust had undergone a substantial feasibility study for Matters. In December 2002, an £11,000 grant was made “towards the cost of the forthcoming issue of ‘Matters’ magazine”. The Spring 2003, issue 16, of Matters was the first of two to be guest edited by Kate Tregaskis (formerly Director of Still Gallery, Edinburgh) and Malcolm Dickson (founding editor of Variant and Director of StreetLevel Photoworks gallery, Glasgow). Having pursued SAC, additional cash is understood to have been offered for the second issue, which set out to coincide with ‘Zenomap’, the premiere of the Scottish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, June 2003. Touted by the SAC at the Biennale as its magazine of choice and with a recognisable pattern of encouragement, all the signs seemed to point in Matters’ favour, but this was to be the last issue. Matters was caught up in the forced closure of the Scottish Sculpture Trust and the creation of another SAC franchise, one for a “national body for the development of public art in Scotland”—bizarrely, one of whose remits is to “help develop critical writing on public art through publications

and other means”, something which Matters was clearly doing.

Product magazine has had a similarly precarious existence of Lottery and annual project funding, with the exception of being under the auspices of the Literature Department, so in 2003 they received a more practical £18,000 “towards increasing the audience for Product by use of cover mounts, advertising and point-of-sale materials”.

In 2002 SAC Visual Arts commissioned market research from ScotInform, an Edinburgh-based market research company, to determine demand for a visual arts magazine “that would promote



contemporary practice from Scotland within an international context” and “meet the aims of [SAC’s] Visual Arts strategy”.<sup>1</sup>

ScotInform were also commissioned by SAC to update the one year old Arts Council of Wales’ review of arts publications, with the inclusion of four other titles.

This was followed by an ‘Indicative Business Plan’ by Richard Gerald Associates (RGA) Consulting Ltd, Edinburgh, who describe themselves as “consultants specialising in hospitality, leisure, tourism and the arts”. They are currently undertaking a best practice Digitisation Impact Assessment Study for Scottish Museums Council, and have provided “finance and business planning” to... National Theatre for Scotland; a Marketing plan for An Lanntair Arts Centre, Stornoway; redevelopment feasibility study for Corran Halls, Oban; an Arts marketing consortium viability assessment, Dundee City Council; marketing plan, Edinburgh International Film Festival; business planning, Edinburgh

*Below left & Below: ‘At home with ... Roderick Buchanan’, ‘Family affair’, 31/8/03, Scotland on Sunday, atHome magazine. “Roderick Buchanan and Jaqueline Donachie are living in a croft beside the Glenfiddich distillery—and it has been a welcome break from the city”*

Fiona Bradley, Director of Fruitmarket Gallery won the Art Category of the 2004 Glenfiddich Spirit of Scotland Awards—developed to recognise individuals who are leading the way in various aspects of Scottish culture.

Scotland on Sunday “joined forces with Glenfiddich®, the world’s premier single malt Scotch whisky, to give you the chance to vote in the Glenfiddich® Spirit of Scotland Awards.”

International Book Festival; marketing strategy, The Piping Centre, Glasgow; Arts, cultural and conference review and development, the Stirling Initiative, Macroberts Arts Centre; tourism case studies and advertising impact analysis, Scottish Arts Council; policy Review and Strategic Recommendations, Arts and Older People, Scottish Arts Council; Pilot Project Review, Arts and Older People, Scottish Arts Council; Marketing Audit and Strategic Plan, Scottish Poetry Library; Strategic Business Planning for Advancement Funding, Lemon Tree Theatre Trust Aberdeen; Strategic Business Planning for Advancement Funding, Pitlochry Festival Theatre...

ScotInform presented ‘Selected Information’ from RGA’s findings in their drawing up of their final task for SAC, a ‘Visual Arts Magazine: Indicative Business Plan’. The “overall conclusions from the research” are grossly obvious and outline the need for a magazine whose “aims and objectives” must carefully match SAC’s own. It conflates promoting the ‘very *best* contemporary visual art’, with ‘*comprehensive* and informed coverage’ while never questioning the nature of these terms or their mutual exclusivity, or how what’s presented as the unproblematic arbitration of taste has replaced any discourse around what *might* constitute progressive cultural practice.

important target segment”. They suggest a two-fold response: “The key issue of distribution should be addressed either separately or as part of the audience development work *currently* being conducted by the Scottish Arts Council”—more consultation leading to a “planned distribution policy”. The “audience development work currently being conducted” is reflective of real and perceived sales / distribution problems with the SAC Visual Arts flagship galleries’ own publishing, which has clearly raised concern about the new magazine. But the real unidentified problem is the market driven policy itself—that the Scottish Executive and SAC see the visual arts as a marketplace phenomenon driving a creative and competitive Scotland.

The introductory paragraph of the audience development work—SAC Visual Arts 2004 publishers’ questionnaire, ‘Distribution and Marketing of Visual Arts Publications in Scotland’—sets out the millstones of this further round of consultation:

“In 2002 the Scottish Arts Council undertook a survey to identify the issues which predicated against effective distribution of visual arts publications in Scotland. This had come out of *discussions* on support for publications and critical writing. A *focus group* discussed the findings and agreed that a *research report* should be commissioned to investigate possible initiatives to support development, test these with the sector, prioritise and cost them.

“Edinburgh College of Art took the lead on this, with the support of a *steering group*. The research was funded through the Audience Development lottery fund, SAC. This research is intended to complete and cost that unfinished research.” Visual Arts Officer Sue Pirnie resigned her post at SAC to then be employed by them as a consultant to take up and finish the very research that she implemented and oversaw as Arts Officer. Top of the list of proposals for development from her assessment of the ‘research to date’ is “a 2 year *pilot post* with marketing expertise to complement the galleries’ expertise—to co-ordinate initiatives and provide support.” This is the consolidation of power in one post as “a one-stop contact”, accompanied by a “*steering group* to monitor progress and assist with selections and sector expertise”.

But what exactly there will be to monitor is questionable, as only a “core group of gallery/publishers [are] to be supported to develop the infrastructure”, and this access is to be based upon “*commitment* to publication, *quality* of past publications, and *support* for the initiative”. The elusive, exclusive terms may be familiar to those that have dealt with the department over the years. It gets better though, only a “‘package’ of visual arts publications from the core group [are] to be promoted once or twice a year—to reviewers, editors, and international curators.” So not even the whole “8-12 publishers”, but only a choice selection, and then only once or twice a year!

The justification for yet more consultation omits to mention that the market-driven solutions fostered within the flagship galleries are failing. The solution: the misuse of public funds to support the commercial activities of a narrow clique.

So we don’t really know how many

consultations there have been, at what cost, or how many more there are likely to be—we might not actually be allowed to know.

The Freedom of Information Act came into full effect on 1st January 2004. According to the SAC website it was “designed to promote a culture of openness and accountability...by providing people with rights of access to the information held by them.” Importantly, “It is intended that by granting rights to information under publication schemes, people will better understand how public authorities carry out their duties, why they make the decisions they do and how they spend public money.” It also stresses that “there are exemptions to the information the Council has to provide” including “where information is of a commercially sensitive nature.”

Variant has requested from SAC Visual Arts (a number of times) the ScotInform update of the Arts Council of Wales’ review of arts publications. SAC did not circulate the update with the tender documents to prospective bidders, despite being included by ScotInform as an Appendix. It was described by SAC as ‘restricted information’. Initially not being able to locate the document, we’re now told it’s being looked at by the SAC’s Freedom of Information Officer.

#### Charm offensive

In July 2003, we were informed that the SAC was inviting tenders for start up (3 year) funding “in the region of £200,000” for A Visual Arts Magazine for Scotland, “based on market research”. Confirmation of putting in a tender was to be in by 31st July. Despite the tight time frame for confirmation—one month—the tender documents weren’t available, as there were ‘still things to be ironed out’ by the unheard of ‘Corporate Department’. Documents were eventually received on the 16th, confirmation had been moved to 4th August, with a conciliatory officious deadline for tenders of 9am 15th September.

From ScotInform’s ‘Indicative Business Plan Review of Options’, the SAC’s bullet pointed ‘Call for Tenders’, and the Corporate Departments’ crafting of the finalised versions, the only outcome was going to be a ‘new’ magazine with the backing of private capital.

We don’t know who actually did bid, but along with Matters it is believed, amongst others, AN, Circa, and Tate magazine. Variant did not show an interest or put in a bid, nor did Product.

Tregaskis and Dickson put in a tender to acknowledge and pick up on the legacy of Matters, which may have been the only other Scotland-based bid to make the short-list. ScotInform’s ‘Review of Options’ identified Matters as “the only publication in the review that offers the potential to re-develop on a broader basis...” with “potential for Matters to become viable and this is worth exploring *if this option is to be considered further*.” Only to then dismiss Matters before any bid had been made and to contradict what it had just stated: “The final option [of a New Publication] is the one that emerges most strongly from the research, given the potential levels of demand and the *lack of an obvious publication for re-development*.” How could such ‘confusion’ arise?

Similarly, the Report states Product magazine was relaunching and likely “to have an ‘alternative’ stance on arts and political culture that will not fit with the broad-based identity of the new publication.” Underlying this is the claim of consensual neutrality. This inclusivity is disingenuous—it politically positions Product as ‘outside’, as marginal, while deliberately ignoring the ideological agenda of Scottish arts policy that is explicit throughout the tender documents. The fact is that Product does *not* have a radicalised alternative stance, its tongue-in-cheek by-line is “over-the-counter culture”. But what it does do is acknowledge that ‘culture’ is ideological territory



Similarly, they point out that “the magazine is unlikely to be self-financing and will require an element of [public] subsidy” but which should be reduced over time. However, the Report states that the “forecast for sales figures for the new magazine [1,500] mean it will not be self-financing, especially given the requirement for a high quality publication.” So just what is the role of the private sector here?

These documents were drawn together—along with a June 2002 ‘Visual Arts Magazine for Scotland: Market Research Study’ and the SAC’s ‘A Call for Tenders: An opportunity to establish and deliver a Visual Arts Magazine for Scotland’—to form the information pack that prospective tenderers for the new magazine received.

Throughout ScotInform’s report is the clear expression of a lack of information on the part of SAC with regard to art publications’ distribution and subscriptions—it includes tautological classics such as “...unless distribution channels were available the magazine was unlikely to reach an

that is constantly being fought over—which is something even the main staples of jobbing arts journalism dare occasionally report on when it comes to such things as the Culture Commission. But for the most, ‘Scotland the Brand’ cultural reporting is just colourful consumer material for Sunday supplement lifestyle sections, the very market The List is being squeezed by. In late 2000 / early 2001 ScotInform carried out audience research for The List, used to put together its lifestyle entertainment profile of its readership for potential advertisers. This profiling stresses the indicators of a ‘young’, ‘mobile’, ‘discerning and cultured’ consumer.

What we are experiencing is the prejudicial exclusion of grass-roots organisations and networks by a professional managerial class that is increasingly encouraged to see the provision of public services as the role of the private sector, albeit underwritten by public money. The SAC Visual Arts can excuse themselves by claiming to have commissioned research, consulted artists, held focus groups, conducted phone polls, but what it has *not* done is draw attention to, or enter into any discussion about, the explicit political nature of the economic model that was determined for this magazine from the outset. Any bidder not backed by private capital was wasting their time, or worse, unwittingly acting as unpaid consultants to further inform SAC’s arrangements.

**Straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel**

The shortlistings for interview were informed by a hush-hush ‘Independent Advisor’ from London, Gilda Williams, Commissioning Editor for Contemporary Art at Phaidon Press. Formerly Managing Editor of Flash Art International, “Williams is an art, photography and film critic who contributes regularly to periodicals including Art Monthly, Parkett and Sight and Sound.” Not surprisingly, Williams has written on the Scotia-Nostra artists, such as Roderick Buchanan.

The panel that interviewed the list of bidders for the tender was made up of: Sue Pirnie, then SAC Visual Arts Officer; Elisabeth McLean, Deputy Director, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh;

Gordon Cosh, SAC Financial Compliance Officer; Sophy Dale, SAC Officer Literature Dept.; Katherine Pearson, SAC Creative Arts Committee.

So who are they, what experience and knowledge do they bring to confirming who would be ‘promoting contemporary practice from Scotland in an international context’?

According to the SAC website: “The Creative Arts Committee assists Council in the monitoring of its aims and objectives and informing the development of its work into the future on policy matters relating to creative arts ... in Scotland. It also considers the broad spectrum of work that crosses these artforms, ensuring that Council policy areas, such as audience development, equalities and education are embedded in their work.”

Committee member Katherine Pearson is the former Director of Creative Partnerships Durham / Sunderland (based at Arts Council England), and formerly the City of Sunderland’s Head of Arts. The National Glass Centre Sunderland appointed Pearson its sixth chief executive in as many years in September 2004.

Creative Partnerships Durham / Sunderland is a Dept. of Culture Media & Sport and Dept. for Education & Skills scheme involving some 22 schools in “the most economically and socially challenged neighbourhoods” in areas of England as selected by Government ministers. Have no doubt about the political agenda: “Creative Partnerships looks to stimulate whole school change... invoking shifts in thinking and doing in the wider education system in the longer term.” So what of the ‘*partnerships*’? Under the header ‘Business partners’ we hit the nail: “... Organisations and employers are increasingly looking for a creatively agile workforce and there is a growing awareness of the advantages of starting this work early on in the school years. Key to this vision of creative education is the development of relationships with a variety of partners from the cultural, creative and business sectors...”

According to BBC online: “The £17m [National Glass Centre] has struggled to hit visitor targets

since opening in 1998, but Arts Council bosses have pledged to continue subsidising the centre”, which has “lurched from crisis to crisis in its short life”. The Centre is “dedicated to promoting glass in all its uses”. The University of Sunderland’s Glass, Architectural Glass and Ceramics Departments are located there, as is the international Institute for Research in Glass. We’re now all too familiar with the UK-wide successes of such Third Way symbols.

So why is someone exclusively working in England one of only a handful of people ‘informing’ the Scottish Arts council, *especially* in this exceptional decision, where an informed understanding of the actual (not government imagined or desired) cultural activity on the ground in Scotland one would have thought was essential? Could it be the lack of skilled and informed professionals in Scotland, or perhaps Pearson’s involvement in a politically motivated scheme for reshaping educational practices and the role the arts have in this?

With such an historic decision to be made and such an unprecedented amount of cash on the table, it is a pity the Head of Visual Arts, Amanda Catto, couldn’t make the interviews. But perhaps such a distancing from the project at that stage was no bad thing, as Catto is understood to be good friends with the Director of the SAC ‘flagship’ Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, Fiona Bradley—whose partner happens to be... Nick Barley, the editor of The List. So it may come as a surprise to some that the *only* person not directly employed by the SAC on the panel is the Deputy Director of the Fruitmarket Gallery, Elisabeth McLean.

McLean’s inclusion is perhaps testimony to one of the few existing gallery bookshops<sup>2</sup> in Scotland (fighting for space as it does between the cafe, the stairs and the pavement), and to her experience in the production of shelves of Fruitmarket catalogues.

However, at a time when the incestuousness of Scotland’s political and media institutions is in question—brought into focus by the family

holidaying of Newsnight’s Kirsty Wark and Scotland’s First Minister Jack McConnell, in what has been called by some an “abject lack of judgment”—this single inclusion by the SAC is worrying, and calls into question the perception of neutrality and impartiality.

Interviews for the tender were 9th December 2003—those who were unsuccessful were told the very next day... in writing.

**Bedazzled**

What of The List, the “Glasgow and Edinburgh fortnightly events guide”?

Before moving to Scotland to become The List editor in 2003, Nick Barley was publisher of Blueprint<sup>3</sup> and Tate magazines in London.

The Sunday Herald article ‘All change as The List gets caught in crossfire of newspaper wars’ 24/10/04,<sup>4</sup> gives a helpful insight. Interviewing editor Nick Barley, it paints a picture of recent difficulties—of being “under threat” from online services and the “huge rise in listings magazines in newspapers”. Claiming to have weathered these troubled waters, Barley plans to “make the magazine more features orientated” and cut back the listings content by “50% to 40% of the word count”, moving them online. It has no plans to extend to other cities in Scotland, as it is believed there is not enough customer or advertiser demand—the article estimates “the circulation is rising again (to over 10,500)”. These changes are being “implemented cautiously ... in case it gives potential rivals an opening.”

ScotInform’s report was also cautious, warning off infringing on The List’s events listings. If only the SAC were as mindful of others. We should question if amongst all this consultation there’s been an impact study on Scotland-based annual project funded magazines’ main source of revenue, advertising? Maybe that wasn’t their concern. ScotInform invoke a “conventional competitive strategy” as an incentive for existing magazines “covering the whole of the UK” to focus more on “Scottish content”. It doesn’t examine or question the market effect on the nature of this content, or this contents effect on artistic practice, while invoking the market fantasy of a level playing field with equal access for all—all £200,000 of it.

The List is already embedded as a sizeable state cultural mediator, according to their website: “The List is also the official supplier of information about events in all parts of Scotland to VisitScotland for publication online and in print.” With its head office in Edinburgh, VisitScotland is the official site for Scotland’s National Tourism Board, ‘offering a guide to Scottish arts and cultural events’. The List’s publisher, Robin Hodge, also has a sizeable collection of other titles: “The List also publishes a number of special issues to support major arts events and festivals in both Glasgow and Edinburgh... T in the Park, the Edinburgh International Festival and Fringe, the Edinburgh International Film Festival, The Edinburgh International Book Festival, Gig on the Green, and Glasgow and Edinburgh Hogmanay.”

Someone more competent may well have questioned the effect on an environment shaped and largely created by mass-circulation newspapers and magazines which are almost

completely dominated by the commercial motives of their publishers and their clients.

In trying to find an “editor of the highest calibre”, the promised (2.5 by 3.5 inch) Guardian ad for a “Freelance contract, approx. two days per week” appeared and went. There was no mention of salary. The closing date was 10 May 2004, roughly six weeks after the initial announcement in The List and by SAC—you could be forgiven for missing the notice.

The figure bandied around for the post of editor was £10,000, this was to “...provide the inspiration for the magazine’s editorial strategy, oversee its launch, and manage a small team of editorial and design staff. Based at The List’s offices in Edinburgh and Glasgow, you will work closely with the magazine’s publisher...” , Robin Hodge. The List were looking for someone with at least three year’s experience.

Anyone with experience would know there’s more than 2 days a week to starting a critically informed magazine, from scratch, never mind sustaining it. Especially one that has no track record and no proven distribution mechanism. So who exactly was this £10,000 prestigious income going to attract?

Things got worse, some applied only to be told the sum was to be split between five assistant editors, each working two days apeice—that’s £2,000 a year, or £500 per issue, or a staggering £21 a day for an alleged 2 days a week work, before tax and travel. Others were approached and turned down the generous offer.

The reasons for the launches being put back was that The List was struggling to secure an editor, or editors. Effectively, the fall back was onto List staff, some of whom were already involved, though had no recent experience of the contemporary arts scenes across Scotland—something one would have thought was essential. This was hardly looking like the ‘Credible’, ‘Informed’, ‘Leading’, ‘Creative’ and ‘Confident’ editorial that was demanded. Time for Arts Officers to start ‘shitting themselves’.

The magazine is to be published from the List offices edited by former List writer Alice Bain (who also oversaw interviews for the post(s) of editor) along with Ruth Hedges, acting as deputy editor—rostered on the List website as a Researcher, Art section editor, City life / Travel section editor, and Kids News, let’s hope she has time.

The reason Glamour magazine was mentioned in the SAC and List press releases was, one would hope, not primarily for its content but for its format. Probably out of fear of finger pointing, it would be uncouth for them to say the model is probably going to be poached from the Irish arts magazine Circa—especially when they may well have tendered for the job (and now want to ditch the ‘compact’ format themselves). Not without its own problems, Circa has been muttered about as a desired model for a while, and now in terms of a stand-alone commercial viability. This really shows the naivety of those involved as Circa is, and has been for a very long time, almost entirely publicly subsidised.

Having initially rejected pretty much all suggested Scottish-based contemporary arts writers for a more cheap-and-cheerful List touch— not so much representation as re-presentation—

they appear to have fallen back on the writers within the arts communities intimate with other magazines.

**Grand Gestures**

Burdened with the title The Map, an embodiment of arrogance whose self-delusional quality raises as many questions as hackles, there is little doubt the topography of the landscape of this magazine has been modelled by personnel attached to the SAC Visual Arts Department.

Maybe for fear of what others might produce, there are some extraordinary contradictions at work here between the SAC’s alleged commitment to ‘social inclusion’, its fetish with an overly specialised artistic production, and the use of public funds in a market-driven distribution policy. One based upon the sophistry that the private sector can deliver upon unproven promises of ‘appealing to a wider audience’.

Instead of coveting the narrow star-system focus that makes up the bulk of what passes as the art press, this should have been an opportunity for a serious unpacking of the institutional precincts that territorially guard access to our cultural life in Scotland. Instead, a good while after the boat went out everywhere else, we’re having visited upon us grand gestures more akin to the consumerism of the 1980s at the expense of multiple, self-determined standpoints of observation. It’s an all too familiar hierarchy reflective of the gallery system that artist-run projects are said to have been challenging for decades; an advantaged managerial class with an underclass of artists and writers existing hand-to-mouth in its shadow.

With all the paraphernalia extolling the virtues of ‘Cultural Diversity’, the tendency towards monopoly on so many levels is staggering. What of the impact of such a corporate media consolidation of power in the fields of the arts and publishing in Scotland? SAC should be enabling broad democratic expression in the social sphere, instead we have been afflicted with a centralised apparatus conferring dominance on the mores of ‘Scotland the Brand’.

**Notes**

- For an account see ‘Through the Looking Glass’, Leigh French, Variant issue 16, Winter 2002, [www.variant.org.uk/16texts/Events.html](http://www.variant.org.uk/16texts/Events.html)
- For one of the few Scottish arts bookshops, The List is one of only eight, recently updated, links on the Fruitmarket Gallery’s website under the Bookshop: the others being, Art Monthly, Booklab, Bookworks, Frieze, Parkett, Scottish Book Trust, Scottish Poetry Library.
- Blueprint was established in ‘83 and still edited by Deyan Sudjic, Director of the Glasgow 1999 UK City of Architecture.
- [www.sundayherald.com/45500](http://www.sundayherald.com/45500)