



V A R I E

VISUAL ARTS RESEARCH INSTITUTE EDINBURGH
ANNUAL REPORT
2008-9

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1. Projects

1.1 Introducing: *Art in Translation*

In February 2009, VARIE launched a new e-journal entitled *Art in Translation (AIT)*. Appearing three times a year, the journal will publish English translations of the best writing from around the world on the visual arts, architecture, and design. This exciting new venture is generously funded with a grant from the Getty Foundation.



AIT brings new and unknown material to an English-reading audience. Although primarily devoted to contemporary writing, each issue of *AIT* will carry significant historical texts whose translation and dissemination will benefit a broad audience. Texts are drawn from all areas of the visual arts: painting and drawing, sculpture, architecture, design, installation works and digital media. They are proposed and selected at the annual meeting of the Editorial Board.

While not attempting encyclopaedic coverage, *AIT* will act as a window onto the practice of art history and visual culture. The inaugural issue was published in March 2009 and can now be viewed free of charge via a link on the Art in Translation website (www.artintranslation.org).

"The journal and the collaborative effort involved in producing this journal will act as a significant catalyst in connecting scholars worldwide, in bringing important scholarship to wider attention and in moving art history in challenging new directions. AIT will introduce the English-speaking readership to new areas of scholarship that share as their main qualities their excellence and originality."

Iain Boyd Whyte, Editor of *Art in Translation*

1.2 Copyright for Scholars

VARIE is leading an initiative on best practice in copyright for scholarly purposes on behalf of the International Association of Research Institutes in the History of Art (RIHA). This initiative was launched at a one-day workshop in Edinburgh in October 2007 as part of the RIHA General Assembly, which was hosted by VARIE.

In 2008, VARIE worked with the Courtauld Institute of Art, the AHRC Centre for Studies in Intellectual Property and Technology Law (University of Edinburgh) and with colleagues in the School of Law at Birkbeck College, University of London, to produce a statement on copyright which endorses the British Academy's guidelines on Copyright (2006). This statement was approved by the RIHA General Assembly in Rome on 8 November 2008 and can be read in full on the VARIE website.

The document is now being translated, as necessary, into the home languages of the 28 member institutions of RIHA and distributed to the leading galleries, museums, journals, and other cultural institutions in the respective member countries.

1.3 Coming Soon: *Darwin's Edinburgh*

VARIE is working with the University of Edinburgh Collections and the Talbot Rice Gallery to stage an exhibition about Charles Darwin's time in Edinburgh in the 1820s. The exhibition will feature objects and archival material from the University's collections and will open at the Talbot Rice Gallery in October 2009.

The year 2009 marks the bicentenary of the birth of Charles Darwin and the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* - one of the most significant achievements in Western intellectual history. These twin anniversaries offer a unique opportunity to explore and examine the relationship between Darwin and Edinburgh.

From 1825 until 1827, Darwin was an undergraduate at the Medical School of the University of Edinburgh. During these two years, Edinburgh academics and curators had a lasting influence on the young and inquisitive scholar, who in his autobiography recalls his introduction to natural history research methods and the presentation of his first scientific discoveries to the learned societies. Key to the exhibition is its location; what is now the Talbot Rice Gallery was then part of the College Museum, the focus of natural history teaching and collecting at the University of Edinburgh. The exhibition is made up of four sections:



Medicine at the University of Edinburgh

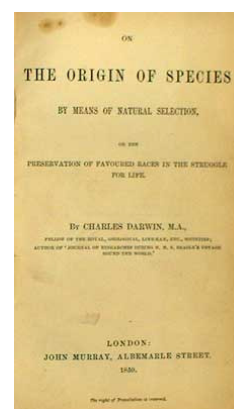
In Darwin's day, Edinburgh was one of the principal centres of medical teaching in Europe, and Darwin was the last in a long line of family members who studied medicine in the Scottish capital. Although he eventually failed to pursue a medical career, his encounters with teachers, academics and curators formed the basis of his brilliant later explorations.

First Encounters with Natural History

Although Darwin did not enjoy his medical lectures, he loved his chemistry classes delivered by Thomas Hope. Outside the University, he studied the volcanic geology of Edinburgh and the marine life on the shores of the Firth of Forth. He discussed his findings with eminent academics such as biologist Dr Robert Edmond Grant, who encouraged him towards a career in natural history.

College Museum and Learned Societies

In the 1820s, the Talbot Rice Gallery was still part of the College Museum of Natural History, one of the largest natural history museums in Europe at that time. Here, Darwin studied specimens, learnt about taxidermy and had long conversations with Robert Jameson, Keeper of the collections. This section will also discuss Edinburgh's intellectual environment, still reeling from the Scottish Enlightenment that produced some of the greatest scientists, philosophers and writers in history.



Darwin's Legacy

The final section of the exhibition will ask the following question: After Darwin left Edinburgh, what happened to Darwin and what happened to Edinburgh? It will then approach this question from different viewpoints and will link the historical exhibition to the contemporary art display, *An Entangled Bank*.

2. Symposiums

2.1 Art Writing: Translations, Adaptations, Modalities Edinburgh, 23-24 April 2009

The publication of the first issue of the online journal *Art in Translation* in March 2009 was marked with an international symposium entitled *Art Writing: Translations, Adaptations and Modalities*. It was organised by VARIE in association with the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH).

The symposium took place in Edinburgh on 23 and 24 April 2009, and was attended by internationally acclaimed scholars, promising younger academics, curators, translators and postgraduate students. Keynote papers were delivered by Peter France (University of Edinburgh), Lawrence Venuti (Temple University, Philadelphia) and Clive Scott (University of East Anglia), in sessions that focussed on the politics, process and interpretation of translations in relation to the visual arts. Other papers were given by both art historians and translators, and focussed on the interconnections between the disciplines of visual culture and translation studies.



Professor Vojtech Lahoda giving a paper at the *Art Writing* symposium, 23 April 2009

2.2 Material Matters Edinburgh College of Art, 20 November 2008

VARIE collaborated with the Modern Materials in Collections: Scotland working group (MMiC:S) and Edinburgh College of Art to organise this one-day symposium on materiality in contemporary art collections. The organising group included staff from National Museums Scotland, National Galleries of Scotland and History of Art at Glasgow University. Speakers came from ECA, NGS, Glasgow and Tate.

Materiality

How do you make, preserve and interpret contemporary art made with non-traditional materials? What are the challenges and how are they overcome by artists, conservators and curators? What are the implications and opportunities for art education in Scotland? These questions were raised in the papers during the morning session, with topics including the neglect of materiality in traditional art history, conservation challenges posed by non-traditional materials and the artistic production process.

In the afternoon a number of break-out sessions gave delegates an opportunity to explore some of these issues in more detail. The event was recorded, and the papers will be available online in due course.

One of the delegate discussion groups at *Material Matters*, 20 November 2008



3. Workshops and Seminars

3.1 Darwin's Edinburgh

14 March 2008

Funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, this workshop's aim was to initiate interdisciplinary dialogue, to explore themes, and to come to a better understanding of the Edinburgh dimension of Darwin and Darwinism. It also provided an opportunity to revisit the research themes identified in an earlier workshop and to strengthen ideas for the Darwin exhibition in the Talbot Rice Gallery in 2009. The symposium was chaired by Dr John Scally (University of Edinburgh Collections) and Professor Iain Boyd Whyte (VARIE). Speakers included Dr Andrew Fraser, Dr Jim Endersby (University of Sussex), Malcolm Fraser (Malcolm Fraser Architects), Professor Jay Brown, Geoff Swinney (National Museums Scotland) and Dr Andrew Patrizio (Edinburgh College of Art). The event was recorded, and all papers are available in mp3 format on the VARIE website.

3.2 ACE - National Museums Scotland - Collaboration event

18 April 2008

On Friday 18 April 2008, VARIE assisted in the organisation and running of a collaborative meeting between curatorial staff from National Museums Scotland and staff from the School of Arts, Culture and Environment. This well-attended event showed that there are many crossovers between research at both institutions, and potential collaborations that could be explored further.

VARIE's involvement in the *Material Matters* symposium was a direct result of this meeting, as was the application to the AHRC for a Collaborative Doctoral Award on the collections of Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe. A similar event with the National Galleries of Scotland is being prepared for 2009.

3.3 Grant Writing Workshops with Edinburgh Research & Innovation

May-June 2008

In spring 2008, VARIE organised three workshops on the process and practicalities of applying for research funding. Two of the sessions were led by staff from Edinburgh Research & Innovation (ERI).

The first workshop, on 29 April, focused on standard grants from the main grant-giving bodies and was attended by staff from all subject areas within the School of Arts, Culture and Environment. The second session, on 13 May, gave an overview of Knowledge Transfer Opportunities. This session was attended by ACE staff as well as representatives of all the VARIE partners in Edinburgh. A third session in June focussed on matching funding schemes to specific grant proposals.

3.4 Symposiums Sponsored

In 2008, VARIE made small monetary contributions to three symposiums. Two of these were held at The Queen's Gallery and brought together scholars from the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and St Andrews as well as the National Galleries of Scotland and National Museums Scotland for high-level discussions about the works in the exhibitions *Bruegel to Rubens* and *The Art of Italy - the Renaissance*. VARIE also made a contribution to the conference on Gerhard Richter at the National Galleries of Scotland.

4. Publications

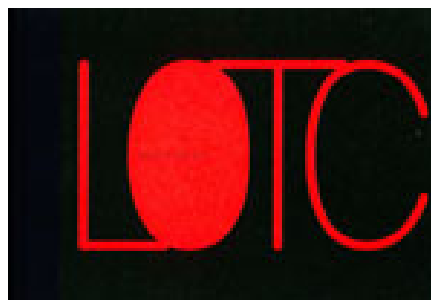
Locus of the City

Karen Forbes and Gordon Brennan

ECA/VARIE, 2008

120 pages | ISBN 9781904443148

Locus of the City examines the narratives and visual codes of Edinburgh's Grassmarket to define its past, current and future state.



How do you experience the spaces you encounter every day? How can you see afresh the interconnections and meanings of place and context? This innovative book mixes up urban photography, performance documentation and new commissioned artwork to examine the Grassmarket - an area in the heart of Edinburgh - in terms of its narratives and visual codes. Looking at the city from numerous perspectives - the geologist, architectural historian, architect, minister, artist, lawyer, inhabitant - it places these perceptions within a multi-layered matrix which is embodied in the site.

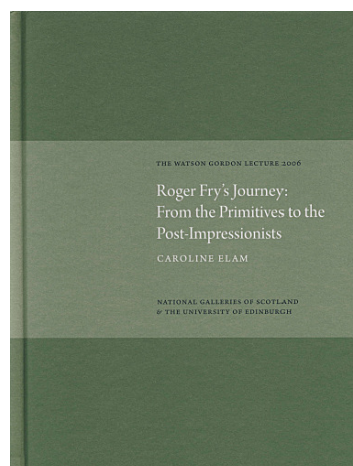
Roger Fry's Journey: From the Primitives to the Post-Impressionists

Caroline Elam

National Galleries of Scotland/VARIE, 2008

48 pages | ISBN 9781906270117

The Watson Gordon Lecture 2006 by Caroline Elam, on Roger Fry's negotiation of the art of Seurat and the early Italians.



Established following the 125th anniversary of the foundation of the Chair of Fine Art at the University of Edinburgh and named after the painter Sir John Watson Gordon, the Watson Gordon Lectures typify the long-standing and positive collaboration between the University of Edinburgh and the National Galleries of Scotland: two partners in the Visual Arts Research Institute, Edinburgh.

This lecture, the first in the series to be published, was given by Caroline Elam, an eminent scholar of the Italian Renaissance and former editor of the *Burlington Magazine*. Her illuminating lecture links Roger Fry's analysis of the paintings of Seurat with his deep understanding of Italian Renaissance art, and explores the connections between his taste for the Post-Impressionists and his love of the early Italians.

5. Grants and Sponsorship

5.1 *The ones we got in 2008-9:*

Illuminating Scotland: A Digital Future for Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts from Scottish Collections

£6,938 (Development Trust Research Fund)

Dr Thomas Tolley (History of Art) will lead this project and will oversee:

1. Pilot cataloguing and assessment of manuscript digitisation rationale
2. Workshop on digital cataloguing of manuscripts in Scottish collections
3. Grant application to a suitable body to sustain a long-term project

Darwin's Edinburgh

£10,000 (Sponsorship)

Investment managers Baillie Gifford have agreed to sponsor the exhibition *Darwin's Edinburgh*, which opens at the Talbot Rice Gallery in October 09.

Art Writing: Translations, Adaptations, Modalities

£2,238 (Sponsorship)

VARIE and IASH secured sponsorship from the European Society for Translation, John Benjamins Publishing, *Art in Translation* and the University of Edinburgh.

The Genius Loci of the Athens of the North: the cultural significance of Edinburgh's Calton Hill.

£55,020 (AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award)

This PhD studentship, now in progress, is a collaboration between the University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh World Heritage.

5.2 *... and the ones that got away:*

Art and antiques in early nineteenth-century Edinburgh: The collections of Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe

AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award, led by Vicky Coltman and Clare Haynes (History of Art) in collaboration with Dr David Caldwell from National Museums Scotland.

Art Writing: Translations, Adaptations, Modalities

British Academy Conference Support Grant
ACE Initiatives Fund Award

IN:herit

Investigating, Interpreting and Contextualising our Cultural Heritage

AHRC Heritage Science Research Cluster, in collaboration with Heriot Watt University and National Museums Scotland.

6. Promotion and Publicity

6.1 Website and newsletter

During 2008-9, VARIE has worked hard to raise its profile both within and outside its membership. VARIE has undertaken to publicise all talks and research seminars that take place at its partner institutions. Each month, a new list of seminars is published on the VARIE website and a link to the latest listing is e-mailed to subscribers. This e-mail list is made up of staff at all partner institutions as well as a growing number of members of the public.

The seminar listings in April, July, October and January are accompanied by a quarterly VARIE newsletter which reports on projects, publications and grants.

The VARIE website (ace.caad.ed.ac.uk/varie) has been redesigned, expanded and updated. It now hosts two standalone sub-sites:

Art in Translation (www.artintranslation.org)

Darwin's Edinburgh exhibition website (ace.caad.ed.ac.uk/Darwin)

6.2 VARIE publicity

In 2008-9, the following articles about VARIE and its events were published:

- Article on *Darwin's Edinburgh* in *Knowledge Transfer News*, University of Edinburgh, issue 6, spring 2008
- Article on VARIE in *RecaP* (Edinburgh College of Art research news), June 2008
- Article on the MMiC:S event *Material Matters* in *RecaP*, autumn 2008
- Article in University of Edinburgh Bulletin on *Art Writing*, May 09
- VARIE Profile in *Vision* (Edinburgh College of Art), forthcoming

6.3 Publicity for *Darwin's Edinburgh*:

- *Darwin in Edinburgh*
The Scotsman, 12 February 2009
- *The Man Who Knew Too Much*
The Telegraph, Calcutta, India Scotsman,
12 February 2009
- *How Edinburgh inspired Darwin's Origin of Species*
Mike Wade, Times, 6 February 2009



On 15 May 2009, a taster exhibition of *Darwin's Edinburgh* opened in the University of Edinburgh's visitor centre (above), along with displays about other Darwin-related activities that are taking place within the University in 2009.

7. Looking ahead

7.1 Projects

VARIE is working with staff from the University of Edinburgh, Abertay University, National Galleries of Scotland and National Museums Scotland on a project around the significance of Colour in visual expressions of identity.

A large VARIE project on Nudity/Nakedness is currently being discussed by staff from History of Art in collaboration with the National Gallery in London. It is expected that this project will focus on spectatorship within a chronological framework that spans five centuries.

VARIE is also committed to form partnerships with contemporary galleries in Edinburgh, including Stills, the Ingleby Gallery and the Fruitmarket Gallery. An initial meeting to discuss collaboration is being planned for summer 2009.

7.2 Events

On 28 May 2009, VARIE will host a workshop on ideas for a Scottish Collectors Database, with a view to applying for funding for a large database project. This project will be led by Frances Fowle (History of Art).

The recent award of DTRF funding for a manuscript project led by Tom Tolley (History of Art) includes funds to organise a workshop on the cataloguing and potential digitisation of medieval and renaissance manuscripts in Edinburgh. This workshop is planned for autumn 2009.

VARIE will be assisting Suzanne Ewing with the organisation of the AHRA conference in November 2009.

7.3 Anticipated Grant Applications for 2009

- Research Networking Grant on Fieldwork/Spatial Anthropology, led by Suzanne Ewing (Architecture), June 2009
- Leverhulme International Network Grant for a project on Symbolist Landscape (with NGS, Van Gogh Museum and University of Geneva), led by Richard Thomson (History of Art), October 2009
- AHRC and Leverhulme Large Grant Applications for Nudity Project, led by Jill Burke and Richard Thomson (History of Art), Autumn 2009
- Research Networking Grant on Colour, led by Heather Pulliam (History of Art), Autumn 2009
- Collaborative Doctoral Awards, November 2009