

## **National Collecting Scheme Scotland 2007-2010**

### **Evaluation and Recommendations**

*Research dimension and research-focused activities*

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## 1. Introduction

This document looks specifically at the research-focused activity attendant to the post of *Research Associate, National Collecting Scheme Scotland* for the period July 2007-March 2010.

The post has been a catalyst for research-focused activities around the National Collecting Scheme Scotland in its second phase (2007-2010). It is also a specific feature of the research dimension developed between the Visual Arts Department, Scottish Arts Council and the History of Art Department, University of Glasgow in Phase 2.

Within the terms and tenure of the post, the Research Associate, Dr Tina Fiske, has progressed two arenas of research-focused activity:

- Sector activities, including: The *Contemporary Collections and Collecting in Scotland Series*; curator research activities
- Department activities, including: Research Associate research and publishing; creation of new postgraduate taught module; postgraduate research supervision; hosting and supporting new research

This document summarises and evaluates those activities, and it provides recommendations for the development and enhancement of a research dimension as critical to strategic development offered by the National Collecting Scheme Scotland through a Phase 3.

## 2. Summary of research-focused activities 2007-2010

### 2.1 SECTOR-LOCATED ACTIVITIES

#### 2.1.1 The Contemporary Collections and Collecting in Scotland Series

Between January 2009 and January 2010, Dr Fiske developed and oversaw the *Contemporary Collections and Collecting in Scotland Series*, which she devised and initiated with Amanda Catto and Stephen Palmer (Visual Arts Department, Scottish Arts Council).

Conceived as a primary research undertaking and comprising a programme of three linked events, the Series cumulatively aimed to generate sustained critical debate across the sector about the formation and dissemination of contemporary collections by public museums and galleries in Scotland. The Series also aimed to address what such collections offer to their incumbent institutions and audiences, and sought to position the NCSS as the platform and catalyst for this debate.<sup>1</sup>

Together the events were intended to

- initiate a 'mapping' process and promote alignment of the various related initiatives and funds that support contemporary collections-building in Scotland, and provide an updated context and overview of the contemporary collecting landscape
- build a community of stakeholders and initiate a regular forum for identifying priorities and perspectives, and to explore ways of linking them
- further a common understanding of the extent and nature of aspirations across public collections to develop their contemporary collections and programmes

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<sup>1</sup> For further details of the Series, and to access summary notes for all of the Series events, please see <http://www.gla.ac.uk/contemporarycollectingscotland>

- identify the most effective ways to represent and address the critical questions about the strategic development and use of contemporary collections across Scotland

A key principle of the Series was to recognize that issues pertaining to collections and collecting reach across a range of sector bodies, funders, organizations and individuals. Currently, however, there is no regular forum in Scotland for drawing together representatives from the various agencies and development bodies, collecting institutions, public galleries, commercial galleries, or artists around the issues of collections or collecting. An objective of this Series has been to look at how this might be established, what form it might take, and what it might do.

Those with a stake in contemporary collecting were invited to participate: this included individuals from organizations within the museums and HE sectors, members of the visual artists' community, and representatives from the Art Schools, non-collecting institutions and visual arts organizations, and commercial galleries.

Across the Series as a whole, 94 individuals participated in one or more of the events. They represented 50 organizations and coming from Orkney, Aberdeen, Perth, Dundee, Stirling, London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Paisley and Selkirk.

See **Appendix 1** for a full list of the individuals who participated in the Series.

#### 2.1.2 Curator research activities

Throughout Phase 2, NCSS curators have been supported to undertake 'sector-located' research and research through travel in relation to the development of future acquisitions and of their respective NCSS collecting policies. This research was facilitated by group days pre-organised by the Research Associate, as well as by individual research through travel.

- *Group research/gallery days:* The curators participated in pre-organised group research/gallery days, which were scheduled by the Research Associate in response to programming as it has occurred across galleries in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee. The group days have also taken advantage of the opportunities offered by events such as Glasgow International and Edinburgh Art Festival.
- *Group studio visits:* The curators also participated in a number of studio visit days, in the first instance located at Glasgow Sculpture Studios.
- *Individual travel – UK:* With the support of research through travel grants, NCSS curators between them undertook self-organised individual research trips to London (Frieze), Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Oxford
- *International travel – group and individual:* With the support of research through travel grants offered in Phase 2, NCSS curators will have undertaken self-organised individual research trips to Avignon, Bergen and Oslo, Vienna, and Paris. The research travel grants have also facilitated participation in group trips facilitated by the Scottish Arts Council and other providers to Venice for instance.

## **2.2 DEPARTMENT- LOCATED ACTIVITIES**

### **2.2.1 Postgraduate teaching**

As part of her remit, Dr Fiske devised and taught a new post-graduate module, *From Freeze to Frieze: Public Collections and Contemporary art*, in the History of Art department between January and April 2009.

The course focuses on contemporary art, collections and the gift economy specifically. A ten-lecture module, its development was a first step in considering the viability of a stand-alone, one-year MLitt course that focuses

on contemporary art and collections curation specifically, targeted at those who wish to enter the museums and galleries sectors as entry-level curators. Further scoping around the development of a stand-alone MLitt is needed. In the meantime, *Freeze to Frieze* now forms a core component of the Department's MLitt *History of Collections and Collecting*.

Short abstract

MLitt module *From Freeze to Frieze*

The course examines the nature of the relationships that obtain between **artist, patron/ collector and public museum**, and how these are encoded with values and suppositions about time, historical representation, gift, commodity, exchange, reciprocity and circulation and the dynamic of what Adrian Ellis has recently called the 'institutional ecology'. The course takes account of a number of factors and trends apparent from the advent of the *Freeze* exhibition in south London in 1987 onwards: the increased institutional collecting of contemporary art; the globalised market for contemporary art; a focus on artists' early careers and the inflation of prices for their work; the increased ubiquity of the various sites of trade and circulation – galleries, art fairs, and auctions or what Arjun Appadurai calls 'commodity situations'; - and the impact of the rise of the private foundation upon public sector museums and their ability to form collections of contemporary art.

Drawing on key texts on the 'Gift Economy' (notably Mauss, Derrida, Bataille, Bourdieu, Carrier) and essays regarding the international art market, the lectures provide a critical overview of the key developments and theoretical issues that have attended the collecting of contemporary art by public (national, regional and municipal) museums and galleries. It also reviews a number of international contexts comparatively. In the seminars, students assess and debate specific concepts, texts, practices, issues and objects, and engage in evaluative processes. These are facilitated by trips to Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, and the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, the Hunterian Art Gallery, The Modern Institute, Sorcha Dallas and Mary, Mary, Glasgow.

### 2.2.2 Research - Research Associate

Since July 2007, Dr Fiske has been working towards the following research outputs in respect of her own long-standing research agenda.

*Current research and publishing activities*

Dr Fiske is currently working on a scholarly essay entitled 'Collecting economies: the dynamics of gift exchange in the formation of contemporary art collections'

Short abstract

'Collecting economies: the dynamics of gift exchange in the formation of contemporary art collections' *8,000 words*

This essay takes as its starting point the influential historical role of gifting on the formation of public collections of contemporary art, and seeks to situate it within the wider modalities of exchange relations that currently underlie the process of public collections-building vis-à-vis contemporary art. Arguing for a critical engagement that reaches beyond a largely acritical and ahistorical fixation with the 'phenomenon' of the gift, I draw on analysis by Pierre Bourdieu and Jacques Derrida, in particular the latter's 'aporia of the gift,' as a basis for examining the relations of exchange that underwrite the recent ARTIST ROOMS acquisition, as well as other recent examples of large-scale or single-work gifting within the international context.

*Recent*

**1) Fiske, Tina and Hermens, Erma (eds) (2009) *Art, Conservation and Authenticities: Material, Concept, Context*, (London: Archetype), 280 pages. ISBN 978-1904982517**

Edited volume featuring an introduction co-authored by Tina Fiske and Erma Hermens and comprising selected papers delivered at an international conference of the same name (University of Glasgow, September 2007).

Includes nine essays focusing on contemporary art case studies, of which one was authored by Ben Harman, Curator of Contemporary Art, GoMA and Polly Smith, Conservator, Glasgow Museums:

**Harman, Ben and Smith, Polly, 'The artist's role in installation and future display at the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow,' pp. 217-227**

**2) Fiske, Tina (2009) 'White Walls: Installations, Iteration and Difference,' in Bracker, A. and Richmond A (eds.) *Conservation: Principles, Dilemmas, and Uncomfortable Truths* (London: Elsevier) ISBN 978-0750682015, pp. 229-240**

There is a wide body of literature surrounding the documentation, recreation and/or conservation of installations, which this book chapter contends has not escaped what Jacques Derrida referred to as the 'logic of presence.' This book chapter draws on iterability and Deconstructive notions of absence and difference in order to challenge discussions of the re-installation of contemporary artworks. It takes installations to be underwritten by absence, or more precisely, by the play of absence and presence that their continual material dis-assemblage / re-assemblage instigates.

**3) Fiske, Tina and Law, Wendy (2008) *Funding Contemporary Art Collections and Collecting in the Regions: models, partnerships and international comparisons* (London: Arts Council England).**  
[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/regions/project\\_detail.php?rid=4&sid=17&id=1064](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/regions/project_detail.php?rid=4&sid=17&id=1064)

Commissioned by Arts Council England, this research entailed examining how funding partnerships and models might be developed in regional contexts to promote contemporary art collecting across England. The research was required to investigate public and private sector opportunities and successful international funding models. The resulting report synthesised two complimentary strands of research: firstly, it presented the results of a comprehensive consultation into the funding landscape across the English regions, which directly supports collections-building and contemporary art acquisitions in particular. Secondly, this report outlined selected trends, partnerships and models in evidence in municipal and regional museums across six international contexts: Germany, France, The Netherlands, Italy, Spain and Australia.

### 2.2.3 Research - projects

Within Phase 2 2007-2010, new research has been generated in response to the programme set within *Sector-located Activity*. Though of short duration, one such project – hosted by the History of Art Department - could establish a precedent to be built upon. It also proposes the potential for larger-scale

projects to be developed with partners in response to their own research agendas.

In December 2009, Dr Kirstie Skinner was awarded funding from the Scottish Arts Council to research the viability of a new Patrons Group that is responsive to Scotland's collecting context and is tailored to the supporters of Scottish culture at home and abroad.

The research has been originated by Dr Skinner in relation to the first event in the *Contemporary Collections and Collecting in Scotland* series. She was funded by the Scottish Arts Council through the History of Art Department, University of Glasgow, and her findings are presented in her report, Establishing TRUST: a patrons' group dedicated to the expansion of Scotland's contemporary art collections.

#### Short abstract

#### Context, aims and research meetings

*Following a Scottish Arts Council audit of collecting activity in Scotland conducted in 2003 and 2004 by the Contemporary Art Society, two schemes were set up. The National Collecting Scheme for Scotland aimed to develop the public holdings of contemporary art by offering funding and research support to curators, and the National Galleries' Spin members' group promoted the enjoyment of contemporary art through regular and informal discussion. Because the scale of private collecting in Scotland was revealed to be minimal, it did not seem viable to develop a patrons' scheme at that time.*

*Now, however, capitalizing on discussions as part of the Contemporary Collections and Collecting in Scotland series, and thanks to the ongoing impact of the afore-mentioned initiatives, the marked rise in the confidence of the commercial galleries in the Scottish sector, the advent of the d'Offay legacy, and a new director at the SNGMA, Scotland's collecting culture is characterized by new vigour and increasing sophistication. A new patrons group would not simply reflect this excitement: by quickly becoming a highly-regarded entity in itself, it could seek to enhance the profile and prestige of Scottish collecting in the wider art world.*

*The purpose of the research is to investigate the potential for a flexible and innovative independent patrons' group in Scotland, which could*

- *purchase works of contemporary art for public collections in Scotland,*

*and seek to engender an excitement around private support for collections*

- *be aimed at novice and experienced collectors of art, as well as other individuals who wish to engage with, and enhance, Scotland's collecting culture;*
- *promote the inherent rewards of contributing to a shared culture;*
- *consist of a number of different 'funds' so that it could work with a variety of curators and institutions, and could respond to new ideas and shifting contexts in the future.*

*The research programme includes two meetings held at the University of Glasgow:*

- *12 November 2009: Preliminary meeting, to introduce research aims to a group of invited participants.*
- *4 March 2010: 'Patrons, the work of emerging artists, museum collections.'*

#### 2.2.4 Research - postgraduate

In terms of scoping the potential to establish layers of research activity using NCSS as a platform, the fostering of new postgraduate research also continues to warrant attention. Already in this vein, Dr Fiske has provided PhD supervision to Bo Hanley: '*Commissioning for Purpose: Evaluating commissioning for acquisition as a collecting strategy for local authority collections*' (September 2008-October 2011).

Bo Hanley  
Short abstract  
PhD research

*Commissions support artists and promote creativity, innovation and risk; they strengthen partnerships, and promote participation and engagement with contemporary art. 'Commission-accession' or commissioning to collect is a practice increasingly used by European and North American museums yet it has seen little uptake in the UK. Very recent examples demonstrate that new works produced via commissioning which then enter permanent collections, can have significant financial and audience benefits that UK museums could harness, drawing on the expertise of local and national commissioning organisations such as Artangel and The Contemporary Art Society.*

*Where does commissioning fit in the landscape of contemporary collecting; are there advantages to commission-based purchases, in particular for local authority collections of contemporary art, which are forced to compete for new works with relatively small acquisitions resources; and moreover, could*

*'commission-accession' provide a sustainable means of collecting for municipal museums and galleries in the UK?*

*The use of the 'commission-accession' principle as a mechanism for sustainable collecting in public museums has been significantly under researched, only recently soliciting attention from national funding bodies. This research will continue to assess the unfolding situation, enhance existing scholarship, provide a current body of evaluative evidence for commission-based acquisitions and a set of guidelines curators can use for future contemporary art purchases.*

#### 2.2.5 Research – inter-departmental

Within Phase 2, redevelopment of the NCSS website has been taken forward by Dr Tina Fiske in conjunction with Dr Andrew McHugh and Brian Aitken from the Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute (HATII), University of Glasgow. Working from a database developed by Dr Fiske in conjunction with the NCSS curators and existing archived data from the first NCSS website, Brian Aitken has undertaken Stage one of programming and interface development, which will produce a single on-line portal to the combined acquisitions made through NCSS 2003 to present. Once completed, the on-line portal will be available via the University's arts server.

The schedule for completion of programming and interface development is due to be completed at the end of May 2010. Further phases of development could take place with additional funding in the future; there is real potential for development of the portal in respect of various functions around access for instance, such as information-sharing, featured acquisitions or artists, on-line exhibitions, or generating critical discussion.

### **3. Summary of the *Contemporary Collections and Collecting in Scotland Series***

#### **3.1 EVENT 1 – *PANEL ON CONTEMPORARY COLLECTIONS AND COLLECTING IN SCOTLAND* – TRAMWAY – MAY 29 2009**

##### 3.1.1 Purpose and aims

Within the larger aims of the Series, this inaugural event was intended to

- begin scoping out the various individuals and organisations with a stake in the formation and presentation of collections of contemporary art in Scotland
- begin mapping out and bringing into view the dynamics of the ‘visual arts ecology’ and of policy, practice, and perspectives that informs and is informed by public collecting in Scotland

The event was a pretext for bringing together representatives from various agencies and development bodies, collecting institutions, public galleries, commercial galleries as well as producers and artists for the first time.

The composition of the panel was such that it reflected this ‘eco-system’: national collection, local authority, agencies (SAC, MGS, CAS), commercial galleries, and artist. It took place at Tramway.

##### 3.1.2 Participation

Chair: Mark O’Neill (formerly Head of Arts and Museums, Culture Sport Glasgow) chaired the event, with an introduction by NCSS Research Associate, Tina Fiske.

Panel included Amanda Catto (Head of Visual Arts, Scottish Arts Council), Jane Robinson (Head of Museum Development, Museums Galleries Scotland), Simon Groom (Director, SNGMA), Victoria Hollows (Museum Manager, Gallery of Modern Art), Richard Ingleby (Ingleby Gallery,

Edinburgh), Lucy Byatt (The Contemporary Art Society, London), Christine Borland (artist).

Attendees: 56 delegates from 32 different organisations

### 3.1.3 Overview of contents

In terms of forming an overview of experiences, priorities and agendas, the seven speakers spoke for seven minutes each, and, between them, broached:

- Existing models and initiatives for developing and presenting contemporary collections in Scotland: conveying the different perspectives and emphases of these, as well as the particular opportunities and the robustness of process that these each have offered
- The lack of committed funding or support for research & travel to underpin collecting activity, or the capacity within institutions to use research to full advantage for those organizations and their audiences
- The beneficial organizational challenges and impacts of contemporary collecting experienced by those institutions building such collections
- The importance of advocating the cultural worth of contemporary art, for instance, to local authority leaders
- The need to articulate what is being offered through contemporary collecting - for institutions and for their relationships with their audiences and with artists
- The need to capitalize on the interdependence of the art world and sense of community as evident in Scotland, and explore what possibilities for co-ordination or collaboration can be enabled from this

- The desire to promote and develop capacity around principles of collective working, and the linking of collections nominally within the rationale of a 'distributed national collection'
- Commissioning as a process that has much to offer institutions; as one that promotes creative engagement, and as such one that has a role to play at the heart of what they do
- The need to develop a culture of private patronage in Scotland, and the respective roles of commercial and public galleries alike in this respect
- Priorities for policy development for contemporary collections and collecting in Scotland and the issue of national strategy formation

#### 3.1.4 Key points

##### *1. The sustainability of contemporary collecting requires a shift in the perceived cultural worth of contemporary art*

- The cultural worth of contemporary collecting - for institutions and for their relationships with their audiences and with artists - needs to be articulated and promoted
- Endorsement from the Scottish Government in support of wider ambitions to build public collections of contemporary art, building out from their investment in The Recognition Scheme and ARTIST ROOMS, is crucial for the longer term

##### *2. Collecting when viewed as an isolated activity is not sustainable*

- Contemporary collecting and the ways of working that it requires must be promoted as part of a continuum of activities that affect all aspects of what museums and galleries do, what they offer and what they represent
- Public collections could be much more closely related to broader programmes of commissioning and exhibitions as developed by non-

collecting venues, as well as the processes of research that underpin them, and particularly where public investment supports these

*3. Strategic development of contemporary collecting requires joined up working*

- Models and initiatives such as ARTIST ROOMS, Art Fund International, Commission to Collect and NCSS comprise a textured picture and support a range of principles – local, joint and shared ownership
- Understanding the checks and balances between them is critical in identifying the areas for future investment and policy development

*4. Sustainability of contemporary collecting is related to sustainability of other areas of investment and activity*

- A sustainable culture of public collecting in Scotland requires a sustainable network of private galleries
- The role of the private collector and the development of an incentivized culture of private collecting is crucial in discussions about the sustainability of public collecting

Cumulatively, the presentations and discussion provided

- Evidence of overlapping agendas and fields of concern, development and activity, between which a certain level of relatedness exists and is understood, but which appeared to be nominal and sporadic rather than strategically developed
- Evidence of the potential and desirability to link areas of visual arts ecology, infrastructure and development more collaboratively and productively around the formation and dissemination of contemporary collections in Scotland.

They indicated

- The mapping process initiated by this Series to be timely, and a prerequisite in underpinning and developing on from any of the key points above.
- The usefulness of a forum to articulate agendas and perspectives, and line those up comparatively.

### **3.2 EVENT 2 - *EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY COLLECTIONS* – CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, GLASGOW – OCTOBER 1**

#### 3.2.1 Purpose and aims

This second event looked to generate debate of a more discursive kind, which could be mindful of the critical practice that institutions elsewhere in Europe are developing around the formation and presentation of their collections – with the hope that this in turn may inform discussion on scales of ambition and issues of policy and practice in Scotland.

This event was conceived as a means to begin learning more about other institutions, particularly those that are ‘municipal’ or ‘regional’ and starting with those that have achieved a position that is simultaneously ‘local’ and ‘international.’ It was designed to introduce the audience more closely to institutions that have developed critical approaches to their collections and programmes of display, as well as to their own institutional histories and contexts of operation. This was with the intention of understanding how they put their collecting into practice and their collections into space.

#### 3.2.2. Participation

##### Chairs:

- Katrina Brown (Director, The Common Guild)
- Dr Tina Fiske (Research Associate, NCSS)

##### Speakers:

- Eva González-Sancho (FRAC Bourgogne, France)

- Antonia Maria Perelló (Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Barcelona)
- Christiane Berndes (Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven)
- Liesbeth Bik and Jos van der Pol (Bik van der Pol, Artists)

Attendees: 45 individuals from 28 organisations

### 3.2.3 Overview of contents

**Eva González-Sancho** introduced FRAC Bourgogne, one of twenty-two Fonds Regional d'Art Contemporains (regional art 'funds' or collections) in France established through national legislation in the early 1980s, 'to constitute contemporary art collections of a high level for every region in France.' Eva outlined the basic functions of every FRAC in respect of contemporary art practice– inform, collect, disseminate. She also reported on factors relating to budget and funding as well as procedural/curatorial factors around building and presenting the collection at FRAC Bourgogne.

- *'The point was not to create 'regional' collections, but international collections for the regions. These are two very different things.'*
- *The collection: to talk about this is to talk about different layers at once that cannot be disassociated. These are: 1) for us, a programme of exhibitions; 2) approaching the purchase of artworks through an editorial policy; all of the research and critical approaches that we intend to have through the editorial policy ... not just to acquire one work or another but a more global way of thinking; 3) the life of the artwork through its different travels, the dissemination and the visibility of the work and the future visibility of the work; and 4) the adding of a work to an existing corpus of works, adding further depth to that corpus.'*

**Antonia Maria Perelló** introduced the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Barcelona (MACBA), which was founded in Barcelona in 1988 by a consortium that includes the Generalitat de Catalunya, the MACBA Foundation, the City of Barcelona, and since December 2008, the Ministry of Culture. The public bodies – the Generalitat and the City – provide the

resources to support the museum's basic functions. The MACBA Foundation has generated the money each year specifically for building the collection. Since 2008 however, the various levels of government now also support acquisitions of new work into the collection.

- *'MACBA primarily wants to be a contemporary institution. We are concerned with our present and we are worried about our future ... The gravity centre of the museum is changing. It is no longer rooted in the artwork or the artist but rather in the public (the visitor). It is in this point – the visitor – that we are centered – providing the different publics of the city with different points in which hopefully they can be protagonists.'*
- *'We are more a museum of artists than artworks – we like to work with artists.'*
- *'We do not try to buy the big names – we try to buy from margins, the borders – to collect the best works by artists with promise.'*

**Christiane Berndes** introduced Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven in the Netherlands; *'We are a municipal museum. We are part of the City of Eindhoven, and it is important to us that we stay as such, as part of the municipality ... We don't want that distance from the public area. The collection is public; it is from the people and for the people of Eindhoven.'*

- *'It is not our aim to collect as much as possible, it is our aim to collect precisely.'*
- *'We are not interested in the medium; we are interested in the story and the meaning of the artwork. Here I come to this notion of quality. We collect only high quality artworks. But we ask as an institution: what do we mean by quality? Do we mean the consensus view? Or something else? We raise questions – and do not feel pressured to provide an answer.'*
- *'The theme of entanglement has been important to us: the world is now a jumble; with the internet, we can be in instant communication with the other side of the world. We can live next door to people from very different communities or cultures: what sense does it make to talk of*

*shared origins in this reality?*

Artists **Liesbeth Bik** and **Jos van der Pol** (Bik van der Pol) referred to three projects that have focused specifically on collections and the dialogic potential within and towards collections:

- *'The expression 'Married by Powers' was introduced to us by a Colombian artist, and it relates to the idea of having responsibility for a situation or an event, but devolving it to somebody else because of mitigating factors. It refers to a historical practice of arranging a marriage across distance, the two parties perhaps having never met, using proxies and being legally married at a distance through the use of those stand-in proxies. We felt this expressed our position as in-betweeners, with the ability to do more than [the curator] might be able, or [the host venue].'*

#### 3.2.4 Key points

The speakers reflected on city and regional collections that, through their formation and their dissemination, are:

- engaging with their immediate contexts (political, social) as well as their geographic 'locatedness'
- placing audience at the centre of what they do with their collections, and engaging critically notions of ownership and the role of the public collection within the municipal context
- engaging with notions of contemporaneity and the interfaces between 'global' and 'local' experience through their collections – through narratives that can be related to individuals' and communities' experiences
- engaging with dissemination as an integral part of collections-building – that these are non-separable

- aware of maximizing the ‘knowledge wave’ – through the use of international advisors to advise on acquisitions and critical practice.
- aware of the benefits of networks and partnerships, and of working with other collections ‘in place’
- building collections strategically and with precision and purpose

Cumulatively, the presentations provided

- Evidence of institutions that utilize their contemporary collecting and collections to work to a scale of ambition that links the local, national and international
- Evidence that internationally little sharing occurs around critical practice vis-à-vis the formation and dissemination of collections of contemporary art, or on policy development relating to this

They indicated

- That innovative practice where it occurs internationally needs to feed into vision and ambition around collections of contemporary art in Scotland, and inform the development of initiatives such as the NCSS
- That any future research programme developed alongside an NCSS Phase 3 needs to build on the platform that this event offered to its participants and to develop this international interface and network

### **3.3 EVENT 3 – *PLENARY* – DUNDEE CONTEMPORARY ARTS – JANUARY 20**

#### **3.3.1 Purpose and aims**

This third plenary meeting provided a context to engage new thinking around the fourth desired outcome from the Series:

- Progress thinking about areas of focus and priority for future strategic development and future investment; where responsibilities currently lie;

where leadership or partnership working around those areas of focus and priority can be identified, shared, or fostered.

A key aim of the Series was also to consider the usefulness and practicalities of forming a Standing Group, in whom the representation of key issues and the continued future critical practice around the development and presentation of collections of contemporary art could be invested. Participants were also invited to consider the usefulness respectively of developing strategy and of forming a Standing Group and/or advisory forum on the promotion, development and use of contemporary collections.

### 3.3.2. Participation

Introduction: Dr Tina Fiske

Guest speaker: Gerrie van Noord (Director, Artist Pension Trust, London)

Plenary chair: Moira Jeffrey

Invited updates from Amanda Catto (Scottish Arts Council) and Joanne Orr (Museums Galleries Scotland)

Attendees: 40 participants from 30 organizations

### 3.3.3 Overview of contents

*Mapping: current positions and recent developments*

Building on the mapping process initiated with May, the Dundee meeting was an opportunity to further flesh out the terrain informing contemporary collections and collecting in Scotland, to hear from key agencies - Scottish Arts Council and Museums Galleries Scotland - and their priorities, and to expand the range of voices feeding into the overall picture and to begin to reflect on what that 'map' might lead to, or what it might serve.

- Updates on initiatives such as Art Fund International and Artist Rooms, from further voices – production facilities (Glasgow Sculpture Studio), commissioning venues (Tramway; Fruitmarket Gallery) -as well as about new research (Institute for Capitalizing on Creativity/Dundee Contemporary Arts PhD) and about research that the mapping has enabled through already revealing certain gaps (**see 2.2.3**).

- Acknowledgement that collections and collecting '*has brought together people in a way that no other topic of discussion does because it unites us all*'.
- Also recognized was '*the intellectual energy*' that the Dundee group and participants of the wider Series have contributed to the mapping process, and the benefits of the process itself to those participants. Those benefits included the ability to articulate areas of working, of mutual interest, of overlap or concern, or to feed into planning at any early stage.

*What are the areas of priority/focus for future development and future investment?*

Areas of priority coalesced around the issue of *access*: the accessibility of artworks; the movement of works between institutions and loaning; work around engaging audiences with often challenging contemporary art - all raised with a specific focus on capacity, resources and on sharing to facilitate these areas.

- The lack of planning around capacity and the resourcing of capacity was conveyed as a key inhibition to the kinds of ambitions embedded in the partnership working of the NCSS for example. It was ear-marked as needing resolution in respect of any future emphasis on partnership working or inter-institutional working.
- The outcomes of resourcing a system of access can be seen with Artist Rooms tour 2009, which achieved an estimated 700, 000 visitors outside of London and Edinburgh. Resourcing of the tour is guaranteed till 2012, but the long-term issues around capacity and resource will very likely come to the table with that too.
- Access also raised in relation to measuring and evaluating impact - increasingly important on the political agenda - with Artist Rooms proposed as providing one structure for doing so.

*Do we need a strategy to progress future working?*

Regarding strategy and whether it might develop from a mapping process, it was felt that a vision rather than a strategy might suit better the fluid and heterogeneous character of the sector and the grouping that has developed around the Collections/Collecting Series in particular.

- A vision or '*a framework to imagine the future*' were proposed as a means to harness the qualities of the sector, which could enable a more opportunistic and responsive way of shaping developments, and allow an '*agenda to be set at this level of discussion, where issues are coming up.*'
- It was recognized that the Scottish context accommodates a spectrum of different perspectives and that, in the visual arts in Scotland, '*there is something that brings all of the different perspectives in and succeeds in doing so.*'
- Also noted was the need to tie vision to action, for vision and discussion to have 'momentum'

*Where can developments be led from?*

Focus for this was primarily around institutional leadership – particularly in relation to those organizations with an obligation (whether statutory, or as held by membership bodies) to undertake a leadership role.

- There was some consideration of partnership projects between lead organizations/agencies – such as Scotland/Venice (Scottish Arts Council/ British Council Scotland/ NGS) - as models that achieve funding and impact.
- Further discussion around leadership and models as well as the partnership value of the HE sector is needed.
- Raised also, the need to think about how different leadership can come forward, and to consider the relationship of institutional and individual leadership to what is understood by 'sector-led' (a priority for Creative Scotland).
- The key issue of credibility emerged, as a factor that is endowed in part by lead partners as well as the quality of what is produced.

- The credibility of a sector demonstrating its shared commitment also noted.
- Ways to articulate and capture this were discussed, including the possibility of a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ or of articulating a collaborative agreement between key agency/institutional partners backed by broad advisory forum.

#### *The creation of a standing group*

Discussion around the proposition of a standing group focused on the compatibility of a formalized committee and the ‘very diverse voices’ coming through the grouping. What the relationship between a standing group and a wider advisory forum might be, and how to evolve to capture and sustain that ‘intellectual energy’?

- Emphasis placed on retaining the diversity of perspective and enabling a mechanism to co-ordinate, articulate and represent, but not necessarily direct, the development of an agenda at an advisory forum level. How this might be tied into any Memorandum of Understanding or collaborative agreement?

In addition, the following were also raised:

1. the kinds of discussions or platforms that might form part of the programme of an advisory forum (such as a focused context for those programming contemporary art and the collecting institutions to share their mid-term plans at an early stage),
2. what regularity of meeting/level of participation might be manageable,
3. and where those should be developed and convened from?

#### 3.3.4 Key points

Key phrases and words emerged from the plenary discussion that should play a part in focusing and structuring future developments and outcomes around the building and use of contemporary collections. These also present a set of inter-related values to be built on from, which are positive and expansive:

**ambition, association, credibility, forum, framework, intellectual energy, momentum, responsiveness**

**Intellectual energy, momentum, credibility:** *values accumulated across the Series*

- The Series has accumulated and benefited from the **intellectual energy** and investment of a wide range of peers participating across the three events. A key question is how to maintain and convert that energy as a feature of future policy development, of critical practice as applied to the building and dissemination of contemporary collections, as well as of discussion and debate?
- Through its programme but most particularly through the participation it has enjoyed, the Series has generated a sense of **momentum** and also a '*deal of credibility*'. A question is how to tie these respectively to development and to advocacy.

**Ambition, association, responsiveness:** *values articulated through the Series*

- The Series has facilitated the identification of values that are as embedded in the conception of the National Collecting Scheme Scotland, as they are in Art Fund International and ARTIST ROOMS; namely the desire to work to a scale of **ambition** that is acknowledged and shared by peers, one that produces quality of engagement for audiences, and that links the local, national and international.
- The 'mapping' process engaged in by the Series, particularly through its first and third events, has revealed a strong inclination among the participants towards reciprocal **responsiveness** as well as the principles inherent in the act of **association** and notions attendant to it: common purpose, free congregation, partnership.

**Forum, framework:** *future structures proposed by the Series*

- The participants valorised the **forum** as a medium for open discussion, and broadly recognised the need for a smaller mechanism to articulate that as an agenda set at the sector level

- Vision and a **framework** for action were favoured above strategy and definition; as the means to support and shape future developments as well as accommodate more opportunistic responsiveness.

## 4. Scoping future developments

This section sets out initial thoughts for a continued and enhanced research dimension attendant to a NCSS Phase 3. It considers future research-focused activities that could build on the critical context established within NCSS Phase 2. It suggests areas for development and the research relationships / framework that might bring them about.

### 4.1 PHASE 2 2007-10

*'The University context has given the NCSS something different ... taken it in a different direction.'* [McManus, evaluation meeting, February 2010]

*'The involvement of the University ... the research credibility and agenda ... has brought a new perspective to [the NCSS].'* [City Art Centre, evaluation meeting, February 2010]

*'... [it is] a tremendous benefit that [the Research Associate's] post is within the university context and has had that structure and credibility, and also that commitment. Looking forward, that is what you will need.'* [Plenary meeting, Dundee, January 2010]

#### 4.1.1 Focuses

With the research dimension of NCSS Phase 2, the activities of the Research Associate have focused on

- building up the **external relationships and routes** around the NCSS
- establishing a **context of critical debate** within the sector on the issue of collections and collecting, using NCSS as the platform to do so
- **engendering** and **contributing** to layers of research and teaching activity, as well as **identifying** research and teaching needs in relation to contemporary collections formation, dissemination and impact

An area that has not received so much attention within this phase, nor benefitted as directly from the History of Art Department as a research and teaching context, is the 'internal' or **intra-NCSS engagement** between the

seven partners, and linked development work around their collecting policies. This has been a factor arising in the evaluation of Phase 2 (See **Evaluation – Museum Partners, 3.3.4**), and should be addressed as a feature of a Phase 3.

#### 4.1.2 Outcomes

Research-focused activity throughout Phase 2, that which has been both 'sector-located' and 'department-located', has supported various outcomes.

Research-focused activity has

- developed sector engagement with issues around contemporary collecting, using NCSS as a platform
- produced a sense of how different initiatives engaged in developing contemporary collections, and different areas of infrastructure sit relative to each other
- produced a template for a future annual research programme
- engaged an international dimension, through the input of invited speakers
- engaged a level of critical participation and reflection on future developments around contemporary collections and collecting in Scotland
- generated the basis for an on-going forum and a mechanism for identifying and articulating priorities for development as viewed from the sector
- enabled the preliminary identification of existing research and teaching activity within Scottish HEIs as well as the research engaged in or commissioning by sector bodies and agencies such as Scottish Arts Council, Museums Galleries Scotland, National Galleries of Scotland, Culture Sport Glasgow, VAGA, Engage, Art Fund and the Scottish Government
- helped build a picture of the needs and potential in these areas

#### 4.1.3 Priorities for development

From these outcomes, the following priorities propose themselves, which relate to the role of a research dimension and research-focused activity within a possible Phase 3 of the NCSS. These pertain to the development of the NCSS initiative, the critical context of debate, and to new research and teaching. They include:

- Securing the network forum that has evolved and developing an articulated framework through which it can support the shaping of agendas, support advocacy, and provide an effective mechanism for partnership, leadership and innovation
- Resourcing an achievable and sustainable annual research programme for such a forum that focuses on critical practice around contemporary collections
- Developing the international dimension and potential of such a forum and programme
- Resourcing of and re-focusing on the intra-NCSS element and a greater role for the university context and research-focused activity around core elements such as acquisitions research and collecting policy development
- Developing a 'shared research agenda' around contemporary collections and collecting, derived from the research priorities of a number of key HEI and sector partners, which can underpin the generation of new research and evidence that can contribute to the development of advocacy, policy and critical practice

## **4.2 THE ROLE OF RESEARCH WITHIN A PHASE 3**

### **4.2.1 Articulation around role of research and research strategies**

It has become clear throughout Phase 2 and through the *Contemporary Collections and Collecting in Scotland* Series especially that a number of sector bodies such as Scottish Arts Council, Arts Council England, and Museums Galleries Scotland are all commissioning, prioritising or engaging in research to inform policy and development, as are Culture Sport Glasgow, VAGA, Engage, Art Fund and the Contemporary Art Society.

Alongside this, it is clear that pertinent research and teaching activity pertaining in a range of ways to contemporary art curation, to cultural policy and to the formation and function of collections currently exists across a range of HEIs in Scotland – being evident in research and teaching programmes across the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and St Andrews, Edinburgh College of Art, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design and Glasgow School of Art.

Moreover, organisations such as The Fruitmarket Gallery, Stills Gallery, The Common Guild and Dundee Contemporary Arts engage international speakers and dimensions to their programmes, and work in close collaboration with their local HEIs on the organisation and delivery of events and programmes.

What is less clear are the research strategies that sit behind these developments and initiatives, on the part of agencies and sector bodies for instance, and where overlaps may exist and where new areas for research could be identified. Identifying this ground will gain particular emphasis for the HE sector as the current REF assessment period will end 2012/13.

A research dimension attendant to a possible Phase 3 could, thus, have a wider picture to formulate from, draw on, link with and work within. The Series revealed a range of issues, some such as **impact** recurring throughout, which could propose the focuses of a research dimension.

#### 4.2.2 Research relationships

On this basis, the existing research relationships supporting the NCSS, namely that between the History of Art Department, University of Glasgow and the Scottish Arts Council, could be expanded and built upon, notwithstanding the reconfigured structures that both organisations will operate through by the end of summer 2010, and through the alignment of further key partners and associate partners. Key partners, such as Museums Galleries Scotland, and further associate partners should be identified and approached.

Within the University of Glasgow itself, there are potential partners in the form of the Centre for Cultural Policy Research or Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute (HATII) for instance, as well as a new Collaborative Framework with Culture Sport Glasgow that could potentially support research-focused activities.

#### 4.2.3 Developments towards a Phase 3

##### *1. Scope the potential for a 'shared research agenda'*

Scope the potential for a 'shared research agenda', that could be formed from common research priorities articulated across University of Glasgow (across schools), Creative Scotland, Museums Galleries Scotland and other possible partners.

A shared research agenda of this kind

- could present an opportunity to articulate a research agenda around a specific area of concern that links the HE, local authority, museums/galleries and visual arts sectors.
- could underpin applications for funding for continuation of Research Associate post and the creation of other research positions, research programmes and specific research projects –for instance around impact - which could draw in specific partners in any one case, but contribute to a shared knowledge basis for all partners

- should be linked by a research programme to the wider sector forum and support the development of a forum, in linking with international policy-makers and practitioners on the continent vis-à-vis critical practice in relation to contemporary collections.
- should support the development of new, innovative postgraduate teaching

*2. More clearly articulate and structure a research programme around NCSS to support future acquisitions and collecting policy development*

Restructure 1) support for research and travel to the NCSS curators, providing support not through grants to each institution on the basis of a research brief, but through a programme, of which pre-organised travel is a feature, 2) the role and composition of the Panel, its feedback process on acquisitions and relationship to the curator group.

A structured research programme of this kind

- could underpin participation in NCSS, be a feature of participation agreement within the 15 days provision, and include components of the following: travel (outside of Scotland), pre-scheduled gallery days and studio visits, NCSS meetings and forum meetings
- could facilitate the curators in expediting travel for instance, in terms of capacity and permissions/forward-planning issues, which can be difficult particularly at local authority level and which will only tighten in the foreseeable future.
- could provide an intra-NCSS framework to support strategic development of the initiative, particularly in terms of its collaborative nature and ambition, in a Phase 3
- should re-invigorate the intellectual engagement around development of NCSS collecting policies that was a feature of Phase 1
- could provide a structure for inviting specialists and consultants to work with the group on specific areas, i.e. providing tours or development around aspects of purchasing, access to 'knowledge wave,' feedback on acquisitions etc.

### *3. Establish network forum, framework and programme*

Refine the purpose of the network forum, its form and regularity, and where its agenda and research programme are to be developed and organised from.

Define its role in

- informing, from sector-level, a framework for imagining the future vis-à-vis the development of collections of contemporary art across Scotland
- shaping and engaging with a programme
- providing a platform for certain kind of focused sector meetings

A network forum of this kind

- should be convened from the HE sector by the University of Glasgow as an element of its participation in a shared research agenda
- could respond to such a research agenda, benefit from an enhanced on-line presence, and support the development of any new teaching
- could come together once or twice a year; this should include a key event with an international dimension, with the capacity to bring together smaller seminars around particular themes more responsively
- should relate to other programming of events or series elsewhere, and provide a source for information and legacy-sharing around events
- could generate more focused meetings on a less regular basis, i.e. a meeting for key exhibition programmers, commissioners and collections curators, alongside key agencies who can facilitate partnership potential
- could support or feedback policy and project development within an articulated framework, enabling development to properly be 'sector-informed'

### *4. Scope the potential for a taught post-graduate course and form a postgraduate research cluster*

Further scope and envision a possible one-year taught post-graduate programme, looking at contemporary art / collections curation, and seek out

partners for the development of a curriculum. At postgraduate research level, promote research opportunities and convene a research group formed of students registered at University of Glasgow, DJCAD and University of St Andrews, who are currently conducting postgraduate research (PhDs) that interface in key areas.

#### 4.2.4 Envisioning a research dimension

With the aim of consolidating a field of sustained critical debate, curatorial practice and policy development, a further phase of research attendant to an NCSS Phase 3 could seek to:

- generate layers of research activity through key HE partners under the umbrella of a shared agenda, but also linking with associate activity generated across the network
- be underpinned by a sector-led, network forum
- be linked to that forum and other international networks by means of a research programme of international dimension as well as associated programmes

## **5. Recommendations**

- **Retain an HE research dimension attendant to a Phase 3 of NCSS**
- **Retain as core the existing research relationship supporting the NCSS, namely that between the History of Art Department, University of Glasgow and the Scottish Arts Council, in their restructured forms following summer 2010**
- **Expand and build upon this relationship with further HE, sector and funding partners (both key and associate)**
- **Investigate and scope the potential for a ‘shared research agenda’ around contemporary collections and collecting to be shaped by the research interests of key and associate partners**
- **Establish a network forum with a programme that is of international dimension, and that can contribute to advocacy-building, as well as to further critical discussion, policy development and curatorial practice**