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KILLER MIKE and EL-P on people, politics
and powerful moments

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This Month in Scottish Art

November brings exciting solo presentations across Edinburgh, Dundee and Glasgow. **John Akomfrah's** acclaimed contribution to the 2015 Venice Biennale comes to Talbot Rice, as Dundee showcases artist **Ulay's** long legacy of politically charged performance

Words: Figgy Guyver

November kicks off midway through Sonica, a festival of visual sonic art from fourteen countries in venues across Glasgow. Don't miss *Phase Transition* by **Kathy Hinde**, in which the artist converts the abandoned Govanhill Baths into a sound installation. Blocks of melting ice will become instruments in a sonic performance raising awareness of climate change. There are a huge range of events during the 11 day festival, so be sure to check out the full programme at sonic-a.co.uk.

Continuing on the theme of sonic art, Glasgow's David Dale Gallery will open a new exhibition by Norwegian artist **Hanne Lippard** on 4 November. Lippard's practice typically explores the production of language using only the voice, and this show, entitled *numb limb* is set to continue her investigation of form and content.

Over in Edinburgh **John Akomfrah's** *Vertigo Sea* (2015) has been installed at Talbot Rice Gallery. The three-screen installation was a stand-out piece at the 2015 Venice Biennale, and uses new and archive footage to explore the beauty and cruelty of man's relationship with the sea. Prompted by a radio interview with young Nigerian migrants, the themes range from whaling to slavery and the current refugee crisis. *Vertigo Sea* will be screened alongside *At the Graveside of Tarkovsky* (2012), which will see Talbot Rice's Georgian Gallery filled wall-to-wall with pebbles.

The weekend commencing Friday 10 November will be a busy one if you're in Glasgow: exhibitions open at Tramway, The Modern Institute, Transmission and Mary Mary Gallery.

Tramway presents a new body of sculptural work by **Amanda Ross-Ho**. This will be the LA-based artist's first solo exhibition in the UK, and will include her trademark production of comically oversized objects. The new pieces are inspired, in part, by Charlie Chaplin's political comedy *Modern Times* (1936), and will appear within an installation resembling a factory floor.

Opening at The Modern Institute's Osborne Street space will be a new selection of appropriated photographic works by **Anne Collier**. The New York artist typically uses found images to examine the embedded meaning and cultural value of photographs.

Mary Mary gallery will present its second exhibition in its new premises on Oswald Street. A trio of painters, **Lisa Alvarado**, **Alex Olson** and **Daniel Sinsel** will present new works reinterpreting their medium and challenging how the viewer reads the painterly surface and the image.

At Transmission curators from **Black Radical Imagination** will be taking over the gallery programme for the month. The collective will present *baby boy*, a visual art exhibition exploring Black-American male identity in its numerous forms. The exhibition will be bookended by a pair of films, *Baby Boy* (2002) by John Singleton and Barry Jenkins' *Moonlight* (2016).

Meanwhile, in Edinburgh, Fruitmarket opens a new major show on the weekend of 10 November. The gallery will present a mid-career exhibition of sculpture, installation, photography, film and drawing by Glasgow-based artist **Jacqueline Donachie**. Returning to the theme of identity, the artist will use sculpture to explore how we construct and support ourselves in the world. A new incarnation of the artist's *Advice Bar* (1995/2017) will also be unveiled at Fruitmarket: simultaneously installation and performance piece, Donachie will host a programme of advice sessions throughout the exhibition.

On the other side of the Forth, Dundee will also be hosting significant works from an acclaimed performance artist. **Ulay** is known for experimental photography and action works as well as collaborations with Marina Abramovic. Running throughout the month *So you see me* will present challenging works examining the ethical functions of art as well as the appearance and performance of identity. [Figgy Guyver]



Install View

Sue Tompkins The Modern Institute

★★★★★

"This is a reminisce!" shouts Sue Tompkins in *Country Crammar* (2003), and indeed, this is. Despite being one of her earlier works, the performance piece is the focus of a new film by Luke Fowler, a previous collaborator and Derek Jarman Award winner.

For this, Tompkins' fifth Modern Institute exhibition, the Aird's Lane gallery space has been transformed into an auditorium, its walls covered in untidy orange emulsion and a selection of small paintings by the artist. Her wall-projected performance is a stream-of-consciousness game of word association, backed by an internal metronome that paces her distinctive 'shout-sung' delivery. Phrases are abstracted, but in series, and Tompkins' textual process is always on display. Within 'verses' there is no jump in cognition that isn't directly spoken: "for you

faster/ four years later/ this is for you faster."

Fowler's collaged video runs parallel, though not in-sync, with Tompkins' verbal unfolding. His 16mm camera shifts from recording studio, to domestic interior, to outdoors, each time presenting a procedural interrogation of the everyday: removing books from a shelf, peeling back a corn cob husk. There are moments when meaning almost accumulates, before being discarded in a kaleidoscopic flourish for a juicier fragment of word or image.

In the adjacent Brick Space Gallery, a new body of Tompkins' painting is also on display. Her use of shop bought canvases and from-the-tube colour reflects the reworking of the commonplace found in her performance. Unlike recent exhibitions of her painted works, the use of text, here, is limited. Images tread a fine line between abstraction and representation, with thickly layered colour obscuring any semblance of fixed meaning: a toothbrush, sort of; maybe a glue-smear horizon. This is wordplay reflected as paint-play. The art of transience and pure process. [Jonathan Coward]



Verica Kovacevska, *The House We Grew Up In*, 2017

Captured State Summerhall

★★★★★

The former Yugoslavian country Macedonia seems rather distant to the UK, with it being likely that audiences here are not attuned to the Macedonian art scene. However, curator Jon Blackwood unites six art practitioners with work centring around ideas emerging across the international art world. The familiarity of themes such as urbanism and consumerism frees the spectator to attune themselves to the cultural specificity of Macedonia, a nation which is infrequently reported on by British media.

Despite stressing the internationalism of artists featured, the exhibition is firmly rooted in Macedonian history and contemporary social issues. For example, Verica Kovacevska's video piece *The House We Grew Up In* (2017) explores the impact which temporary, prefabricated houses had upon the urban space of Skopje, an

anarchic influence which bypassed the dominant architectural voice of the city.

Elsewhere, in *The Artist* (2013) Kovacevska interrogates the role of the artist, measuring the worth (or lack thereof) placed upon the occupation by society. Ironic humour is made manifest via a deliberately cold, detached atmosphere. With this sense of critical distance between viewer and subject, Kovacevska draws on the social documentary's claims of objectivity in order to highlight the frame of prejudice through which the arts are viewed.

A similar theme is picked up by artistic collaborators OPA (Obsessive Possessive Aggression) who use faux seriousness to explore the role of the artist in a society where creative opportunities are limited. Against the backdrop of a politically ensnared economy, OPA questions how artists are able to survive without bending to dominant values and aesthetics, while simultaneously underscoring the power and necessity of art as a tool for political critique. [Megan Wallace]

Until 30 Nov



Ulay, *Dunes*, 1973