Ross Sinclair: "Real Life and How to Live it in Auld Reekie / Real Life Parledonia”
A commission for Edinburgh Art Festival 2013 (EAF) comprising almost 45,000 different pieces distributed/exhibited around the city, using multiple forms, strategies and locations. 
Real Life Parledonia was a related symposium event I was invited to curate for E.A.F. featuring 12 artists/writers/performers hosted by Edinburgh College of Art attended by 120.

Over dozens of sites around the city during the festival, I invite the public of Edinburgh to consider ideas of the (sometimes conflicting) identities of the city, cultural, social, sporting historical, political, criminal, educational etc through a wide variety of contexts and artworks in dozens of locations around the city exploring the potential engagement with art, without necessarily announcing it as such.
Submitted by Ross Sinclair
Output No. 6
Real Life and How to Live it in Auld Reekie is an ambitious project made up from nearly 45,000 discrete pieces spread around the city in dozens of locations. These include 3 Billboards (20' x 10'), 20,000 beermats, 20,000 postcards, 500 posters, 500 records (7” gatefold sleeve, red vinyl) 2000 badges, 15 metal signs, in various locations, one banner, (10' x 4'), 2000 booklets, 500 tote bags. In this project I wanted to engage the public of the city in as many different locations as possible, often in situations where there would be no assumption of an 'Art' experience.

The theme of this years EAF was 'Parley' i.e, to talk/ discourse. Using a wide array of ‘empirical’ knowledge researched from various methods of statistical analysis, I wanted to provoke a discussion with the people of Edinburgh engaging their sense of identity and the construction of the identity of the city itself, from a local, national and international perspective during the vibrant and cosmopolitan demographic of the Edinburgh Festival. This reflects the accepted canons of the city's culture of the enlightenment and writers through to the twin towers of the cities football identity and also the less salubrious side such as drug deaths and suicides.
The wider context for this project and the work generally can be viewed as a dialogic, reflexive, evolving paradigm. This has come into focus over 25 years of engagement (through practice) in over 200 exhibitions, books, catalogues, exhibition practice, curating, writing and teaching and in particular for me since 1994 when I had the Real Life tattoo made.

The following slide reflects a sort of digital studio pinboard that is a fragmentary snapshot of work and text that have informed the development of the work over the years and in relation to this project.

These would, of course, include the key texts discussing the paradigms of The Real, The Everyday, and the continuing exploration of the identity/demographic of the public and the attendant politics of the dissemination or art practice which of course would take in the works of Nicolas Bourriaud and Claire Bishop though I think it is significant that the current writing in this field is formed and shaped even more specifically by the practice of artists and I see that as the true and purest site of engagement. Maria Lind, Simon Sheikh, Paul O’Neill etc.

The resultant context outlined, engages with the local/national/international activating politics, history, geography in order to interrogate and undermine received assumptions and seeks to explore new modes of engagement, formally and intellectually.

The fragments here show *Lanark* by Alasdair Gray, a formative influence discussing, identity, nationalism, culture, politics and the development of the individual in a Kafkaesque notion of ‘place’, key texts by Baudrillard and Ranciere, *The Hot 100*, by Peter Davies, Nauman. Mark Titchner and texts exploring the more pertinent local context/Scottish Enlightenment, portrait of David Hume by Allan Ramsay (1766) and dynamic formal exploration/public engagement in the series *Casual Passer-By* portraits of Braco Dimitrijevic.
This is ambitious project commissioned by Edinburgh Art Festival (EAF) as one of 10 new commissions for the 2013 festival. Founded in 2004, Edinburgh Art Festival is Scotland’s largest annual celebration of visual art. Uniquely, the festival offers the chance to experience the best contemporary Scottish artists in the context of exhibitions of the most important International artists and movements of the 20th Century and historical periods. Attracting over 250,000 visits each year, Edinburgh Art Festival brings together the capital’s leading galleries, museums and artist-run spaces, alongside new public art commissions and an innovative programme of special events. The vast majority of the festival is free to attend.

The Director of EAF saw the project I made at the Duchy (output4) where I had used different forms I have utilised over the years and told me she wanted to invite me to make a project where I could employ some of these ideas in a public context. Featuring a wide variety of forms and locations, I viewed this project as an opportunity for at least 45000 individual encounters with art, a chance for some kind of dialogue/conversation with a wide cross section of the citizens and visitors to the city during the festival.

Parledonia badges, from an edition of 2000
This link lists some of the various locations in which the works from the commission can be viewed
http://www.edinburghartfestival.com/commissions/ross_sinclair

The beermats were located in various pubs/bars ranging from the ‘4th floor’ at Harvey Nichols to Dirty Dicks on Rose St. and the posters were spread widely around official festival sites and the postcards were available in shops ranging from Waterstones on Princes St. to ‘Best of Scottish’ on the Royal Mile.

The dibond signs were specifically located to engage with the unique context of the building/place/location self consciously mimicking the ‘blue plaques’ in London.

Real Life and how to live it in Auld Reekie: Writers for example was sited in the Oxford Bar – the local of both Ian Rankin and his fictional detective John Rebus, ‘Painters’ was located on the railings of the RSA building on the mound, where the members of the new ‘57 gallery (Bellany, Moffatt etc) once hung their works in a salon de refuse). Referendum ‘79, was on the site of the old Royal High School, which was to be the site of the new devolved Scottish Government, had the referendum voted yes. /over ctd...
METHODOLOGY

This link shows the 10 commissions for EAF 2013
http://www.edinburghartfestival.com/commissions

EAF website

http://www.edinburghartfestival.com/about

Ctd ‘Bands’ was to be found on the wall of The Ingleby Gallery, previously home of The Venue which was for 30 years one of Edinburgh’s most lively venues for live music. ‘Burke and Hare’ was found near a watchtower on one of the city’s biggest graveyards, towers build to guard against body snatchers, ‘Schemes’ was located on the railings of one of the most expensive streets to live in the whole country, Two ‘Footballers’ signs were located in two of the foremost Hib and hearts pubs near the stadium (one in the toilet, on in a trophy case!) ‘Fictional Scots’ was on the back of the Scott Monument, where you go in to climb the stairs. (this was the most stolen sign, replaced 4 times) ‘The Future’ was installed at the top of the Camera Obscura, near the castle, an anachronistic but engaging 19th c idea of a futuristic way to view the city, from the castle to the sea. Various other signs were positioned at other venues.
| 1 | ABANDON HISTORY | 2 | TEAR UP THE TARTAN | 3 | SHUN THE SHORTBREAD | 4 | TAME THE TOURISTS | 5 | MUZZLE THE MONEY | 6 | MINUS THE MYTHOLOGY | 7 | FORGET THE FESTIVAL | 8 | CENSOR SCOTLAND | 9 | PERFECT THE PARLEY | 10 | FOR FEARLESS FUTURE |
|---|-----------------|---|-------------------|---|--------------------|---|------------------|---|-------------------|---|-------------------|---|------------------|---|-------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | GATHER TOGETHER | 2 | LEVITATE CULTURE | 3 | CELEBRATE SCULPTURE | 4 | VENERATE THINKING | 5 | EULOGISE SINGING | 6 | GLORIFY DRAWING | 7 | DIGNIFY DANCING | 8 | REJOICE IN WRITING | 9 | PROSELYTISE THINKING | 10 | PARLEY... |

**REAL LIFE**
...and how to live it in

**AULD REEKIE**
**...CITIZENS!**

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* LESS THAN 40% ELECTORATE VOTE YES
Ross Sinclair

REAL LIFE and how to live it in Auld Reekie

These billboard posters are part of a series of works distributed throughout the city in a variety of media: beermats in local pubs and bars, postcards, posters, badges and bags, plaques on buildings and even a limited edition 7” vinyl record. Each item carries a top ten list of different aspects of Edinburgh, from its most famous writers and painters to subjects which make for less comfortable reading. Collectively, they invite discussion about the portrayal of this most picturesque of cities.

www.edinburghartfestival.com

EDINBURGH ART FESTIVAL

1 August – 1 September 2013

LOTTERY FUNDED
3 x Billboards on Calton Road, each 20 feet x 10 feet, directly opposite rear access to Waverley Station.
Real Life and how to live in Auld Reekie: Capital-ism, Tote bags pictured on day of opening (edition of 500)
Badges and 7” Record, *Real Life Parledonia in Auld Reekie*, (gatefold sleeve, red vinyl, 500) distributed around the few remaining record shops in the city.
ROSS & THE REALIFERS
IN AULD PARLEDONIA
REAL LIFE
REKKIE
PARTS I & II

ROSS & THE REALIFERS
IN AULD REKKIE
REAL LIFE
PARLEDONIA

10. PARLEY
9. PROCESSION
8. REJOICE
7. GLORIFY
6. CELEBRATE
5. VENERATE
4. EULOGISE
3. LEVITATE
2. GATHER TO

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Real Life and how to live it in Auld Reekie: Painters, installed at the Royal Scottish Academy, on the mound.
Real Life and how to live it in Auld Reekie: Referendum '79 installed at the old Royal High School, proposed site of a devolved Scottish Government in the event of a ‘Yes’ vote in 1979. Although 51% who voted, voted ‘yes’, Westminster had decided that 40% of the total electorate must vote yes so the Scottish people had to wait another 20 years for a Scottish Parliament.
Left - Real Life and how to live it in Auld Reekie: Bands – installed on the side of Ingleby Gallery, for 30 years home of ‘The Venue, one of the city’s liveliest music venues.

Right – Real Life and how to live it in Auld Reekie: Writers, installed at The Oxford Bar, haunt of Inspector John Rebus, and his writer, Ian Rankin.
Real Life and how to Live it in Auld Reekie: Crime, situated directly outside Gayfield Square Police Station, city center
Real Life and how to live it in Auld Reekie: Festival Poster, specifically made to be seen alongside the overwhelming glut of publicity plastered around the city throughout the festival.
In parallel with my commission for the main Art Festival, Edinburgh Art Festival asked me curate an event which would kick start the festival with a dynamic overture, held in the Sculpture Court of Edinburgh College of Art within the remarkable work of Krijn de Koning. His work took the form of a multi-height platform built around about 25 of the casts which proposed a new kind of social space, less hierarchical and pedagogic.

Real Life Parledonia - This was an afternoon event at Edinburgh College of Art where. I invited 12 artists/writers/performers to contribute to a live event where I also performed and hosted. This included drawing, dance, deconstructed lecture, songs, spoken word prose/poetry, music, improvisation with the audience etc. There was a booklet published to accompany this event(2000 copies) including an essay I wrote which reflected on the contributors and the festival theme of ‘Parley’. The contributors were, Prof. Raymond MacDonald, Maria Fusco, Ewan Morrison, Hanna Tuulikki, Romany Dear/Dominic Paterson, Florin-Alen Mocanu, Phoebe Amis, Amy Pickles, Chris Silver, Kenyersel, Birthe Jorgenson, Krijn De Koning.

“Artist Ross Sinclair adopts the role of ring master to direct a loose array of speakers, performers and artists, in debating questions such as: ‘what is Parley? And what is Caledonia? And how might they come together locally, nationally and internationally? What is the job description of ‘artists’ in a small damp Northern European country in 2013? What is a ‘creative life’ and how can the idea be articulated by ourselves and others at this particularly complicated moment in time?’.

The artists I selected included a number of students from the current graduating year in SEA of GSA as well as some from the previous years. I wanted to explore the idea of artists starting off with one set of formal concerns which, over time, move into other areas, for example artists who train in Environmental Art but end up exploring dance in their practice (Romany Dear) or music/voice (Hanna Tuulikki) or Ewan Morisson who trained at GSA in Photography but is now an award winning author. I have had some connection with most of these artists over the years and wanted to continue a conversation in this dynamic public sense. I put the event together with the specific aim that it would remain open ended and ambiguous, raising a number of different questions in relation to the themes of the festival and at the end proposed that the further discussion of these questions could be addressed while traversing the city exploring the different works in the festival.
REAL LIFE
...and how to live it in
PARLEDONIA
...CITIZENS!

1. GATHER TOGETHER
2. LEVITATE CULTURE
3. CELEBRATE SCULPTURE
4. VENERATE THINKING
5. EULOGISE SINGING
6. GLORIFY DRAWING
7. DIGNIFY DANCING
8. REJOICE IN WRITING
9. PROSELYTISE THINKING
10. PARLEY...

PARLEDONIA
E.C.A SCULPTURE COURT
2ND AUGUST 2013
EDINBURGH ART FESTIVAL

... ROSS SINCLAIR WITH
1. RAYMOND MACDONALD
2. MARIA FUSSCO
3. EWAN MORRISON
4. HANNA TUULIKKI
5. ROMANY DEAR / DOMINIC PATERSON
6. FLORIN-ALLEN MOCANU
7. PHOEBE AMIS
8. AMY PICKLES
9. CHRIS SILVER
10. KENYERSEL
11. BIRTHE JORGENSON
12. KRIJN DE KONING
Real Life Parledonia (details)
Real Life and how to live it in Auld Reekie: Fictional Scots, installed at the Scott Monument. Sir Walter Scott is arguably the ‘father’ of contemporary Scottish identity.
Beermats installed and being used in Worlds End pub, High Street and at Harvey Nichols exclusive 4th Floor Café/Bar. There are 4 different beermats each with a different subject on each side, for example Footballers/Poets and Kings and Queens/Referendum'79
Real Life and how to live it in Auld Reekie – postcards – sets of 12 different subjects and also sold individually
Real Life and how to live it in Auld Reekie: Burke & Hare installed beside 19th c cemetery watchtower - Schemes, installed in one of the most expensive residential streets in the country, Footballers in Hibs Bar toilet.
Real Life and how to live it in Auld Reekie: The Future, installed at the Camera Obscura on the Royal Mile up beside the Castle – I liked the idea of looking back to a contemporaneously futuristic technology of the 19th C in order to free the imagination to look forward to our own uncertain future.
DISSEMINATION

The project was one of the most widely disseminated in 25 years of practice and generated a lot of discussion and was seen by an extremely diverse audience. As many of the works are flexible and moveable (posters/postcards/beermats etc) – these continue to have a life after the event. I include a letter from Alex Salmond, Scotland’s first minister to Chris Silver one of my participants of Real Life Parledonia (and a recent GSA graduate) in which he refers to my project as one which indicates a freedom of expression in the current political climate.

Recent Reviews of the project
The Scotsman 1 August 2013 ‘Poster Campaign Marks Edinburgh Art Festival Start’ By Brian Ferguson http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/arts/news/poster-campaign-marks-edinburgh-art-festival-start-1-3023784
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Aesthetica August / September 2013 ‘Last words’ Not credited No online link

http://thisiscentralstation.com/edinburgh-festivals/eaf2013-preview/
The EAF published a short book featuring each commission including an essay discussing each project by the director Sorcha Carey. My work discussed pp 21-23.
Since the project I have also been nominated for the prestigious Glenfiddich Spirit of Scotland Awards 2013 http://www.glenfiddich.com/uk/explore/spirit-of-scotland/
I am also in dialogue with a Curator from South Korea about developing the Real Life Parledonia project in that context.