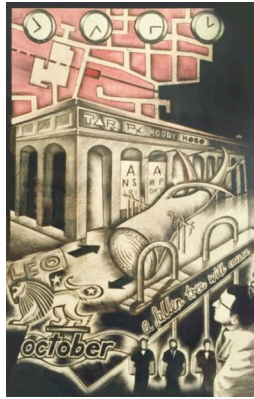


Growing up in Public Art: Chicago and Bellgrove

Glasgow School of Art MFA 1989-91

Alan Dunn

Postscript



I come across some images from Environmental Art not included in *Learning to be silent*. I find a Bellgrove-planning psychogeographic map of sections of the east end. It is biro-drawn from early 1990 and shows the arches, a map of Dennistoun, fallen trees, a list of gang names and an eye chart test slotted into the retaining wall. Post-Barcelona is the self-explanatory and nicely-titled *Monkserrat* and a self-portrait from behind phoning into the blind man who walks around the Dali Museum. As I write in *Up the hill backwards*, it is about the patina of a Butthole Surfers song rather than each component.



From the summer of 1988 there is a white chalk sketch on a blackboard in one of the Easterhouse schools I was running workshops in. Something to do with billboards vs blackboards and education and *The Shadow*. It is the same figure that appears in the Gallowgate billboard. And finally an example of the biro pen pressed into the reverse of photographic paper that is then exposed at an angle. Dark times in the darkroom.

Summer 1989

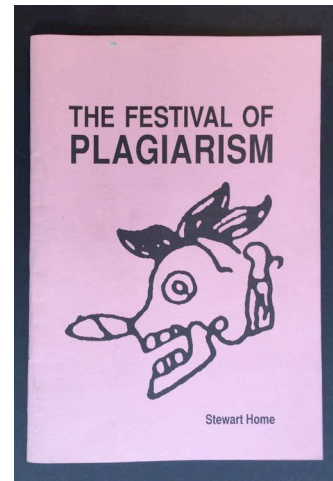
Thirteenth century Scottish philosopher and Franciscan monk John Duns Scotus turns against the orthodoxy of Aquinas. The Church reject his ideas and the modern day dunce cap is named after him. I read that the name

Dunn may stem from Duns, and find the statue of him in Duns, just outside Berwick.



This is my summer research. I continue working in Rogerfield and Easterhouse. The heat in Glasgow rises for once and I invest in some Neneh Cherry, Girltrouble, Grace Jones, Mica Paris and Jane Wiedlin. I meet up with Roland Miller and he gives me advice about the next year in Glasgow, warning me "against becoming part of the outdoor gallery system." David tells me the Third Eye Centre may want to commission a billboard as part of the National Review of Live Art and Clare Henry writes in The Herald: "billboard projects by Buchanan and Dunn show environmental art at its best." Ambo is late to open up as he spends the Friday night on glue being towed around

Rogerfield on a dog leash. It is the heat. All hell breaks loose as Rangers sign a high-profile Catholic. *FUCK YOUR MO SURRENDER* graffiti appears in Ruchazie. I meet Nikki and John Dodds at the Third Eye Centre to discuss billboard plans and I have an idea called *Ghetto Plaster* to develop. I hang out at the new Transmission with Christine, Billy Clarke, Peter G and Douglas G to plan the Festival of Plagiarism piece and I have this idea of an indoor billboard that changes each day during the show. Jerry Dammers is in the press saying that *Ghost Town* is inspired by a trip to Easterhouse and we hear the Stone Roses for the first time. Mo's dad gets mugged in Springburn by neds in Celtic tops. The heat.



The Festival of Plagiarism at Transmission: Stewart Home's *Three-year Art Strike*, Jamie Reid, terrorist videos, David Allen, Tape Beatles, King Mob, The Temple of Psychik Youth, Florence Cramer and The Mudguards whom I am asked to document. I write: I AM NOT SURE IF THEY HAVE STARTED: TOY UZIS AND TOY CARS. I photograph the Festival and recycle it back into the billboard, along with images from Rogerfield murals painted the day before. I borrow VAGUE

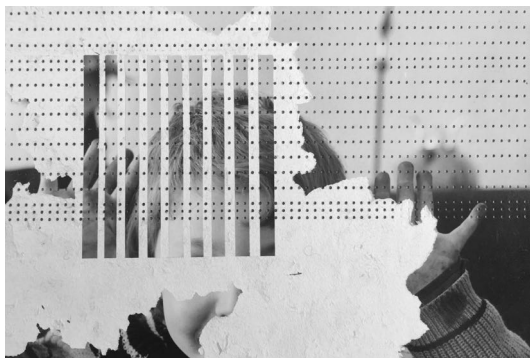
and try to make sense of it: *The 20th Century and How to Leave it / Psychic Terrorism Annual*, with that great still from *If* on the cover. During the Festival, Angela R and I do a huge Banana Splits mural in an Easterhouse church for the Reverend Ainslie. Cool haircuts can only be had from Alberto's in Shettleston and I get a call from some hippy anti-tory activist who has seen my Plagiarism work and



wants me to approach MNA for him with his campaign of forty billboards that simply say *FUCK* on them. We do another church mural and Angela and I attend the service to speak to the congregation about our finished design. I chat with Robert Auld and he will stay involved with Easterhouse Arts until



retiring in mid-2015. I talk with Hilary Robinson who is interested in the billboards and I work up a proposal for a mural in Maryhill that is something to do with Dali and facepainting. David says to use the word *esquisse* for these drawn proposals. Family funerals are always at Daldowie Cemetery, out from Mount Vernon towards Calderpark Zoo. I have an idea for a work about being the only human left in the city. Does that constitute public art? My design for Maryhill makes the last 30 of 180 submissions but I don't get the gig. I think a flaming Phoenix wins it.



September 1989 – June 1990

MFA: the Girls' High is sold but the buyers pull out. The planned move to St. George's Road falls through, something to do with the 'missive' stage. Brian and I wonder about the missive society. I read Deanna Petherbridge's 1983 essay on using billboards for art. I start cutting up old

black & white photographs from my childhood. We are to be in the GH after all and I spend time with Craig R preparing some ground floor studios. I meet the newly arrived Brigitte on her British Council scholarship. She starts in Sculpture but gets disillusioned and meets Sam Ainsley in the Vic who tells her to relocate to the GH. Thanks again, Sam! I hang out with Dublin Dot as Eddie Stewart relocates to the GH and starts carving up the floorboards. Janitor Bill is really pissing me off and already the building is chaotic. Claire Barclay and Martin Boyce sally in for their final year and there is a proposed trip to Germany on the cards. We hear that Photography are also moving in to the

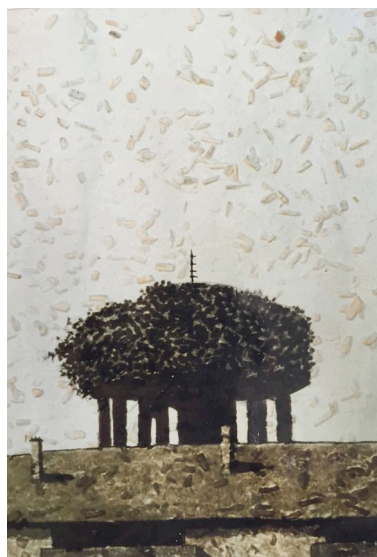
GH and nobody knows where to turn to start the academic year. A few pints are had in The Ref with Craig and Ian McLinton who is on the MFA to mull it all over.

The powers that be decide that it would be a good idea if Peter McCaughey (second year MFA) moves in to share a studio with me. David rips into my summer work, describing it as "inconsistent and shit." Welcome back. There are eight in our year – Ian McL, Aideen Cusack, Rebecca F, Susie S, Doug Doig, Annette Heyer and Ray Stratton. Michelle Rowley from Liverpool will start our course and then transfer, but by June 1991 only four of us will actually pass the MFA.



Once a week we sit in on the second year seminars, under the tutelage of Sam Ainsley, Roger Palmer and Sandy Moffat. We sit upstairs in the Mackintosh for a drunken mixed-year dinner and I sit between postgrads Brigitte and Rachel and the atmosphere all round is *really* weird. There is a lack of foundation, even for those who have been around GSA. My

billboard goes up for the National Review of Live Art and I develop a technique of drawing with permanent markers on the reverse side of the paper to allow the ghostly images to seep through. This work is something to do with the sheer volume of urban noise that Glasgow is emitting and, just like *London Road* back in 1987, there is a postman figure walking through the billboard, oblivious to the issues around. Except that the figure is now me.



George Wyllie is around again, energising us with his paper boat videos and David pulls me aside to say "Look, Alan, just go *for it* on this MFA." We drink in The Vic as an exhibition in the Mackintosh is announced. What do I do? I start making weird breadboards with images from the east end, of the Garthamlock water tower and the new cow-decorated vans and I make some woodchip tower block things that are really shit. But they get me started. Julie Roberts is in the studio above precisely painting medical equipment and McCaughey is hardly around. I propose a work to Tessa Jackson that is to be painted on top of one of the Bellgrove tower blocks and hence only be seen from the air. It would be a seated figure viewed from above, reading some kind of

instruction manual. The last human in the east end.

Glasgow in winter. The cold and grey sparks everybody to moan to, and about, each other. Short days, short tempers. I read that Wyllie is trying to install a huge pendulum 'swing' over the Clyde instead of a bridge. There is a weird girl in a trunk haunting the Girls' High. McCaughey stages an event in

an empty cinema that ends with fire and the police. But he is busy, meaning studio to myself. Hospitality: Brigitte, Ross, Helen Maria, Rebecca, two Dundee sculptors brought by David H, Rachel, Sam A, Craig R, Anne Elliott. It's the place to be. I write, half joking: HOW THE FUCK AM I SUPPOSED TO GET ANY WORK DONE!?



American Ray Stratton seems an odd fit for our MFA, working on his very precise maze prints. I witness a phenomenal early evening fight in West Nile Street. Pop over to Mackintosh to chat with Susan punk Steele. She will fail the MFA and we lose touch but I have just found her website [SU_E_SIDE\(SCRAP ART\)](#) and the anarchic energy is still there. We listen to the gorgeous Galaxie 500 and *Les Voix des Bulgares* as the Berlin Wall comes down. I pop out to Paisley to see the *Information* exhibition with Dave Allen, Claire Barclay, Martin Boyce, Roddy Buchanan, Nathan Coley, Jackie Donachie, Douglas Gordon, Michael McDonough, Craig Richardson, Ross Sinclair and Karen Vaughan.

The MFA is quiet. Aideen Cusack starts to conjure up some magical works in the Mackintosh. I watch Léa Pool's *Anne Trister* on the suicidal mural painter and have a good tutorial with Sam A who suggests that I could do an exchange to the Art Institute of Chicago in my second year. Go to a talk about *Common Ground* by its founder Sue Clifford. Brigitte steals my kettle. Try to arrange a tutorial with Sandy Moffat and help Ross carry the huge *Soup Dragons*. *This is our art star*. More studio hospitality: Bryndis, Sue Clifford, Ross, Julie Roberts, Ian McL. Craig, John Calcutt, David H and our two 'janitors' Billie and Norrie, the latter of whom will be sacked for misconduct. I should just go play 5-a-side, or buy a Lambretta. Anything. BBC2 and Channel 4 show plenty of films with the young Hanna Schygulla.

The second years have an interim show down at Transmission Gallery and the opening is packed. Jim Hamlyn shows his stitched together peppers and fruit, Dempster his books on tower blocks that we will later use at *Bellgrove* with a Kelman quote, Craig is working on glossy white torture-type minimal sculptures and Eddy S thinks he is Keifer.

Read Ian Stewart's *Does God Play Dice? The New Mathematics of Chaos* and there is a deed moose downstairs in the Girls' High. Some periods of your life feel a bit spacey, not chemically, just floating between highlights like a dream with a constant procession of people through your studio. But this is the EA way, despite being MFA. The socialisation years, after all. Rachel and Rebecca sit for coffee but I have to head out to work in Easterhouse. James Kelman has to cancel his tutorial. McCaughey starts to roll dice. He borrows my Super-8 projector that actually belongs to my dad. He badly bolts it to a wall to project onto a floor, it falls, breaks and he says nothing. I am fucking furious and ask that he is moved out of the studio. He is hardly around but

now I have the studio all to myself. Time to really go for it and, despite the fog, and the woodchip, I get all round brilliant end-of-first-term MFA tutorials.

I start to contact German billboard companies with the help of Brigitte and Marlies. Susan Hiller visits us and sits in my studio and talks of frozen water and buildings as people. We go for a curry later and I am sat between her and Roger Palmer. They talk through me like a ghost about the latest art from Canada. Go to the Kelman talk and there are only four (!) others there, including Dempster. Head for Dundee with Brigitte and Sandy Moffat starts showing some of my billboard works in his talks and I watch Antonio Skármeta's excellent 1983 *Burning Patience* about the poor postman, with Oscar Castro and Marcela Osorio. I see *the uncle who I always thought was a spy on the subway* but he is not with my aunt. I work on my brown covered book that is full of ideas around billboards, architecture and murals. It feels close to something big, but there is still something missing. Chaos in Romania. The sound of The Sundays. *Can't be sure*. Barmy Army. End of a decade. George Wyllie and Tim Neat (who will later author *Part Seen, Part Imagined: Meaning and Symbolism in the Work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Margaret Macdonald*) are in the studio. I have a self-portrait in profile with headphones on and GW describes it as the most anti-social image he has ever seen. He talks about ships and I suggest that tower blocks are our modern day equivalent.



Welcome to 1990 European Capital of Culture.

I start to learn German. Read William James. Two youngsters break into the Girls' High janitors box and get all keys. *Ghost riders in the sky*. Craig's stock sculpture is splattered with blood red paint. Read George Orwell. Chat with third year EA Chris about jazz. Douglas Doig is in our year but he has spent most of the time in Morocco. He defines grunge. Roll ups, splinters, dope. Head for GFT with Roger P and Ross for the latest Jim Jarmusch, *Mystery Train*. Dempster does his seminar on the USSR, we all sit around in silence, not just for his, for most of them. Maggie Bolt from the Scottish Arts Council pops in to the studio for a chat and mentions that they have changed their policy to allow students to apply. They have an upcoming New Projects Scheme for public art projects.

In the EA third year, Jerry Heavy Heavy Drinker Glass pays £77 trade price for a pile of bricks. I am normally in the Girls' High by 8am and start each day with a great chat with our hilarious cleaners. They know what is happening and they talk of "the lady who just turned down the new GSA Director's job." I write: NEED BRAKE. NEED BREAK. Jim Hamlyn's seminar is silent, cut-up texts from Baudrillard, Barthes and Nietzsche on an OHP. I am a bit lost. Sam pops in for a cuppa and Brigitte drags me away for posh coffee to Fazzi's on

Cambridge Street. The city is changing. She asks whether I think she should join the MFA after her one year Postgrad.

My work in Easterhouse and Rogerfield grinds to a halt as they all internally combust, argue and lose funding. I boycott both Virgin and HMV on Union Street in favour of our smaller outlets. Parts of the Girls' High roof fall in, floors flood and surveyors drill nearby. Hospitality: Brigitte, Bryndis, Rebecca, Rachel, Barbara Droth and Aideen. Alex Dempster, on Sandy Moffat's advice, pops in for a chat about tower blocks. We will start to collaborate on projects and continue until about 1995. I become aware of Gerhard Richter. I double-dot all my ü's and ä's. Miller Homes reps are all over the Girls' High. I get a weird call from Anderson in Cardonald to do a painting from a photograph of his turned-over-eight-times banger, £50. Claire Barclay's installation in the Girls' High toilets. I head out to the Western Infirmary to meet Professor Barrett to chat about a possible mural and get a tour of the Radiotherapy Ward. Wander down to the British Art Show with Claire and new EA Fergus. We see works by Cornelia Parker, Vong Phaophanit, Sonia Boyce and Melanie Counsell. Sandy introduces me to David Ward and some folk from Goldsmiths. Start to lose interest in looking forward with music and listen to Smokey Robinson and the Miracles. Barbara Droth translates the letters I get back from German billboard companies and I try to book one in Düsseldorf for only 15DM.

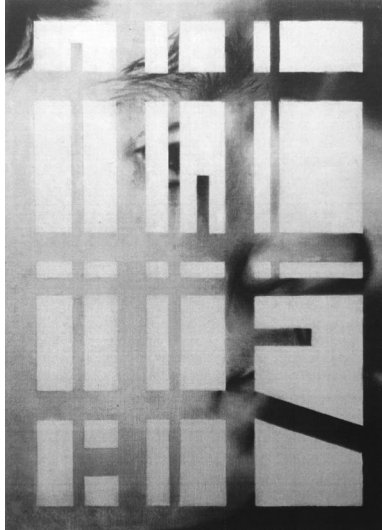


I quietly work on a proposal for the Scottish Arts Council, to install a 20x5ft billboard panel on the retaining wall of Bellgrove. I would curate it for a year, presenting works from students, artists, community groups and writers.

We all head for a DAAD-supported whirlwind tour of Düsseldorf, Cologne, Wuppertal, Bonn, Essen, Krefeld, Neuss, Mönchengladbach and Duisburg. The flight out is fucking terrifying and Aideen is screaming and for a moment we all think the whole MFA cohort are going to die a terrible death. Brigitte and our guide Alex Totter meet us at the Hotel Herzog and Sandy is in his element, dragging Bryndis, Brigitte, Sam and myself around his old haunts, finally drunk enough to ask me which team I support.

This is about seeing art and drinking beer, and lots of it. I don't like the proportions of German billboards but I meet one of the companies and leave it as a 'maybe.' We get a tour of Düsseldorf Kunstakademie with Klapheck and Richter clones painting huge jigsaws. Warhol retrospective at Ludwig, Richter's portraits, Arman, Penck, Museum Folkwang, Beuys, Matta-Clark,

Trockel, Museum Abteiberg, Heerich's Insel Hombroich, Kunstsammlung NRW, Nam June Paik and Maina-Miriam Munsky. We see a big Egon Schiele show, do the Wuppertal monorail and get a tour of some private Cologne galleries. It is only seven days but it is as exciting as fuck.



I come back to re-think things and immediately start on the pastel drawings of a younger me laid over maps of the east end. My dad, being the amateur photographer, took pictures of us growing up almost every day and there are literally box loads of them. I get invited to take part in the sequel exhibition to *Information* but I hear nothing else after that. I dismantle all those shit boxes I have been making and turn them into shelves. Hospitality: Barbara, David H, McLinton, Craig, Rachel, Brigitte, Douglas, Evan and Cyberpunk Donna.

At Larry Riccio's recommendation, I meet with Brenda and Michael of the European Special Olympics about doing some summer banner workshops at the SECC. They know David H and both of them remember seeing the Flower Power mural Nathan and I did back in '86. Douglas brings around some folk from the Bremen Windfall project. The Easterhouse phoenix then rises and I am back in employment with a whole new team. It is Valentines Day and Rachel, Rebecca, The Doig, Brigitte and myself have a drink in The Vic. We share some brandy later. The Doig will ultimately fail our MFA too after nearly burning us all down during the final show. And a few times before that too.



Family friend Jack Chalmers knows somebody who knows somebody with a key and I spend Sunday afternoon with him and my dad up on the roof of the Bellgrove tower blocks. I still think a mural up there is possible, anti-public art. Top of the east end, looking down on the station and thinking about my application on some Arts Council desk. Aideen's puppet videos are the best thing on our MFA. Everybody else is a bit in the dark. I unearth some aerial photographs of the Bellgrove tower blocks in the Mitchell Library. The studio is

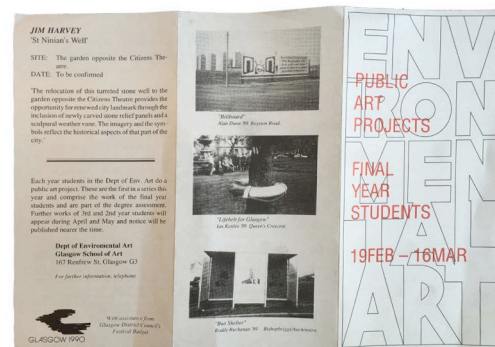
relaxed, lots of ska tapes and Roddy returns from Belfast for a catch up chat on billboards. Go to Alan Johnston's talk with his delicate pencil wall drawings. MINIMAL. I have a tutorial with him. He is incredibly soft spoken and we chat about fresco. Sandy Moffat encourages me in his own quiet way, pushing me to enlarge the work again. Susie Steele hasn't slept for three days. A few of us have some drinks in the quiet Babbity Bowsters then pop in to Transmission to catch up with Douglas and Peter G. We go to Tim Hyman's talk on Siena and he asks about my "colour sense" during our tutorial. Withdraw to The Vic with Rachel and Rebecca to compare notes. FOPP records is the place to shop as my appetite returns, helped by Fugazi (Margin Walker) and the new Wedding Present stuff, namely the Albin-produced Kennedy.

Jenny Saville is upstairs in the Mackintosh and something is happening. See the Gregory Nash Dance Group at the newly opened Tramway and I start a research folder on grey, that will ultimately lead to the *Grey is the colour of hope* CD ten years later. That CD will include me contacting Gerhard Richter



for permission on content that he gives. My old secondary school teacher Hector McLean calls round to borrow some stuff to show to his art classes and he tells me our other art teacher Mr. Wright (sadly nicknamed Lefty as he wasn't quite right) has killed himself. Craig's seminar is cancelled as not one of the MFA staff are available and some students think this is serious.

David pops in and absolutely loves the new grey drawings and talks of "the work having really gone up a level." Wander about to see Ross' *CAPITAL OF CULTURE – CULTURE OF CAPITAL* posters that he has fly-posted around. Good stuff. David produces a little leaflet for all the third year's public works – Chris Wallace's restitched seating fabrics on the Helensborough-Lanark train, Helen Maria Nugent's *Walk on gilded splinter* in Buchanan Street and Martin Boyce's *New things in cartons* in the old Boots shop on Argyle Street. Rita Keegan gives a talk on The Bronx and Steven Campbell's *On form and fiction* opens at the Third Eye. It is even suggested that I relocate to Düsseldorf to study under Richter.



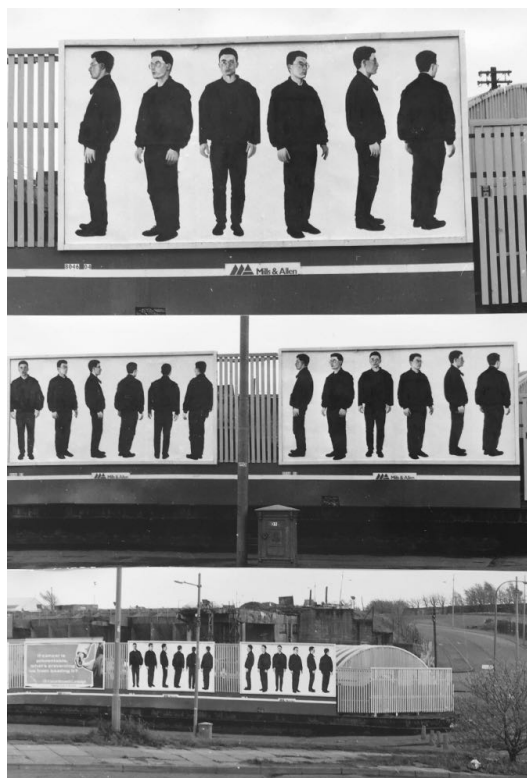
Then I get the letter from Scottish Arts Council offering the extraordinary sum of £1,000 for the *Bellgrove* project. Celebrate in L'Odeon.

Malcolm Jamieson does his lovely blue shimmering Molendinar Burn third year installation. I meet Brian Kyle at MnA and he is cool with constructing me a billboard for a year and doing all the installations. I sit in the Kings Café and dream of this project and head into the Girls' High. Steven Campbell comes in for a tutorial and he is pissed and offers me a nip of whisky from his hipflask. "So" he slurs, looking at a studio full of the pastel drawings "you are cool, restrained and minimal. These are brilliant. Now let's talk about your cassettes.

The Ramones (747 Saudi Cassette Supermarket). Oh, Clare Grogan! I have such a crush on her." We sit and laugh about the merits of *Altered Images* before Moffat comes to rescue me (or Campbell). I take the drawings over to the Mackintosh to start hanging them for our MA1 exhibition with the help of Kenny Hunter to the sounds of The Clash and Motown. I bomb out to Easterhouse for a workshop.

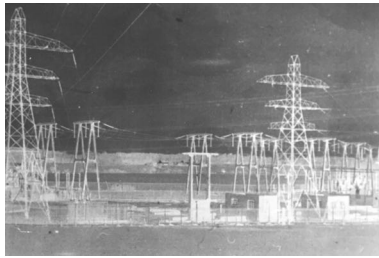


I head over to Edinburgh to meet Roger Livingston of the Scottish Arts Council and he loves all the billboards and is really excited about *Bellgrove*. I go on to the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art for the Gwen Hardie show and chat with Moffat and John Shankie. *Sites Positions* is all over Glasgow with works by Christine Borland, a grey billboard by Roger Palmer that I begrudgingly like, and Douglas' new *MUTE* painting at Glasgow Green. I bump into Joe Nevin en route. Hospitality: Bryndis, Brigitte, Craig and Jim, all excited by the *Bellgrove* news. Head southside to see the David Mach show



at Tramway and then on to Hampden for Scotland 1 Argentina 0. Sadly, Maradona doesn't play. I always regret not seeing him in 1979 but I was playing myself in a cup game for St. Bridgets. Head northside to see Euan's Colston installation and chat with Uncle John who tells me he has "80% amnesia." Fugazi's *Repeater*. I have an idea for two new billboards and photograph myself standing turning 360 degrees. It is installed near the Royal Infirmary and looks fucking great. I am not sure which way to turn, sometimes facing east, sometimes west, slightly swaying. Roger P fucking hates the work but I don't care at this stage. I am invited to look at the new MFA applications and there are 117 of them. The Doig staggers in at the last minute to install his MA1 work.

I bump in to Ruth Greer on the bus, the goth that was nearly the EA goth. We are surrounded by a happy smiling Mr. Man face of *Glasgow's (S)miles Better*. Over to Edinburgh to see the Walter Dahn exhibition with stunning photographs of Rosemarie Trockel. Love. Then it is on to the Collective for the opening of Craig and Christine's exhibition. MINIMAL.



Grey wet Sunday. Flâneur. Five-hour east end trek, Tillycairn Road, derelict farm, Gartloch Mental Hospital, Gartcosh Steelworks, savage dogs and savage kids shouting "That a camera, mister?" Lockdochart Road looking for the original Easterhouse mural, half bricks thrown by lost kids. Shaken, wander to see Ambo and his wife in Rogerfield but Aldo is there talking jibberish

about all the porn he finds in the bins. Ambo gets some beer. Jump on train to Bellgrove to spend time on the platform. Head home. Jump on train to Bridge of Orchy the next day, a lot on my mind, but it is full of American and Dutch tourists. Pop in to the Bridge of Orchy Hotel and they still have my framed pencil drawing on their wall that they bought in 1985. Read Susan Sontag on train back and Buchloh's essay on Richter's new Baader-Meinhof suite.

Everybody seems to love the MA1 drawings and the billboards and I meet with ScotRail who confirm permission to use Bellgrove. In the studio I try out some new things. I project up the black & white negatives from the five-hour walk and draw with pastels, cancelling out everything until it is grey (while the projection is on). Neutralizing, if that makes sense. Drink in Nicos and chat with Ross about him doing the MFA. Head for the cinema with Rachel and Rebecca for *War of the roses*. Tutorial with Sandy Moffat: talk about football for an hour. Alice Adams gives a talk about large land art projects. Good chat with Hilary Robinson about *Bellgrove* and Sam talks about getting hold of a big warehouse for a project. Pop in to see Wols exhibition at Transmission and Sandy has exhibition at Kelvingrove. Third Eye opening and then the Griffin with the usual gang: David and Sam, Euan, Sandy, Brigitte, Helen Maria, Douglas and Christine, Craig, Nathan, Rebecca and Rachel, Dempster, Maggie Bolt, Julie Roberts, Claire Barclay, Roddy B, Martin Boyce, Peter Gilmour, Bryndis S, Andrew Nairne, Tessa Jackson et al.

Six-hours at Lochend Gala Day, painting banners and playing six-a-side with familiar side-burners. Malcom Dickson wants to do an interview on *Bellgrove* for the next Variant. Dieter Magnus gives a talk and I watch Wenders' 1972 *The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty*. Sandy gives me a Thomas Lawson

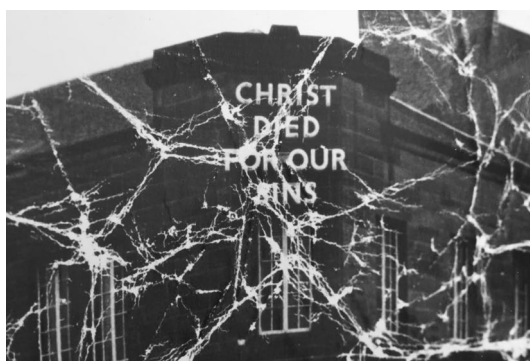


postcard with his new billboard and I sit in on some MA interviews. David lines up a mural project in the St. Enoch's Centre and Dempster and I decide to collaborate and I talk to the folk called The Arts Is Magic who will work with the Special Olympics. Scotland lose 1-3 at home to Egypt and I have a tutorial with Darrell Vyner who accuses me of being a megalomaniac. I reply that he should

have met me last year and we all go for pizza at Di Maggios. I cover the studio floor with old billboards and try to do something with oil stains but it doesn't work, so Dempster and I start the mural at St. Enoch's, something based on a weird European weather map. Declan McGonagle calls in to the studio. He is curating *A New Necessity* in Newcastle with Thomas Lawson,

Gerhard Richter and Marina Abramovic. Head through to Edinburgh with Eddie, Dempster and Moffat for the Schnabel opening and update Maggie Bolt of Scottish Arts Council on *Bellgrove*. David H pops in to criticise "the loss of drama" in the recent work but he is excited about *Bellgrove*. I make lots of calls to Chicago and, with Sam's invaluable help once again, plan the exchange.

A big *FOR SALE* sign goes up on the Girls' High façade. Public artwork. Have a good tutorial with Alistair McLennan and he tells me to keep it simple. *Four Cities* announced for Glasgow with Brisley, Trockel, Fischli & Weiss, Deacon and Wilson. Head for Third Eye with Bryndis and Anne Q for Abramovic's *Dragon Heads* performance. Marina sits in the middle with a large snake. A circle of ice surrounds her. I am stood next to Ricky Demarco and at one point the snake slithers straight for us, up the ice



I continue to work with black and white photographs, crumpling, mirroring, copying. Looking back, this is exorcising the ghost of growing up with the amateur photographer. I help Craig, Julie R and Jim Hamlyn get their space ready for the final MFA exhibition and I have a tutorial with Barbara DeGenevieve, chatting about community art and Chicago as World

Cup Italia '90 kicks off. We all go to a Margaret Hunter opening and then the Third Eye with Marlies, Fini Tribe Andy and Sheila from The Arts Is Magic. Sunday spent at Cranhill Arts Centre with Alistair screenprinting with oil-based ink and he gets out a recently acquired bottle of Korean Adder Liquor which we drink, careful to keep the snake wedged in the neck. I remember floating back along Edinburgh Road in the hot evening sun in time for the Sweden - Brazil game. I feel shit the next day, perfect for Costa Rica 1 Scotland 0. We watch it upstairs in the Girls' High with cans, groans and two Americans.



I am having a good MFA group tutorial about Chicago and *Bellgrove* and Palmer spends the hour criticising the work, the plans, the progress and even the studio. On the other side, our externals Shelagh Cluett and Bruce McLean hang out in the studio and they love the work, reminding me to keep it simple, cool it and relax. I sit on the Girls' High steps with Aideen and Brigitte afterwards, glowing and content, as Aideen points out my first grey hair. Lack of melanin, my son!

Wander down to GFT with Rachel and final year Andrew Sneddon for *Last exit to Brooklyn* and then have a few pints in The Griffin. I have a tutorial with Caroline Tisdall, visit Robert Breen in Edinburgh to give them some slides for

the Art In Partnership library and Douglas and Euan's performances make the pages of Artscribe International. Back and forth between GSA and Easterhouse. There are rumours that Saatchi snaps up the whole of Martin Boyce's EA Degree Show. Unclear is anagram of nuclear, silent of listen. The MFA exhibition opens in the Mackintosh along with the BA show, and all eight of us pass our first year, much (as I write at the time) to the chagrin of one particular tutor.

Summer 1990



It is all about work. It is all about preparation for *Bellgrove*, knowing I will be in Chicago for the first three months of the project. I meet Hildebrand Frey at Strathclyde University and know I want to kick off the project with something enigmatic and slow. The frame will be the orange of the rail company and the image will be a blurred street sign (Old Dalnottar Road) obscured by buddleia. It is very Richter. In my mind this represents the project as about a *place* not about *the place*. I meet with James Kelman and Alex Dempster in The Scotia as we plan the October poster. I recruit Ross to document the first few posters. I go

through to Edinburgh to meet with Thomas Lawson and Susan Morgan. Tom will be in town for his Third Eye show later in the year. I give Ross the keys to my studio for Tom to paint his poster for the October slot. I meet Angela Trainer to talk about *Bellgrove*. There is no clock or tannoy at the station, nor are there any staff. The perception of time can help or cause stress. What would a therapist do? Over a few meetings, Angela talks about a use of colour and we arrive at lilac haze as the most relaxing. I coat some canvas with it, with instructions for MnA to pin it back at three points like a cushion. They omit to do this but it still looks stunning in the winter sun. I meet with David Ingles of ScotRail and Brian Kyle of MnA at Bellgrove and in one meeting we thrash out all the potential hazards. ScotRail even agree on the spot to contribute £1,300 towards safety cover during the installations.



On July 9th, a fire breaks out and destroys the only waiting room on Bellgrove's platform. The Evening Times says: "Orange Walk marchers could have vital information on a fire which destroyed Bellgrove Station in

Dennistoun." Malcolm D at Variant includes an announcement about the project in Issue 8



The only other event of note is working at the Special Olympics with Brigitte. It is held at the SECC and we do a collaborative banner that is gradually hoisted 30ft in the air as people sign it. It is a nod to one of my favourite works, Jochen Gerz's 1986 *Monument against Fascism* in Hamburg-Harburg, that sinks into the ground after locals inscribe it.

Sept – December 1990: Chicago and Bellgrove



On Sunday 2nd September the panel is constructed at Bellgrove by MnA's Alan Murphy and Ian McHugh who will do all the poster installations. I decide to have no logos, no press launch, no information text on the platform and nothing to say that it is art. The next day I fly out of Europe for the first time for three months at the Art Institute of Chicago on their Masters' Programme.

What is important about my time in Chicago in relation to these texts? My time there is about studying some roots of community and public art, with the Chicago Public Art Group, about reinventing myself in the studio and about



receiving regular updates on Bellgrove. I love Chicago from first to last minute. I am met at O'Hare airport by Moray Hilary, ex-GSA who is also studying there. On the way to the house of Jim Kendrick, son of Barbara, friend of Sam A, I am nearly robbed on the bus. Two guys sit either side, make conversation, one reaches over to the other and slips a hand in my inside pocket to wallet and passport. I

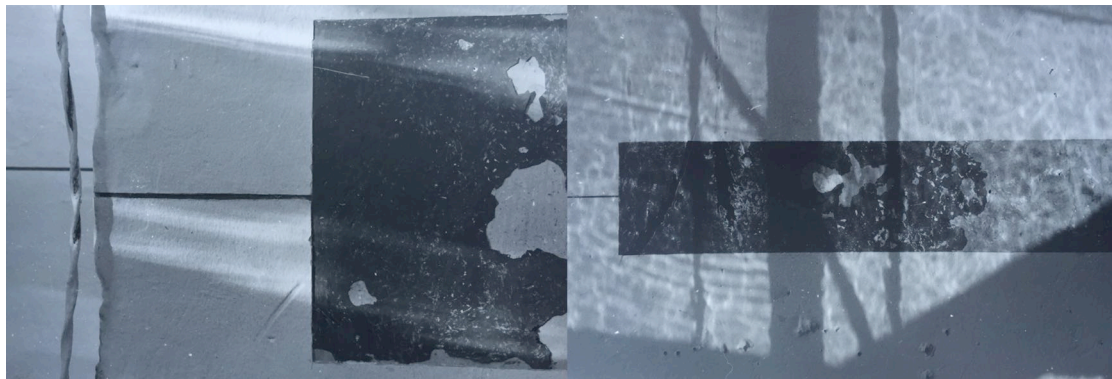
see it, decide to make eye contact and say FUCK YOU. The coin falls on the lucky side and the guy laughs and backs off. Jim is in the Mexican district and we spend a lot of time together. We visit his mum in Champaign to make some experimental Super-8 films and they take me to see an Odd Nerdrum exhibition. We eat the best Burritos in Chicago from Arandas, corner of N. Ashland and W. Division. He drives us in his Cadillac to Ann Arbor (The Stooges) to pick up a friend then up to Detroit to see the Rivera murals. There are posters for Public Enemy & Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, but we chicken out. He drives further to Toronto but I don't have my passport and we have trouble getting back in. Luckily, the man on Border Control is from

Glasgow and he asks me which team I support. It is 50:50 so I say Rangers and he grins and lets us back into America.



I get a studio on the 7th Floor of the Pekula Building on South Wabash, next to Karen Nelson's space, by a fire exit. Perfect for smokers. One day we are hanging out there and there is filming going on in the alley and someone runs down to find out it is *Godfather 3*. We try to look cool in the background. I become obsessed with Damen Avenue and photograph it up and

down, in the style of Ed Rusche. I spend very little time in the studio but when I do, I simply take a Swiss Army Knife and peel off the layers of white paint in very precise lines and panels. Sometimes I sink images from Damen Avenue under the peeling paint. Green, white and gold. I head down to Peoria for Thanksgiving with the Barrowmans, childhood friends of my Auntie Babs and Peggy in Shettleston. Andrew is there and their other son John will go on to do some TV work, including Dr. Who.



My Gran Strang dies.



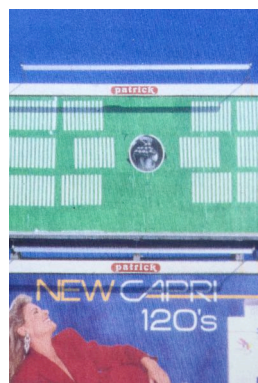
I get notice that Alex Dempster & James Kelman's poster goes up at Bellgrove. And then Thomas Lawson arrives at the Art Institute to do some teaching, excited by the images of his billboard that has just been installed. He takes some illegal pictures of four policemen in George Square and blows these up against a green ground and a neat red outline around

the head and shoulders. Ross gets some great documentation with Celtic fans heading to the nearby Parkhead. I also get £400 from Glasgow City Council (Year of Culture!) towards Bellgrove. In Chicago I explore the southside and the original 60's murals. I meet with Jon Pounds and Olivia Gude of the Chicago Public Art Group, Marcus and Kiela for some soul food and one of the most important original mural painters John Pitman Weber. I smell Subway for the first time and as Jim works in an underground video

store, I get to see loads of things for the first time, including *A Clockwork Orange* and *Faster, Pussycat, Kill! Kill!* I go to see Iggy Pop in concert. His band play shit heavy metal but *I wanna be your dog* is phenomenal. I see Einstürzende Neubauten at The Vic during their tenth anniversary tour with a crashing Yü-Gung (*Fütter mein Ego*). *Feed my ego*.



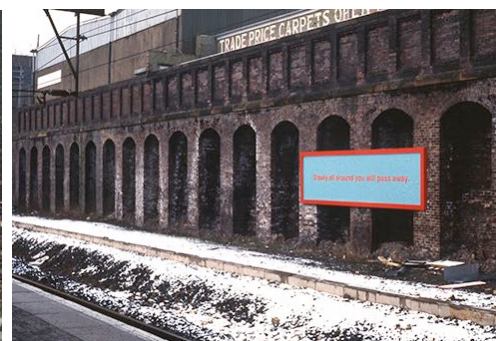
At Bellgrove, *The unfinished sentence...* by myself and Angela Trainer is installed. It catches the shadows from pylons and cables on the lilac haze as they slowly drift left to right.



I make contact with a billboard company in Chicago, Patrick Media Group, and their salesman is from Glasgow so he offers me a free panel. I take a detail from William Walker's 1974 mural *History of the packinghouse worker*

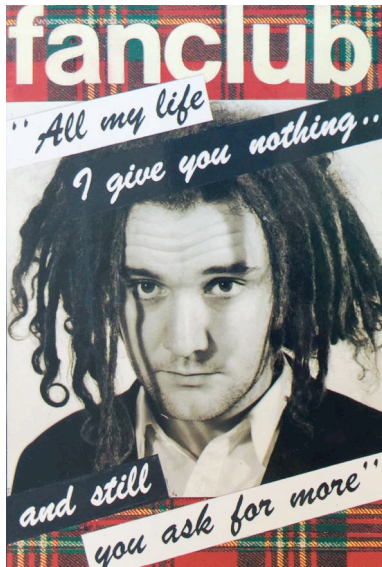
of a boss either planting or removing cells or eggs from a worker's head, but I have to leave Chicago to head home before the work is installed.

January – June 1991



I have very little time to prepare January's billboard. It is the first post-Culture month in Glasgow. Where to go next? Football. I think about the singular most famous moment in Scottish football history – Archie Gemmill's goal against Holland during the 1978 World Cup – and quickly spray it in the Girls' High studio and collage the background with old Virgin Media billboards and ask for the frame to go orange again. In 1993 Irvine Welsh writes the goal into

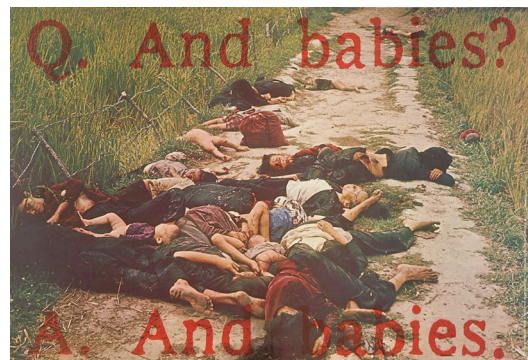
Trainspotting and in 2001 the Scottish Youth Dance Company work with 200 school children to dance it. It is starting to snow and the Gulf War takes over our screens. Precision missile strikes on the ten o'clock news. Craig Richardson produces *slowly all around you will fade away* in my studio and the red and blue zing in the snowy surrounds. Operation Desert Storm and General Schwarzkopf, literally Black Head.



Douglas introduces me to Pavel Büchler and both ask to do works for *Bellgrove*. David is keen to catch up on Chicago and I give a slidetalk to the rest of EA. I do a quick *Bellgrove* budget. Income £1,400. Expenditure £1,323.20. It is only February. Murdo Macdonald in *The Scotsman* writes: "Bellgrove Station is not the most obvious venue for contemporary art in Glasgow but for the past few months it has been one of the most significant. What is notable about this project is not only the quality of the participants ... but the attention paid by the participants to the site itself." David Belcher in *The Herald* mentions it too although this is all coming from the participating artists rather than myself. Ross presents his ambitious *fanclub* at The Stills Gallery in

Edinburgh. Self-portraits. Always. I spend time in the Mackintosh Library with old copies of *LIFE* Magazine researching my MFA seminar on the Art Workers' Coalition 1969 anti-Vietnam poster *And babies*.

In March, Peter Gilmour and Anne Quinn present their *MODEL* piece, a family unit silhouetted against a vivid blue that I buy especially from Sericol in Leeds. I start thinking about Argentina '78 a lot, about maybe doing a catalogue for *Bellgrove* and my final



MFA show.



Clare Henry at *The Herald* sends a card asking for more info on the project and Brigitte creates the April piece from fake wallpaper, white footsteps and stitched red fabric. Art Review carry a mention of the project. Pavel helps gets me some printing quotes and I start to piece together the budget from various sources as the project gathers momentum. I still pass Bellgrove every day en route to art school and form part of the audience as much as the instigator.

What else do I make of *Bellgrove*? I like the mix of contributors. Bellgrove is a between space, between the community art in Easterhouse and the challenges presented by GSA in the west. It is between home and work, a topic I explore later with *Soundtrack for a Mersey Tunnel*.



We sit in on crits of the first year MFA students. During one, I accuse Simon Starling of being just too clever for his own good for one of his stitched violin cases that Roger Palmer is purring about. There is also, I think, Alice Angus, Charles Sandison and Perminder Kaur (?). There is so much interest that I decide to split June into four different posters called *Moments*

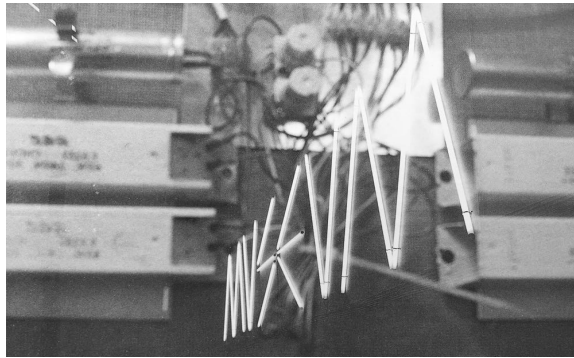
of Quality but before that is mad May. Transmission stage a month of events in conjunction with WORKERS CITY and Ross proposes his *Four-letter Word* piece, a Union Jack with the word *hate* in lower case and a black frame. It is due to be installed on 5th May but there is a police presence at Bellgrove due to the Celtic-St.Mirren game and MnA refuse to install due to "concern over the black frame."



The day before, the Queen is in Glasgow for the Gulf Memorial Service at the Cathedral. We discuss things with MnA and reassure them that the black frame is in no way an attack on billboard culture per se, and they agree to go ahead with the installation at the weekend. On the Saturday, Rangers win the league and of all the games at Parkhead on the

Sunday, it is Packy Bonnar's testimonial between Celtic and the Republic of Ireland. Alan and Ian of MnA turn up at 2pm that day, closely followed by a police escort, and decline to install the work. They return at 5pm to do so but for reasons that remain unclear to this day, Alan and Ian decide to shunt the poster along one section to the right, leaving us with the Union Jack and the word *hat*. Had they been instructed to do so by higher management? Or the police?

Ross still gets some great documentation pics of Celtic fans in front of the poster and I meet with MnA on the Monday and they sincerely apologise for "Alan and Ian's error" while ScotRail phone to complain about the whole incident. The word *hat* is pasted over with white. Ross quickly works up an alternative but in the meantime, National Front and RFC red graffiti appear on the billboard's white areas. It is the only such incident during the whole project. MnA bring forward the next installation almost as soon as Ross has painted it and the revised *Four-letter Word* is installed, with a red-free Union Jack, the word *ache* and a white frame. I find the crumpled Union Jack in the bin at the top of the Bellgrove stairs. *Document everything*. MnA are co-operative through this whole process. In the bigger scheme of things I am not interested in any conspiracies around *hat*. They do ask if they can see the remaining designs up front, which is fair enough. In retrospect, is the juxtaposition of the Union Jack and the word *hate* too risky given the combination of events around Glasgow at that time? Or is *Four-letter Word* an excellent example of waking a context from a slumber to become a powerful 50% of the work?



Back in the Mackintosh, first year MFA's Simon Starling and Paul Maguire create their neon *MUSEUM* piece. Meanwhile, I am preparing three works for my MFA show, to be staged at Project Ability on Albion Street. One will be photographic documentation of *Bellgrove*, for which Sam acquires some money from GSA to do proper

cibachromes. The second will be a large hand-painted portrait of Kenny Dalglish in the act of scoring during the 1978 World Cup. In printmaking with the help of Paul Maguire, we separate out the photograph into yellow, cyan



and magenta. I project each series of halftone dots up onto the wall and paint with trichromatic ink, also from Sericol in Leeds.

During setting up, *Bellgrove* appears in the summer issue of *Artscribe International* with an amazing review by Murdo Macdonald, next to one of Susan Hiller's project at Mappin in Sheffield. He writes that *Bellgrove* gives "indication of the intellectual and aesthetic vitality which characterizes installation work in Scotland at present."

Throughout June, Douglas' *walk a million miles*, Julie's *abattoir implements*, Meredith's *surreal balloons and traffic cones* and my own *And babies?* appear. *And babies?* is me at nine months old, painted on gold paper, nine months into the project, as the National Census takes place.



The third work for my MFA show is an archive of 416 6x4" black & white images printed in reverse and mounted as frames that frame only the white wall behind them. All 416 are from my six years at GSA, a fitting way to glance back in a mirror at 1985-1991.





Aideen presents a wall of unnerving little puppets, Annette Heyer delicately carves into soap and Rebecca Finch presents a suite of black & white photographs. As mentioned, sadly Susan, Ray, Ian and Douglas, who almost burns us to the ground setting up his installation at the last minute, will fail.

After the show, the final two *Bellgrove* works by Pavel Büchler (*NORTHERN HORIZON*) and Grennan & Sperandio are installed. Through Christine B, I meet Francis McKee and invite him to do a contextual essay about the east end for the catalogue. Brigitte puts me in touch with Nigel Rolfe who writes an



introductory text. There is an interview between myself and Craig in *Variant* and Tom Eccles writes about *Bellgrove* for *Alba*. I sort out the catalogue with Pavel in Cambridge and put everything in place to become a self-employed artist. I sit in *Transmission* helping pack some catalogues and Hans-Ulrich Obrist is there, taking everything in like a hawk.



"You can become Glasgow's new Declan McGonagle!" claims Sandy Moffat but I don't do *Bellgrove* to become a global trekking curator. I am asked by ProjectAbility to collaborate with two of their clients, Margaret Murphy and John Knowles, on a little exhibition working alongside Alex Dempster. While working on that, I am up and down the stairs and frequently brushed aside by the series of London curators and critics that have been invited up to Glasgow for a private presentation of artists' work on the other side of the Project Ability floor. Most of these artists are my peers from EA.

I agree to take part in a public debate around artists' initiatives chaired by Tom Eccles and I am sat between Douglas, Cathy Wilkes, Nicola White and Murdo M but I don't fit in. I withdraw. I get pissed off and say that I don't belong on the platform as *Bellgrove* evolves out of years of localised observation, community art and consideration. I don't see *Bellgrove* as having anything in common with the

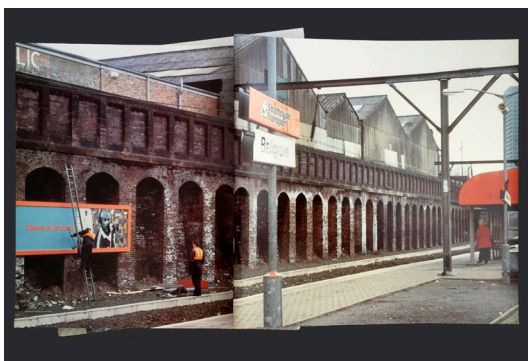
recently opened *Windfall* just because it is initiated by an artist rather than an agency. The original *Windfall* had a much more situation-specific rationale. I know that evening that I need a break from Glasgow and that the city's art scene is moving in a certain direction. I start making plans to exit the city, spending summer down in Highbury and then a year in Kilmarnock. With the exception of nine months in 1993 working on the Hamilton mural, and with the ultimate lure of Liverpool, I won't live in the city again. That is not meant to be dramatic but merely honest and reflective of exploring a different route through some alternative art worlds.

These three GSA texts encapsulate a six-year education that genuinely lays roots and foundations. Over the next twenty-five years, I do not sell any art objects (apart from one 12" for £99), I begin lecturing in Leeds on a course based partly on the model of Environmental Art and I will continue to find project models that deploy curatorial methods to combine 'community' art with elements more from the conceptual of avant-garde areas.



The panel at Bellgrove is removed and all that remains are some overpainting lines down each side, like quotation marks of what has passed. We estimate that around 440,000 people will have seen the seventeen posters. *Bellgrove* was calculated but rooted in four years of passing through that station and thinking about context, public art and how to fuse ideas in

such a manner that they have resonance. It is not necessarily 'wild' - I think Easterhouse provides more wildness than GSA - but there are moments of risk and trust. I think through GSA and *Bellgrove* I evolved a role that was very much in the background, observing and listening. Indeed, I am not listed anywhere on the GSA website, and although that may yet happen, but I am



not pushing it. Twenty-five years on from *Bellgrove*, there is a proposal from Dennistoun Community Council to reinstall a 20x5ft panel on the same spot and present a new set of digital prints from artists and communities. That feels like a more interesting and risky legacy although while supporting this initiative from a distance, it is interesting to observe how in many ways we have gone backwards into a

mire of hesitation, design by community, bureaucracy, fear and risk assessment/health & safety to the point of being preventative of creativity rather than preventative of danger. *Bellgrove* was the culmination of a lot of ideas and questions, some leaps of faith and, in retrospect, a hell of a lot of tutorials from some incredibly generous practitioners, most of whom commented "keep it simple."

Images



Alan Dunn Bellgrove
psychogeographic
map, biro, 1988



Alan Dunn Monkserrat,
3x2ft, 1988



Alan Dunn
Blackboard Billboard,
Easterhouse, 1988



Alan Dunn Dali Blind,
8x4ft, 1988



Alan Dunn LET ME OUT,
photograph, 1987



F. Tritschier John Duns
Scotus, Duns, 1996



Festival of Plagiarism,
1989



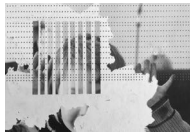
Alan Dunn Festival of
Plagiarism, 5x3ft, 1989



Dunn & Reid Banana
Splits, 1989



Alan Dunn Proposal for
Maryhill mural, 1989



Alan Dunn east end
aged 10, photograph,
typed dots, 1989



Alan Dunn Ghetto
Plaster, National Review
of Live Art, 20x10ft,
Glasgow, 1989



Alan Dunn Garthamlock
Water Tower, 1989



Alan Dunn Charing x
Blocks, acrylic on
woodchip, 4x2x0.5ft,
1989



Alan Dunn Garthamlock
Cow Van Silence,
acrylic on woodchip,
4x3x0.5ft, 1989



Düsseldorf
Kunstakademie, 1990



Alan Dunn east end
aged 14, pastel on
board, 3x2ft, 1990



Alan Dunn Bellgrove
rooftops, 1990



Ross Sinclair CAPITAL OF
CULTURE - CULTURE OF
CAPITAL, 1990



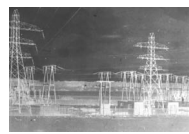
Environmental Art
leaflet, 1990



The Ramones
Subterranean Jungle,
747 cassette 1983



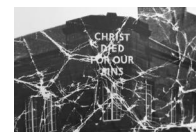
Alan Dunn MA1, 2 x
20x10ft, Glasgow, 1990



Alan Dunn east end
flâneur, 1990



Alan Dunn & Alex
Dempster St. Enoch
mural, 60x10ft, 1990



Alan Dunn CHRIST DIED
(Victoria Road),
photograph, 1990



Alan Dunn Bellgrove
montage, 1990



Alan Dunn Old Dalnottar
Road, work in progress,
1990



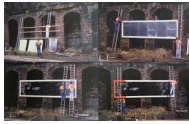
Alan Dunn Old Dalnottar
Road in studio, 1990



Alan Dunn Bellgrove
after fire, 1990



Alan Dunn & Brigitte
Jurack European
Special Olympics, SECC,
1990



Alan Dunn *Bellgrove*, installation, 20x5ft, 1990



James Kendrick, Chicago, 1990



Barbara Kendrick, super-8, Champaign, 1990



Alan Dunn *South Wabash*, gouged walls, 1990



Alex Dempster & James Kelman *That other*, 20x5ft, 1990



Thomas Lawson in Alan Dunn's *Girls' High* studio, 1990



Alan Dunn & Angela Trainer *The Unfinished Sentence*, lilac haze on canvas, 20x5ft, 1990



William Walker *History of the packinghouse worker*, Chicago, 1974



Alan Dunn *And brains?*, painted and slatted billboard, Chicago, 1991



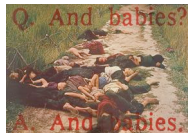
Alan Dunn *68 minutes*, 20x5ft, 1991



Craig Richardson *slowly all around you will pass away*, 20x5ft, 1991



Ross Sinclair *fanclub*, 1991



Art Workers Coalition *And babies*, 1969



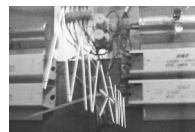
Anne Quinn and Peter Gilmour *model*, 20x5ft, 1991



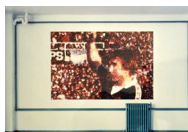
Brigitte Jurack, *Life Circle (snow in the city)*, 20x5ft, 1991



Ross Sinclair *Four-letter Word*, 20x5ft, 1991



Simon Starling & Paul Maguire *MUSEUM*, 1991



Alan Dunn *Bright moments*, MA exhibition, 1991



Alan Dunn *Bellgrove archive*, MA exhibition, 1991



Artscribe International Summer 1991



Douglas Gordon, Alan Dunn, Julie Roberts, Meredith Crone, 20x5ft, 1991



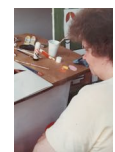
Alan Dunn *GSA archive 1991-1985*, 1991



Pavel Büchler *NORTHERN HORIZON*, 20x5ft, 1991



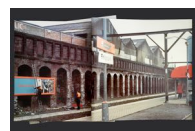
Simon Grennan & Christopher Sperandio, 20x5ft, 1991



Margaret Murphy working on *Displacements* exhibition, 1991



Bellgrove, September 1991



Alan Dunn & Pavel Büchler *Bellgrove*, catalogue, 1991

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