

MATTS LEIDERSTAM

Grand Tour

Exhibition Information

Exhibition Events

Saturday 30 July

3pm, Gallery 1

Artist Matts Leiderstam talks about the development of his 'Grand Tour' project over the years with DCA
Curator Katrina Brown.

Thursday 15 September

7pm, Gallery 1

Join Frances Fowle from the National Galleries of Scotland for a tour of the exhibition exploring the 18th century theories and fashions for looking at and representing the landscape in art.

These events are **free** – just turn up.

Dundee Contemporary Arts

152 Nethergate · Dundee DD1 4DY

Telephone 01382 909900

www.dca.org.uk

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*If we accept that we can see that
hill over there, we propose that
from that hill we can be seen.'*

John Berger
Ways of Seeing, 1972

Matts Leiderstam's ongoing project 'Grand Tour' is a personal journey through the history of travel and landscape painting, specifically from the 18th century. The presentation here at DCA includes a number of works made over the past eight years at different times in several countries.

Since the first elements of the project were exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 1997, 'Grand Tour' has grown to become a living archive. It enables us to look with fresh eyes at this 18th century phenomenon of 'educational' travel around Europe, which became popular among the upper classes and artists.

The display itself creates the feeling of a library or research centre and presents us with a wide range of material on specially-designed tables. There are books, catalogues, small paintings, slides and different instruments for looking; screens, magnifying glasses and light boxes. Leiderstam invites us to use these tools to look closely, to read, investigate, interpret and enjoy the many clues to be found.

**30 July –
25 September 2005**

During the 18th century an educational journey throughout much of Europe became almost customary for young aristocrats and artists. While travelling through parts of France, Germany and especially Italy they would visit historically significant sites, study the ancient civilisations and shop for mementos to serve as reminders of their trip. Known as a 'Grand Tour' this fashion was an early form of tourism and generated a new and significant interest in landscape painting through the form of souvenirs, in this pre-photography age.

Artists from all over Europe travelled to Italy at this time and were often commissioned by travellers to paint the landscapes they had visited. It is within these paintings that Leiderstam inscribes an alternative understanding of the Grand Tour by mirroring it within the contemporary context of sightseeing and a homoerotic perspective.

Leiderstam revisits these often famous and much-loved paintings, by Lorraine, Poussin, Courbet among others, either in museum collections or through reproductions in exhibition catalogues and carefully repaints them. His approach differs from that of the traditional copyist, in that they would stay faithful to the original painting, whereas Leiderstam works from a desire to discover a contemporary

setting that resembles but differs from that of the original.

'Leiderstam's copies, which often alter and accentuate the subtle play of gazes in the original paintings, reveal both the hidden erotics of nineteenth century painting and the highly coded conventions of gay cruising.'

Peggy Phelan, 2001

Throughout the exhibition Leiderstam makes comparisons with gay culture and the history of art. He suggests that both are full of hidden meanings; signs and symbols waiting to be made sense of. Cruising through art history Leiderstam, discovers and sets about uncovering these secret codes.

The project was first suggested by the coincidence of two publications in 1996: an exhibition catalogue '*Grand Tour – The Lure of the Italy in the Eighteenth Century*' and the travel guide '*Spartacus International Gay Guide*'.

Copies of these books are placed, opened at different pages, on many of the tables in the exhibition. The catalogues on display show reproductions of famous paintings by Canello and Piranesi among others and the Spartacus guides offer information about cruising sites in particular cities – two distinct but related sources of information for travellers. In some of the catalogues he has placed small paintings made from the originals which magnify specific details that Leiderstam has subtly altered.

As a continuation of his 'Grand Tour' project Leiderstam has produced new work for DCA which concentrates on our immediate surroundings. In it he has referenced the local landscape and the history of Scottish painting through views of the River Tay: in a painting by Alexander Nasmyth, '*Castle Huntly, Perthshire*' (c.1810), in the collection of the McManus Galleries.

Leiderstam has re-photographed Castle Huntly using 'Claude Glasses' (c.1830) used by artists, amateurs and connoisseurs of the Grand Tour to transform the look and atmosphere of the landscape. Made of eight individual coloured glasses, they filter and enhance the world beyond through a range of tones, suggesting different times of day, those preferred by painters of the picturesque or pastoral.

He has also positioned three 'fieldsopes' (like a telescope), fitted with similarly coloured filters, pointing out towards the River Tay and beyond. With these you are invited to create your own 'pictures' of the scene outside. One such fieldscope stands alone, filter-less, surveying the exhibition. It allows a more intimate view of the paintings on the wall, the figures who appear in them and the 'live' picture of the exhibition and its viewers.

Within Leiderstam's 'Grand Tour', as in our current climate, there is nowhere left to hide.

The exhibition is accompanied by a website:

www.grandtourexhibition.com which is accessible from the table in Gallery 2. Writers Jan Avigikos, Jan Verwoert and Denise Robinson have each contributed essays.

Matts Leiderstam (b. 1956) lives and works in Stockholm. He began to exhibit internationally in the late 1980's and has exhibited in both solo and group shows; notably representing Sweden as part of the group show 'Deposition' in Venice, 1997. His work is held in many major museum collections. He is currently completing a PhD at Malmö Art Academy.

For more information about the artist please visit the Information Room just outside the gallery entrance where you will find books, articles and reviews of his work.

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The exhibition is supported by:

I A S P I S