

Exhibition information

Roman Signer Installations

Sat 4 July - Sun 20 September 2015

DCA
Dundee Contemporary Arts

152 Nethergate
Dundee DD1 4DY
01382 909900
Scottish Charity No. SCO26631

Open daily 11:00-18:00
Open late Thu 20:00
Admission free
www.dca.org.uk

INTRODUCTION

DCA is proud to present an exhibition of works by the internationally renowned artist Roman Signer.

Kayaks, cannons and catapults are all employed by Signer in his solo exhibition at DCA this summer. In a career spanning more than four decades, he is recognised for his playful actions exploring chance, space and time. Signer has selected a body of new and recent works specifically for the DCA Galleries.

Roman Signer was born in Appenzell, Switzerland, in 1938 and lives and works in St. Gallen. He studied at the Schule für Gestaltung, Zurich, in 1966, the Schule für Gestaltung, Lucerne, between 1969 and 1971 and at the Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw, from 1971 to 1972. Major exhibitions of his work have been held at Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht and the La Biennale di Venezia Swiss Pavillon, Venice.

Installations is presented in association with the Barbican Centre, London. The exhibition is supported by Pro Helvetia. We would also like to thank Galerie Hauser & Wirth and William Grant & Sons. The collections of Hauser & Wirth and Kunsthaus Zug have graciously allowed us to recreate works from their collections.

“Actions have changed my concept of sculpture. Other works became possible. Doors have opened that wouldn’t have opened if I’d built the objects in the studio. I have found spaces where I can make an impact that I wouldn’t have found by just sitting in the studio and building my things there. You asked me what I actually do. Am I an object artist? Am I a filmmaker? Am I a draughtsman? Am I an action artist? Am I an explosion artist? Am I a sculptor? I am an artist who works with various things.”

Roman Signer, interviewed by Paula Van Den Bosch,
Roman Signer, Phaidon, 2006

“When I do an action it might turn out completely different. That’s the adventure. I’m actually looking for small adventures in art. Otherwise art gets boring.”

Roman Signer, interviewed by Armin Senser, *BOMB 105*, Fall 2008

“The natural and manufactured are married in a poignant and simple picture. The delicate trial and error processes in Signer’s works make them unpredictable and playful, simple but not empty. This is Signer’s trademark, despite his intention not to have one.”

Marina Cashdan, *Frieze*, November 2010

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

GALLERY ONE

Installation with wooden beams

2015

Wooden beams

The first gallery is given over to a single work in which the artist installed, then attempted to knock over, a grid of standing pine fence posts. The artist specified the use of local, sustainably sourced wooden posts and has placed them in an irregular formation. The posts - usually marking the perimeter of an agricultural field - are harnessed by the artist to cause a chain-reaction domino rally, undoing his own installation and showing the effect of his action. The artist compared the room to a woodland with a gust of wind causing a cascade of falling trees.

GALLERY TWO

Kayak with rubber

2015

Kayak, rubber band, rope, candle

Kayaks are a recurring motif in Signer's work, with two included here in the main gallery, fresh from featuring in his exhibition *Slow Movement* at the Barbican Centre, London. For *Installations* the kayaks are used very differently: one is launched into the wall of the gallery using a catapult, released when a candle has burnt through a rope. The resulting debris and damage is left untouched for the duration of the exhibition. A film documents the moment of the action, from the artist lighting the flame that triggers the kayak's trajectory, to its impact against the immovable object of the wall.

Documentation of the artist's actions creating *Kayak with rubber* and *Installation with wooden beams* can be viewed on a monitor located at DCA reception.

Whisky boat

2015

Kayak, 230 litres of whisky

The second kayak is filled with over 200 litres of whisky donated by William Grant & Sons in a strange and playful reversal of the vessel's usual relationship with water. The work brings to mind the romantic Scottish island story of *Whisky Galore*, in which a cargo ship runs aground with 50,000 cases of whisky and the rebellious islanders seek to claim the bounty. We are grateful to Andy Fairgrieve, Artists in Residence Co-ordinator at William Grant & Sons, Glenfiddich Distillery in Dufftown for his assistance.

Bar

2007 (exhibition copy 2015)

Fans, bottles, cord

Courtesy Kunsthaus Zug, Schenkung Christine and Peter Kamm

Five bottles of whisky are suspended on long sections of cord, spinning in circles above floor-based electrical fans blowing cool air. *Bar* is part of the collection of the Kunsthaus Zug in Switzerland, gifted by Christine and Peter Kamm. With their permission, Signer has devised a new exhibition copy of the work exclusively for DCA with whisky collected on a road and boat trip to Fingal's Cave. Aptly, *Bar* is situated in the gallery in close proximity to Signer's *Whisky Boat* and not far from DCA's Jute Café Bar. The spinning bottles could suggest dancing or even drunkenness, though the action of swirling spirit is also associated with releasing the flavours and connoisseurship.

Football, cannon with tent

2014

Cannon, football, tent, sand in paper bags

A steel cannon elevated by bags of sand is loaded with a football and squarely pointed at an open tent. These elements are brought together by the artist to form an enigmatic relationship, with the artist leaving it up to the viewer to make their own associations. In a previous installation the work was activated to fire the ball into the tent but here Signer is interested only in the potential for something to happen. Signer playfully combines everyday objects with an artisan produced cannon.

Ladder

1995 (exhibition copy 2015)

Ladder, rubber boots

Courtesy Hauser & Wirth Collection, Henau

A pair of rubber boots are placed on a 3 metre tall ladder with unusual rungs. The seemingly ascending boots create a figurative tableau, giving the work a comedic and surreal quality. The original version of this work is on permanent display in the Hauser & Wirth collection, Henau in Switzerland. Ladders and rubber boots are essentially utilitarian objects synonymous with outdoor activities, as indeed are kayaks, tents and fence posts. Signer manages to transform them into something poetic with the lightest of touches.

ANCILLARY GALLERY

Vers la flamme

2014

Video; colour, sound

Camera: Tomasz Rogowiec / Aleksandra Signer

Editing: Aleksandra Signer

Signer enlisted the virtuoso pianist Vikingur Olafsson to travel to the Italian Alps, to play Alexander Scriabin's 1914 piano sonata *Vers la flamme* (*Towards the flame*), Op. 72 on a tiny, floating stage in the middle of Lake Vernago, while contending with an interruption by a helicopter. Signer's *Vers la flamme - a concert with interruption*, was the finale to the Transart Festival 2014 and marked the centenary of Scriabin's composition. Scriabin believed that the world's accumulation of heat would ultimately cause its destruction – the crescendo of the piece marking our heading towards the flame.

All works courtesy of Galerie Hauser & Wirth and the artist, unless otherwise stated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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William Grant & Sons

Jason Shearer

Rob Page

Rachel Withers

TALKS AND EVENTS

Book your place on 01382 909 900. For more information visit www.dca.org.uk

Curators in conversation

Fri 3 July, 18:30

Galleries. Free, but please book in advance.

Alona Pardo, Curator for the Barbican Centre London, who realised Roman Signer's recent exhibition *Slow Movement*, discusses the experience of working with the artist with Graham Domke, Exhibitions Curator at DCA.

Senior Citizen Kane Tour

Tue 28 July, 10:30

Galleries. Free, but please book in advance.

This event is specially designed for our visitors aged 60 and over. Explore the exhibition with one of our friendly Gallery Assistants, then share your thoughts and chat over a cup of tea.

BSL Signed Gallery Tour

Wed 19 August, 13:30

Galleries. Free, drop in.



Join us for an informal BSL signed tour of the exhibition followed by a cup of tea and a chat. We will take time exploring the exhibition, asking questions and sharing ideas supported by experienced sign language interpreter, Jennifer Ramsay.

(((echo)))

Thu 10 September, 19:00

Galleries. Free, drop in.

Come along and engage with this popular event designed to provoke discussion about the current exhibition through a series of presentations by local artists and writers.

Rachel Withers on Roman Signer

Wed 16 September, 11:00

Cinema. Free, but please book in advance.

We are delighted to welcome Rachel Withers, a leading writer on Roman Signer's work, to DCA. She will give an overview of Signer's work and describe her fascinating project researching his personal library. Presented in association with Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design.

More than Meets the Eye Tours

Sat 19 September, 12:00 or 14:00

Free, but please book in advance.

Contemporary artists make and present art in so many ways. This behind the scenes tour shows you how DCA helps artists create and show their work. Meet creative and technical staff to hear more about their unique roles as you visit our Gallery Workshop and Print Studio spaces. Tours will last approximately 45 minutes allowing time for a chat and questions as we go round. Part of Dundee Doors Open Day.

FOR YOUNGER VISITORS AND FAMILY GROUPS

Activity Room

Open daily unless being used for a workshop

Free, drop in.

DCA Activity Room is a comfortable and imaginative space designed for younger visitors and family groups to have a go at DIY activities, browse our excellent children's art library and make connections with the exhibition. For this show there will be lots of exploring, transforming and experimenting.

Family Art Labs

Sat 18 July & Sat 29 August,
13:00 – 15:00

Activity Room. Free, drop in.
Suitable for ages 5+. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

Join our artists for some fun and have time to explore the Roman Signer exhibition. Talk about what you see, make creative responses and try out new techniques. Make the most of our space to create mess and experiment. Each session lasts two hours but you don't have to stay the whole time.

Art Cart

Sat 1 August & Sat 19 September,
13:00 – 15:00

Level 4. Free, drop in.

Fun for all ages, Art Cart offers active ways to connect with each exhibition. For this show you can make your own origami kayak, spinning helicopter and paper climber.

GALLERY SCREENINGS

For each exhibition we ask the artist or curator to choose films to screen in the cinema to coincide with their show. Roman Signer's work has often been compared to Buster Keaton's: his installations and actions recall the wonder and delight at the heart of silent cinema.

The Navigator

Sun 23 August, 15:00

In Buster Keaton's biggest box office success, he plays a wealthy young man accidentally cast adrift on an ocean liner, with his similarly pampered sweetheart (Kathryn McGuire). Filled with Keaton's trademark blend of slapstick and stuntwork, including one of the greatest underwater scenes in silent cinema, *The Navigator* is a masterpiece of action, comedy and suspense.

Dirs: Buster Keaton, Donald Crisp
USA 1924 / 59m / U

Signer's Koffer Signer's Suitcase

Tue 15 September, 11:00

A special free screening of the celebrated travelogue of Roman Signer. Compared to Buster Keaton and Felix the Cat, Signer travels from St. Gallen to Stromboli with his suitcase creating artistic installations and actions. The screening is introduced by DCA Exhibitions Curator Graham Domke.

Dir: Peter Liechti
Switzerland 1996 / 1hr25m / German with English subtitles

NEXT EXHIBITION

Hideyuki Katsumata
USODEHONTOU

Sat 3 October – Sun 15 November

We are delighted to present the first UK exhibition by Japanese artist Hideyuki Katsumata, programmed to coincide with this year's Discovery Film Festival. The galleries will be filled with Katsumata's vibrant illustrations and animations.

JUST ASK

Our friendly Gallery assistants are always happy to help with your questions.

Keep up to date with the very latest from DCA by visiting www.dca.org.uk or by following us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.