



**PRESS RELEASE  
TUESDAY 5 MAY 2015**

**Graham Fagen: Scotland + Venice 2015  
Collateral Event of the 56th International Art Exhibition –  
La Biennale di Venezia (9 May – 22 November 2015)**

Scottish artist Graham Fagen exhibits a new body of work, including sculptures, drawings and a five channel audio-visual installation, for Scotland + Venice 2015 as a Collateral Event of the 56th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. The exhibition is commissioned by Hospitalfield in Arbroath, Scotland and is held at Palazzo Fontana, a Venetian palace located on the Grand Canal in the Cannaregio district of Venice. This is the first time the venue has been used for an exhibition of visual art and is a new location within the city for Scotland + Venice.

Graham Fagen is one of the most influential artists working in Scotland today. His work mixes media and crosses continents; combining video, performance, photography and sculpture with text, live music and plants. Fagen's recurring artistic themes, which include flowers, journeys and popular song, are used as attempts to understand the powerful forces that shape our lives.

Throughout his career as an artist, Fagen has regularly incorporated elements of his own national, cultural and social identity within his work. Often using the artifice of theatre for the development of a narrative, Fagen will use the 16th century Venetian palace as an historic backdrop for his presentation, choreographing an entirely new body of work across four rooms of the palazzo to create a path through which visitors can effectively become performers within the piece.

Continuing Fagen's interest in the natural environment, a neon text entitled 'Entra nel Giardino, e Dimentica la Guerra' (Come into the Garden, and forget about the War) marks the threshold of Palazzo Fontana, inviting visitors into a curated 'garden' of new work. 'Rope Tree', a monumental bronze sculpture cast from lengths of rope, is installed in the first room of the palazzo. Rooted by its sheer size, the work is weighted by historic and cultural associations of rope and references the architectural reliefs often found in merchant cities such as Venice. 'Scheme for Lament', a series of highly intricate Indian ink drawings intuitively and repetitively made by tracing the interior and exterior of the artist's own teeth as felt by his tongue, fill the second room; while 'Scheme for our Nature', sculptures of gold, silver, clay and metal, balance ceramic objects cast from faces, mouths and hands to create a field of metal frames and branches in the third room.

Drawing on his long-term commitment to collaboration across multiple art forms and disciplines, Fagen brings together internationally renowned composer Sally Beamish, the musicians of Scottish Ensemble, reggae singer and musician Ghetto Priest and music producer Adrian Sherwood to realise an ambitious five channel audio-visual installation displayed across a 'quartet' of TV monitors in the final room of the palazzo. Inspired by the work of Scottish poet Robert Burns, the installation features a classical re-interpretation of the poet's haunting elegy, 'The Slave's Lament', the only work by Burns that emphasises and references the hurt of the displaced and enslaved. Sound combining different musical traditions – Scottish folk song, classical music and reggae – pervades the rooms of Palazzo Fontana, creating a melancholic and ambiguous body of work within the surroundings of one of the world's most prestigious visual art exhibitions.

An illustrated publication which documents the breadth of Fagen's career, including his presentation for Scotland + Venice 2015, will be published by Hospitalfield to coincide with the opening of the exhibition in Venice. The catalogue includes contributions from Penelope Curtis, Director of Tate Britain, and Katrina Brown, Director of The Common Guild, alongside an interview between Scottish novelist Louise Welsh and Graham Fagen, with an introduction from Lucy Byatt, Director of Hospitalfield.

#### **MEDIA CONTACT:**

Allison Thorpe  
Sutton PR  
E: [allison@suttonpr.com](mailto:allison@suttonpr.com)  
T: +44 (0)20 7183 3577  
M: +44 (0) 7872 030 946

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

- **Scotland + Venice** is a partnership between Creative Scotland, the National Galleries of Scotland and the British Council. Representatives of these organisations sit on a Steering Group that oversees the successful delivery of the project. Scotland + Venice is delighted to continue to work in partnership with M+B Studio in Venice, architects and designers who provide critical support as project co-ordinators of the exhibition.

**La Biennale di Venezia** (9 May - 22 November 2015), one of the world's most prestigious visual art exhibitions, is an important context in which to build Scotland's profile and reputation as an international centre for visual arts. Scotland + Venice 2015 complements further presentations from the UK taking place across the city at the same time. The British Pavilion will feature work by Sarah Lucas and an exhibition by Helen Sear will appear in the Welsh presentation, curated by Ffotogallery.

**Scotland + Venice 2015 with Graham Fagen** will be open 10am – 6pm, every Tuesday – Sunday from 9 May – 22 November 2015, with preview and press dates on 6 - 8 May 2015. Admission is free. For more information on Scotland + Venice, please visit the partnership's new website [www.scotlandandvenice.com](http://www.scotlandandvenice.com) or follow on Twitter [@Scotlandvenice](https://twitter.com/Scotlandvenice), [www.instagram.com/scotlandvenice](https://www.instagram.com/scotlandvenice) and [www.facebook.com/scotlandandvenice](https://www.facebook.com/scotlandandvenice).

- **Graham Fagen** studied at The Glasgow School of Art (1984-1988, BA) and the Kent Institute of Art and Design (1989-1990, MA) and is senior lecturer at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design in Dundee. Recent exhibitions include *Cabbages in an Orchard* at The Glasgow School of Art (2014); participation in *GENERATION: 25 Years of Contemporary Art from Scotland* (2015) at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh, and *In Camera* (2015) with Graham Eatough at the Panorama, La Friche, Marseille. For further information, please visit [www.grahamfagen.com](http://www.grahamfagen.com) or follow on Twitter [@grahamfagen](https://twitter.com/grahamfagen)
  
- **Hospitalfield: an Artist's House**, located in Arbroath, Scotland, holds a programme of residencies, commissions and curated projects which aim to negotiate and inspire an interplay between the heritage and history of the site and contemporary cultural ideas and practices. From the semi-rural location on the east coast of Scotland, Hospitalfield works with a range of partners to ensure that Hospitalfield plays a significant role within the national cultural ecology and wider international network. The 19th century Scottish artist Patrick Allan-Fraser (1813-1890), inspired by his term of presidency at the Royal Academy in Rome, left his estate in trust to become a residential art school. The model has necessarily changed over time and Hospitalfield are currently working on the first phase of a 21st century Future Plan, led by architects Caruso St John. For further information on Hospitalfield, please visit: [www.hospitalfield.org](http://www.hospitalfield.org) | [www.facebook.com/Hospitalfield](https://www.facebook.com/Hospitalfield) | [@Hospitalfield](https://twitter.com/Hospitalfield)
  
- **Sally Beamish** is a London-born composer based in Scotland. Her music embraces many influences, particularly jazz and Scottish traditional music, and has been performed and broadcast internationally. Recent commissions include 'Dance Variations: Percussion Concerto No. 2' for percussionist Colin Currie with the Bergen Symphony Orchestra, Scottish and Swedish Chamber Orchestras and Stanford Lively Arts, CA. Sally's new concerto for Scottish fiddle and harp, 'Seavaigers', was premiered in Glasgow at Celtic Connections 2012 and has recently been recorded by Chris Stout, Catriona McKay and the Scottish Ensemble for release to coincide with a tour in 2014. For more information please visit: [www.sallybeamish.com](http://www.sallybeamish.com)
  
- **Ghetto Priest** is one of the most flamboyant and creative performers to have emerged from the UK Reggae scene. He honed his vocal talents and artistic persona around the sound system dances of the early 1980s, before beginning his illustrious recording career. Ghetto Priest possesses a raw energy and emotion unmatched by many artists of his generation, and while constantly pushing at the boundaries of Roots music, Priest's style strongly maintains the essence of his Jamaican heritage. Ghetto Priest is currently working on his latest album with producer Adrian Sherwood, as well as fronting Asian Dub Foundation. For more information on Ghetto Priest, visit [www.ghettopriest.wix.com/ghetto-priest](http://www.ghettopriest.wix.com/ghetto-priest) or follow on Twitter [@GhettoPriest](https://twitter.com/GhettoPriest)
  
- **Adrian Sherwood** is a music producer based in Ramsgate and founder of the legendary dub label On-U Sound. Over the last 30 years, Sherwood has worked with artists as diverse as Lee Scratch Perry, Primal Scream, Depeche Mode, Asian Dub Foundation, Little Axe and Sinéad O'Connor. For more information, please visit: [www.adriansherwood.com](http://www.adriansherwood.com)

- **Scottish Ensemble (SE)** inspires audiences in the UK and beyond with vibrant performances which are powerful, challenging and rewarding experiences. The UK's only professional string orchestra is based in Glasgow and is built around a core of 12 outstanding string players who perform together under Artistic Director Jonathan Morton. SE has commissioned new works from composers such as John Tavener, James MacMillan, Sally Beamish, and Martin Suckling amongst others in recent years, as well as working with guest artists such as trumpeter Alison Balsom, tenor Toby Spence and cellist Pieter Wispelwey. Alongside performances across Scotland, SE presents an annual series of concerts at leading UK festivals and recent international tours have included performances in Belgium, Austria, Turkey, Taiwan, China and the USA. For more information, please visit: [www.scottishensemble.co.uk](http://www.scottishensemble.co.uk)

**With special thanks from Scotland + Venice 2015 to partners and funders who have provided additional support to the project:**

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