

DUNDEE CONTEMPORARY ARTS

CARA TOLMIE: READ THOU  
ART AND READ THOU  
SHALT REMAIN

SAT 21 MAY - SUN 31 JULY 2011

**DCA**

Dundee Contemporary Arts

# CARA TOLMIE: READ THOU ART AND READ THOU SHALT REMAIN

Cara Tolmie's practice spans installation, performance, video, music, text and spoken word.

Starting with the action looping out from a car moving through a landscape, *Read Thou Art and Read Thou Shalt Remain* develops into a model of an interior theatrical scene capturing those same far off mountains as seen from the car. This small stage becomes the set for an opera (of sorts) to subsequently take place.

Tolmie was born in Glasgow in 1984 and is a graduate of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design in Dundee. She is also a former committee member of Glasgow's Transmission Gallery and recently undertook the LUX Associate Artists Programme in London. Tolmie has received considerable acclaim for her performances at Art Basel, Miami Beach; Tramway, Glasgow; Serpentine Cinema and Chisenhale Gallery, London, and her exhibitions at artist-run spaces such as Sierra Metro, Edinburgh and Transmission Gallery and Low Salt, Glasgow.

## LIST OF WORKS

*Observed Landscape*, 2011  
Video, 42 seconds, looped

*Description 1*, 2011  
Ink jet print

*Description 2*, 2011  
Pen and coloured pencil on paper

*Chronicle*, 2011  
Video, 21 minutes

All works courtesy of the artist

# COMMISSIONED TEXT

## BY JOHN DOUGLAS MILLAR

### EXTERIOR (BALZAC)

In the East End of London, just beyond the towering palaces of the financial district and before one reaches the covered plague pits of Limehouse, there is an area - once a profitable refuge for Huguenot weavers and later famous for the most debased conditions of human habitation in Europe - known as Shoreditch. Within its environs may be found Whitechapel, famous for the murders of 1888, Brick Lane, famous formerly for its Jewish community and now for its Islamic inhabitants, and, if we move north, Columbia Road, now famous for a genteel and somewhat picturesque flower market on weekends. On the corner of this quiet thoroughfare stands a former cooperative building now converted into loft apartments for practitioners of the new phantom economy. The building is notable for its robust stone work and the unusual rose tinted cladding that surrounds each of its large bay windows. On the fourth floor there is an apartment belonging to a Mr Fournier. The rooms of this apartment are decorated in the current style; white washed walls, dark oak flooring, recovered furniture bought at extremely hiked prices, exotic and brightly coloured rugs. There are rows and rows of books that pertain to the tenants of a liberal arts education, all appear to be unread.

## INTERIOR (WOOLF)

Desert, bone dry, dry as bones after the jellied candied fetid flesh has burnt off, rotted, been picked at, congealed, warped, slid ant-stuffed to the burning desert floor; bone dry, bleached. Film of the process sped up or slowed. right. down. Remember those photosynthesis films you were shown as a child? The triumphant burst of green. Verde que te quiero verde. Not here in this calescent landscape. Still, cactus blooms, flower under sun under snow. MacNeice's scarlet rose on the windowsill explaining the geometry of the universe. On a cold night, stars, you could see your breath in the moonlight, crescent moon, and the fields white with frost, but the copse dark, drinking stolen brandy from a plastic coke bottle. Funny to think of that now, funny to think. Crinoline. Imagine. An effective torture; leaving someone out here wrapped in crinoline. Jello. Those adverts, housewife in puffed skirts, torpedo bra, making jello for senior who's been hard at work on the bomb. Jello cakes. Food for the age of annihilation. Jesus. Heat gets to. To one. The road burning, melting, turning to mirage, seems to end but never does. Birds become men, men become birds. Metamorphosis. Metempsychosis. Petrol ok. Water. Those rivers back home we swam in as children, the smell of wild garlic, liverwort, bluebells. The birth of a whole mythology.

## EXEGESIS (SEVEN NOTES ON THE ART OF CARA TOLMIE)

*Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable.*  
David Foster Wallace

1. Whilst thinking about the art of Cara Tolmie two images suggested themselves to me. Firstly that of two mirrors facing and reflecting each other so that when a viewer stands between them she will see her form reflected infinitely; secondly, the image of a never ending series of rooms, one door opening onto the next, each room offering the chance of a summation or an understanding, but then withholding it in a never ending loop. When considering her work it is important to recognise this generative function, it does not make any final didactic or pedagogic claims, but rather asks us to follow its internal logic to a point at which we might be able to see differently.

2. Her art makes use of and references various applied language systems, from structuralist anthropology to the language of cinema to music theory and notation. Indeed, her work could be interpreted as an interrogation of the symbolic and an exploding of the symbol. Often her performances and video works seem to reach towards the symbolic or the analogous and yet frustrate at the point of comprehension. She asks that we think a little harder. If we read less simplistically perhaps we will understand better.

3. This is not political art with a capital P and yet through its subtle insistence that we recognise the structures that surround us, bind us and tear us apart from one another, it is an art that abhors cruelty and longs for understanding. Like Beckett, the minimal and absurdist scenarios she writes and inhabits aim to get to the frail glow at the heart of things.

4. That something must be read at all, that we cannot go beyond language, this is the sadness in her work. It is human, it reaches continually for communication while demonstrating its own limits. In this she is a mourning modernist.

*Nothing to communicate, no way of communicating,  
must communicate.*

Samuel Beckett

5. At the heart of her work is an almost Taoist need to break beyond the clay that forms us, to reach out from behind these eyes, to inhabit reality, work on it and claim it.

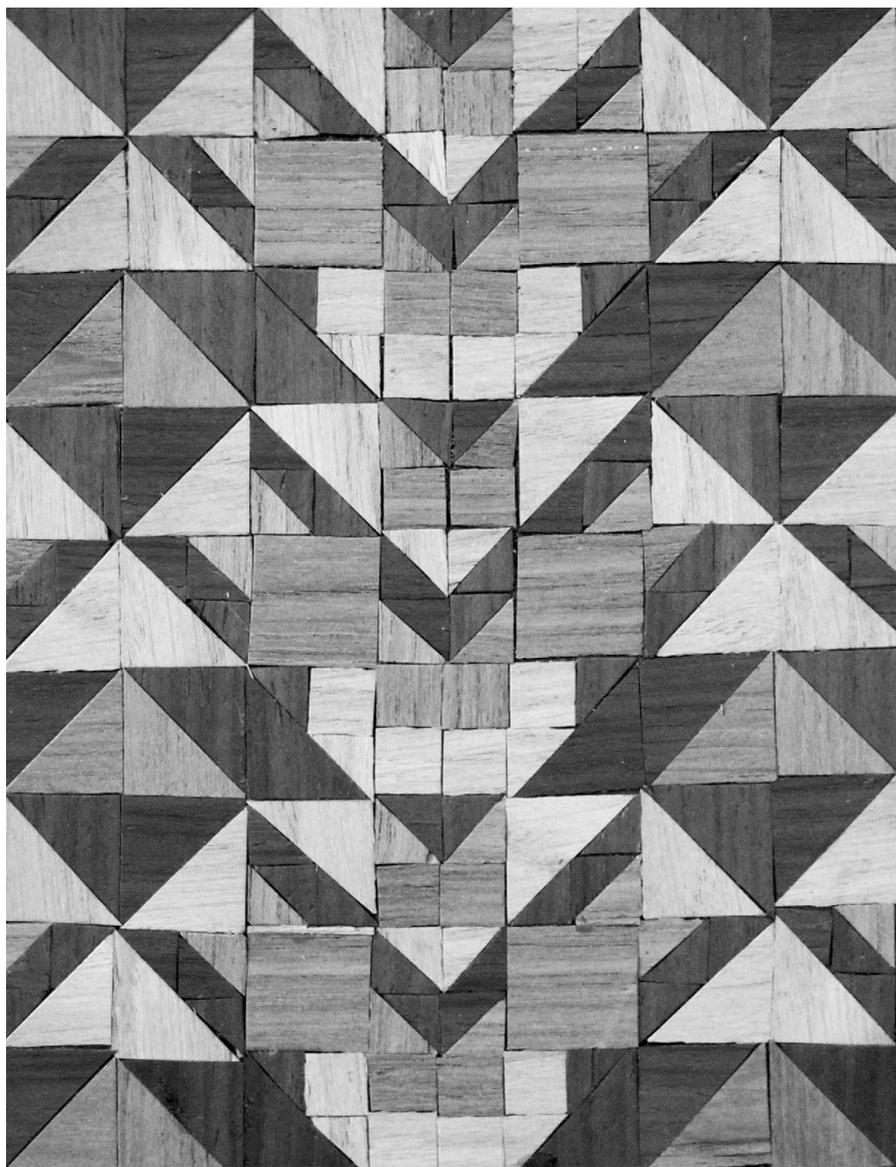
6. This work is moral but not moralising. She asks us to be aware of how we read and what we read, she asks us to recognise that perhaps it is not us who read at all. You repeat the same loop over and over again, our biological, political and cultural inheritance is a locked groove. This is your ball and chain, break it.

7. As Lacan taught us, reality is not biological or social, it is linguistic.

*bababadalgharaghtakamminarrnkonbronntoneeronntuonnthun  
ntrovarrhounawnskawntoohooordenenthurnuk*

James Joyce

John Douglas Millar is a writer, critic and poet based in London. His work has appeared in various national and international journals and magazines including Art Monthly, Mute Magazine, MAP Magazine and the Monthly Review NY. He is currently working on a collection of poems.



Cara Tolmie  
*Floor*, 2011  
Photograph of model  
Courtesy of the artist

## PERFORMANCE

### **Cara Tolmie & Lumpen Nobleman**

Thu 7 July 19:00 - 21:00

Bonar Hall, Dundee; Free

DCA are delighted to use the Bonar Hall Theatre Space for a new work that takes Tolmie's DCA installation in an interesting new direction. Tolmie has enjoyed great acclaim for her recent performances in Miami, London and Birmingham. In addition, Lumpen Nobleman plays music from his recently released album *Grusha* on Extra Normal Records ([www.extrarnormal.org.uk](http://www.extrarnormal.org.uk)). This performance precedes a series of events across the city programmed by Jonathan Baxter from Fri 8 - Sun 17 July. For more information about Dundee Live visit [www.d-air.org](http://www.d-air.org)

Book now on 01382 909900. For more details about talks and events please visit [www.dca.org.uk](http://www.dca.org.uk)

The artist would like to thank all of the staff at DCA, John Douglas Millar, Kimberly O'Neill and Kyle McCallum.

# DCA

Dundee Contemporary Arts

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[www.dca.org.uk](http://www.dca.org.uk)

Exhibition open

Tue - Sat 11:00 - 18:00

Sun 12:00 - 18:00, Thu until 20:00

Admission free. Charity No. SC026631

