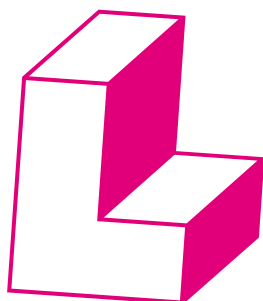


HOUSE OF THE RISING SCOTS

A converted warehouse in Glasgow is making international culture waves.

Words by **Helen Russell**



London Fashion Week is overrun by Glaswegians this year – from new talent Chris Kane to the influential Deryck Walker. In fact Scots are making waves all around the art world on a scale not seen since the days of Charles Rennie Macintosh. This isn't just luck. One of the major reasons why Glasgow is changing the creative landscape of Britain – and giving London a run for its money – is a

crumbling warehouse in the city's former shipping district.

Looking like Jarvis Cocker circa 1997 with thick black rimmed glasses, a mop of black hair and drainpipe trousers, Mutley – aka Andrew Fleming Brown – is the director of SWG3, a registered charity that supports artists of all disciplines by providing low rent space for them to paint, design, perform or record and helping them network and promote their work.

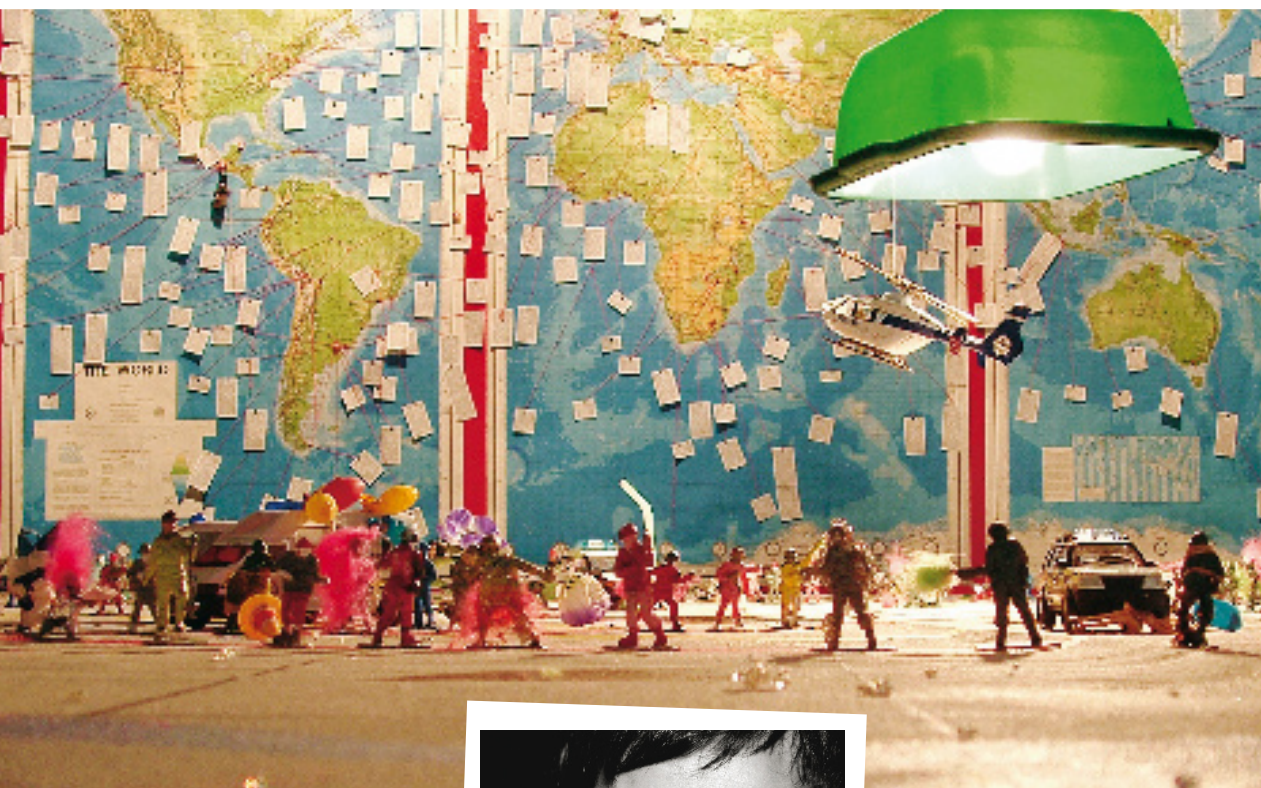
"When I left art school I just got really frustrated at the lack of affordable artists' studios," says Mutley. "And then I found this warehouse."



CUT OUT: FROM THE
DERYCK WALKER LINE
OPPOSITE PAGE:
SCHMOOZING GOES
ON INSIDE AND OUT



WALLFLOWERS: WWW.GOODWIVESANDWARRIORS.CO.UK



The warehouse had only been used as an illegal party venue since it became derelict in the 1980s. Mutley and a collective of artists applied to the council for the lease and began developing the studio warehouse in 2004, and naming it after the local postcode, G3. SWG3 was born.

Now open from 9am until midnight from Monday to Saturday, and 10am-10pm on Sunday, the warehouse buzzes with creative energy from the sculptors, painters, performance artists, musicians, designers and dancers at work there.

Each artist pays around £20 a week to rent studio space in the warehouse. Income is also generated through events, sponsorship and installations open to the public. Last month, for example, a new band had their single launch at SWG3 and sold merchandise. Mutley also charges photographers to shoot videos and advertisements in the space, and a trendy coffee shop is planned for next year.

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definitely a business. I don't have time to fill out grant forms."

He has become a local celebrity, described by the Scottish press and arts community as "Glasgow's culture-preneur". Not that his work life is glamorous: "I feel more like a janitor a lot of the time."

Hot fashion newcomer Chris Kane shot his latest collection last September at SWG3 before The Scottish Fashion Awards. The 25-year-old Glaswegian hit the headlines after his graduate show at St Martins in 2006, being invited by American *Vogue* editor Anna Wintour to her hotel suite for a chat about fashion, while Donatella Versace offered him a full-time job. He turned it down to develop his own catwalk collection. He's the man responsible for the 1980s revival and tight neon dresses as worn by Kylie Minogue and Victoria Beckham. Kane is now based in London but says of Glasgow: "It feels really good to have support from my home city. Fashion is a tough industry and I've been

poor for so long it's just nice to be able to keep going. I'm still in debt. It's just that a few more people know my name now."

Fellow designer Deryck Walker started in menswear in 2004 and launched his womenswear debut at London Fashion Week in September 2007. Already a well-



LEFT: THE VACUUM CLEANER & THE WAR ROOM
RIGHT: TEXT SCULPTURE BY SANDY SMITH
BACKGROUND: STENCILS BY MOHAMMED QASIM ASHFAQ

respected designer, Walker went out on a limb in November to try something different when Mutley encouraged him to turn his hand to sculpture. Making his signature windmill motif in 3D form, Walker was encouraged by Turner Prize nominee Jim Lambie, a fellow Glasgow College of Art graduate and a supporter of SWG3, to exhibit a solo show.

Walker loves the freedom and support that SWG3 offers: "Other galleries are covered in red tape – but here they want to help you. It houses some of the best young talent, and it's just a great community." Walker is back in fashion for now but plans a second art show at SWG3 later this year.

Niki Taylor runs Olanic (olanic.co.uk), a glamorous, edgy womenswear label launched at Paris Fashion Week in 2004. "SWG3 is great because it encourages a lot of artists and designers to stay in Glasgow and sets a high standard," says Taylor. Because artists from all disciplines are thrown together,

she's had the opportunity to do collaborative work with visual artists and bands. "It has a bit of a domino effect," she says. Taylor made her name with the Stilli – a sock-boot with an in-built sole to be pulled over the heel of a pair of shoes and transform any shoe into a boot. With Olanic now an established brand, Taylor has been designing for Marks & Spencer, Nike and the Playboy label. Despite her success, though, Taylor notes how tough the fashion business is. Without the support of marketing agency See Glasgow, the Scottish Arts Council and places like SWG3, she says, "we'd be going round businesses begging for money rather than just getting on with it."

At SWG3, designers work to a soundtrack of bands including retro pop act, Isosceles, whose singer Jack Valentinos from Scotland's Borders area has been in Glasgow for eight years. He credits SWG3 with giving the band the contacts – and rehearsal space – it needed to succeed:

"Mutley has put loads of effort into helping us. The place is legendary and I'm really proud to be a part of it." Isosceles' unique sound partners Hammond organs, cowbells and triangles with witty songs such as "Get Your Hands Off" – about teenage girls trying to seduce singers. They made such an impression on the local music scene that Franz Ferdinand's Alex Kapranos hand-picked the band to support them on their Scottish tour. SWG3 hosted the Isosceles' single launch in 2007. The band are now working on their follow-up.

On the floor above, past rickety partition walls and colourful murals, is artist in residence, a 27-year-old political activist The Vacuum Cleaner (thevacuumcleaner.co.uk). He specialises in *subvertising*, an anarchic response to advertising. He burst onto the scene in 2003 and caused a scandal with a remix of the Queen's speech opening with Her Majesty saying: "The day after my Christmas message, I hope you will all

© W tym roku atak na Londyński Tydzień Mody przypuścili projektanci z Glasgow — od debiutującego Chrisa Kane’a po znanego już na rynku Derycka Walkera. Szkoci robią teraz w świecie sztuki sporo zamieszania, na skalę niespotykaną od czasów Charlesa Rennie McIntosha. Nie można tego jednak tłumaczyć tylko zwykłym szczęściem. Jedną z głównych przyczyn, dla których Glasgow zmienia artystyczny pejzaż Wielkiej Brytanii, należy szukać w starym portowym magazynie.

Mieści się tu SWG3, wspomagająca artystów fundacja, która zapewnia im, za niską opłatą, przestrzeń do malowania, rzeźbienia, projektowania, wystawiania i nagrywania oraz pomoc przy promocji.

Dyrektorem SWG3 jest Mutley, vel Andrew Fleming-Brown. „Po skończeniu szkoły artystycznej byłem mocno sfrustrowany brakiem przystępnych cenowo pracowni artystycznych,” mówi. „Znalazłem ten magazyn.” Wraz z innymi artystami wynajął opuszczony budynek i wziął się za remont. Tak narodził się SWG3.

Za wynajem studia każdy artysta płaci tygodniowo £20. Dodatkowe zyski pochodzą z organizacji imprez, wystaw i sponsoringu. Mutley kasuje pieniądze również za sesje zdjęciowe i kręcenie reklamówek. Stał się lokalną gwiazdą, szeroko znaną w świecie mediów i w kręgach artystycznych.

Ściany magazynu pękają wręcz od kreatywnej energii pracujących tu rzeźbiarzy, malarzy, muzyków, projektantów i tancerzy.

Sesję zdjęciową do swojej kolekcji robił tu ostatnio ambitny młody projektant, Chris Kane. Nie skorzystał z propozycji pracy dla Donatelli Versace, ponieważ chce pracować nad swoją własną marką.

Projektant Deryck Walker dodatkowo zajmuje się również rzeźbą, został nawet namówiony do zrobienia w SWG3 indywidualnej wystawy. Mówi: „Oni chcą ci rzeczywiście pomóc. To niewiarygodne.”

Niki Taylor, która wykreowała własną markę Olanic, jest pełna zachwytu: „SWG3 jest po prostu super, wprowadza wysokie standardy i zachęca wielu artystów i projektantów do pozostania w Glasgow.” SWG3 rozślawia Glasgow jako miasto sztuki.



TOP: ISOSCELES
PERFORM AT SWG3
BELOW: POPUP
FRONTMAN DAMIAN
GILHOOLY



have death and destruction.” His latest work, *The Church of the Immaculate Consumption* was staged around Selfridges and House of Fraser in Glasgow as a comment on the religion of the 21st century: shopping. James, the man behind the nozzle, began working at SWG3 in 2005 and now spends most days there. “There’s no heating in my studio — or walls or windows for that matter — but it’s a great community of people who all support each other. You get advice, support, and people make you tea. It’s just nice.” The Vacuum Cleaner has exhibited at the Tate Modern and London’s Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), as well as in New York and Chicago. He’ll unveil a solo exhibition at SWG3 this Spring on the subject of energy. His future’s bright and it’s getting warmer: “I’ve brought in a garden shed with a heater for my studio. It’s much cosier there now.”

SWG3’s ones to watch this year include Gazmac, a graffiti artist who teaches art and graphic design by day, and paints (legally) for shops, clubs and work spaces by night. Another is new guitar band Popup, formed by school friends who have played more than 200 shows in the last two years and released two singles on Leeds label Art Goes Pop. They’re making an album with the Scottish Arts Council to release later this Spring. “SWG3 was a total discovery for us,” says bass guitarist Michael Cross, 25. “You can get away from everything and have your own space to be creative with no restrictions.” Another bonus is mixing with other artists of different disciplines. “We’ve got the B-Boys

in the studio next door and you can see them break-dancing with this amazing art in the background. It’s a cool place to just wander around,” says Cross, “somewhere that you can do things.”

And that is the overriding ethos of SWG3 — somewhere to let your imagination run wild. “It’s one of those places that we’ll probably look back on and we’ll see all these amazing people who started out there,” says Deryck Walker. “Places that are led by the artist, rather than councils, are critical because they create spaces where artists can do what they want, rather than what is expected of them,” says The Vacuum Cleaner. SWG3 has boosted the morale of artists and the reputation of Glasgow as a creative hub. Expect fundraising, great designs, exhibitions, gigs and mayhem from the SWG3 in the next year including The Vacuum Cleaner’s latest performance, live music nights and the Glasgow International Exhibition in April. *Wizzit* hopes that one day all cities will have their own arts-supporting centre, their own SWG3. **W**

Find out more about SWG3 at www.swg3.tv