

# Observers' Walks

## James N Hutchinson and Lothian Blind Ramblers

### *The Sightseers*

# COLLECTIVE

Performed by Eliza Langland and Simon Tait  
37 minutes

*The Sightseers* is an Observers' Walk made by artist James N Hutchinson and the Lothian Blind Ramblers. It forms part of James' wider long-term research project with Collective – *Rumours of a New Planet* – which investigates some of the alternative historic narratives and figures connected to Calton Hill.

James' initial research centered around astronomers associated with Calton Hill. He quickly became interested in the asides or footnotes of the astronomers' stories rather than the dominant, popular narratives. *The Sightseers* was inspired by the stories of Thomas Henderson (1789-1844) and Thomas Anderson (1853-1932) – both made significant discoveries as astronomers despite having visual impairments – and James Gall (1784–1874) an astronomer, publisher and advocate of accessible mapping for blind people. Henderson and Anderson's stories raise questions about what it means to observe when sight isn't the primary sense, and how this could enable us to reimagine or rediscover a place. To explore this, James worked with members of the Lothian Blind Ramblers, who he met through the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) based at the bottom of Calton Hill. The group walked and talked on Calton Hill and considered how description can become an active practice for the walker and guide.

Field recordings were made from each pair walking round a pre-determined route on Calton Hill. James created a script by

transcribing the recordings, editing and adding stories of Henderson, Anderson and Gall. The script was then performed and recorded live on Calton Hill by actors Eliza Langland and Simon Tait to ensure the ambient sounds and feel of Calton Hill was captured.

Walkers: Victor Aitken, Gail Donald, Elizabeth Douglas, Paddy Dresser, John Howie, Jimmy Milhench, Chris Morris and Dennis Wilson,  
Sound recorded by: Jack Coghill and Dougie Fairgrieve  
Performed by: Eliza Langland and Simon Tait  
Additional thanks to: Lesley Young and June Coates

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James N Hutchinson is based in Glasgow where he is undertaking a PhD at the Glasgow School of Art. Exhibitions and curatorial projects include: *Voices from the Archive*, Transmission Gallery, Glasgow, 2017 – Ongoing; *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, with Jeremy Deller, Hayward Touring, London, 2013; *Proposal For A Warehouse or Towards A Museum Of Reorganisation*, part of *How to Turn the World by Hand*, Collective, Edinburgh, and PiST, Istanbul, 2011.



# Stopping points

