

Observers' Walks
Tris Vonna-Michell
*The Artist and The
Gravedigger: after D.O. Hill*

17 minutes

The Artist and the Gravedigger: after D.O. Hill by Tris Vonna-Michell is the third in the Observers' Walks series, downloadable audio guides commissioned by Collective and created by artists specifically to be listened to on Calton Hill.

Tris Vonna-Michell is an artist who has gained international recognition for his performances, story-telling actions and photo-installations. His work often features his own voice in live performance or as a narrated soundtrack within an installation.

The Artist and the Gravedigger: after D.O. Hill draws on the history of two significant buildings on Calton Hill – St Andrew's House and Rock House. Built on the site of the old Calton Jail, St Andrew's House is the headquarters of the Scottish Government. Rock House is now a residential property but was the first photography studio in Scotland, established by Robert Adamson who worked there with pioneering calotype photographer David Octavius Hill. The title of this work was inspired by a Hill and Adamson photographic series made in the mid-19th century, depicting subjects in Greyfriars' cemetery, in which, one of the photographic plates is labelled 'The Artist and the Gravedigger'.

Central to *The Artist and the Gravedigger: after D.O. Hill* is a tension between lived experience and historical accounts. The work is comprised of layered audio, weaving together a recorded walking tour of St Andrew's House with extracts performed by the artist from Eduardo Cadava's book *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (1998); a meditation on philosopher and theorist Walter Benjamin's use of the language of photography to inform his conception of history.

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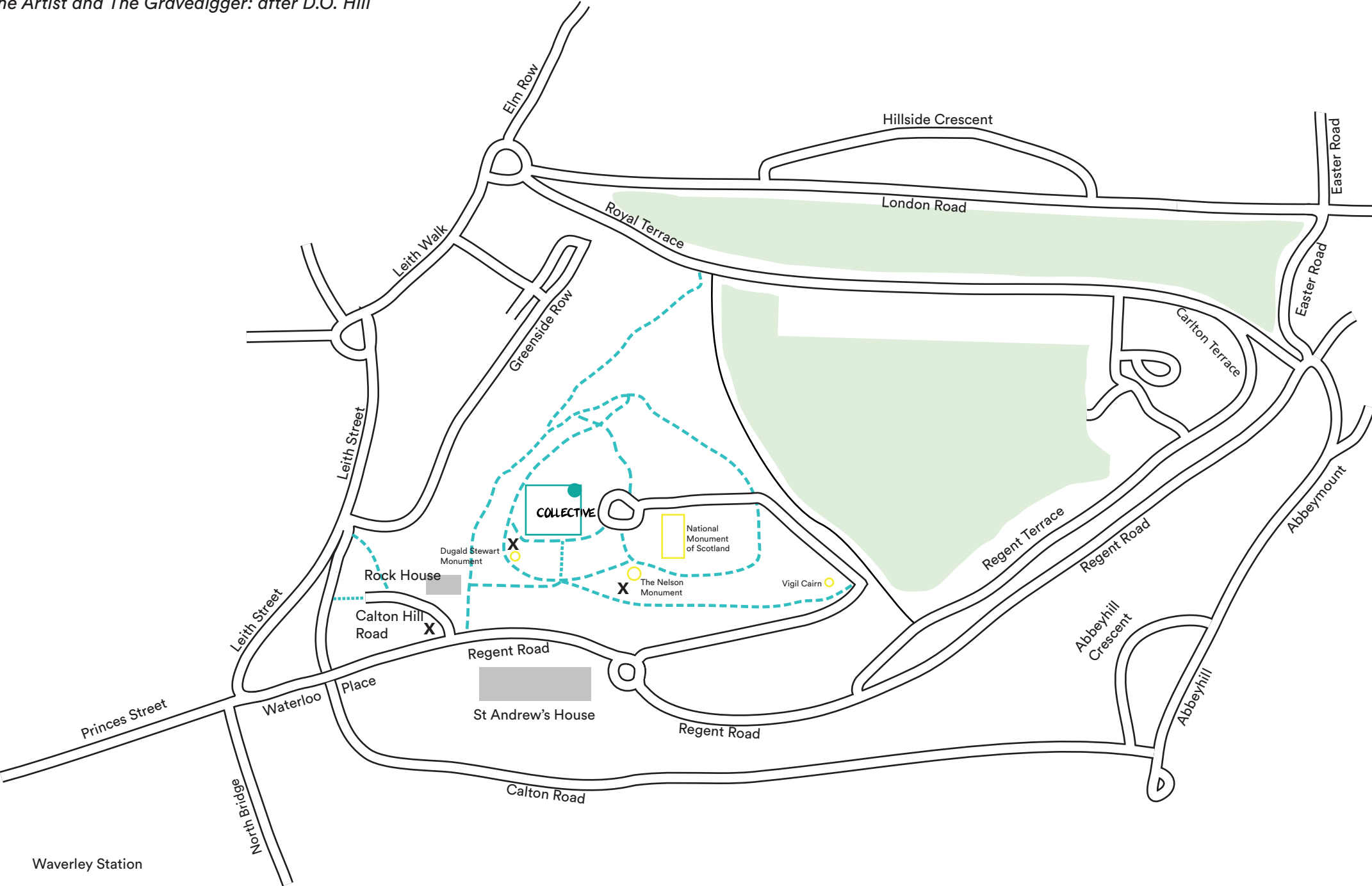
See the map overleaf to find the three recommended listening points for *The Artist and the Gravedigger: after D.O. Hill*, which are located by Nelsons Monument, Dugald Stewart Monument and on Calton Hill Road.

Tris Vonna-Michell was born in Southend-on-Sea and is a graduate of Glasgow School of Art. His recent solo exhibitions include: VOX, Centre de l'image contemporaine, Montreal (2014); *Postscript II (Berlin)*, Jan Mot, Brussels; *Pebble Dash*, T293, Rome (2013); *Uterior Vistas*, BALTIC, Gateshead (2012); *Metro Pictures*, New York (2011); Focal Point Gallery, Southend-on-Sea (2010); *Auto-Tracking-Auto-Tracking*, Kunsthalle Zurich (2008-2009); Cabinet Gallery, London (2008) and Witte de With, Rotterdam (2007). Group exhibitions include *Un Nouveau Festival*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2014); *Unrest of Form. Imagining the Political Subject*, Secession, Vienna; *The Butterfly Image*, MUDAM, Luxembourg (2013); *The Other Tradition*, Wiels, Brussels (2011); *British Art Show 7*, (2010-11); *Manifesta 8*, Murcia (2010).

Observers' Walks is funded by Outset Scotland.



X Three suggested listening points for
The Artist and The Gravedigger: after D.O. Hill



The Artist and The Gravedigger: after D.O. Hill
credits:

Andy Omand, Building Manager of St. Andrew's House; Sound Recordist, Dougie Fairgreave; Audio mix-down and mastering, Martin Konie Ehrencrona and Diana Kaur at Studio Cobra, Stockholm and Mount Analogue, Stockholm; and thanks to PRIM - Productions Réalisations Indépendantes de Montréal, Montreal, and Darling Foundry, Montreal.

Collective is a contemporary, visual arts organisation, established in 1984 to support a community of local artists. Collective now delivers an exciting and ambitious programme of new exhibitions, new commissions and projects. Collective produces major new work by Scotland based and international artists who are at a pivotal stage in their development.

Over the next two years, Collective will be making the City Observatory complex its new home, opening the whole site to the public for the first time. This will bring contemporary visual art into the iconic heart of Edinburgh.

Outset Scotland brings private individuals and corporate partners together to fund contemporary art activity in Scotland. It supports selected artists' commissions, exhibitions and education programmes and seeks to augment Scotland's public collections of contemporary art with gifted artworks. Kirstie Skinner of Outset Scotland said: "Outset Scotland is thrilled to support Collective's vision and ambition in moving to Calton Hill. In funding the Observers' Walks commissions, we are delighted that artists Ruth Ewan and Astrid Johnston, Bedwyr Williams and Tris Vonna Michell will make new bodies of work for this special location, and we look forward to sharing our excitement with a wide audience."