



Susan Mansfield

ALISON TURNBULL

★★★★★

JAMES CUMMING

★★★★★

TALBOT RICE GALLERY, EDINBURGH

ANGUS REID: 6 PEAKS

AXOLOTL, EDINBURGH

★★★★★

An art gallery in Dundas Street might not be a place one expects to find poetry, but **Angus Reid's** ambitious installation at Axolotl (sadly, part of the gallery's final show) shows how well the two can work together. *6 Peaks* is a poem sequence inspired by a walk to six summits in the Pentlands on a wild, windy day, a hard journey, "walking off a broken heart".

The work captures both that walk in savage weather, and Reid's writerly reflections on it. The poems are on the walls, directly above a panorama

of the hills where the walk took place. The raw directness of the poems ("it took six peaks to walk away from you") is balanced by an intricate structure: the line endings form an independent set of poems, a kind of counterpoint to the main narrative, and the clean lines of the Georgian room facilitate this as clearly as lines on a page. It's an elegant coming together of landscape and experience, internal and external, word and image.

Part of the reason Reid's show works so well is that the poems are clear enough to read from a distance, where one can also take in the visual panorama. One of the challenges of showing poetry and image to-

Poetry climbs to great heights of love, loss and redemption

Visual Art Giles Sutherland

Angus Reid: 6 Peaks

Axolotl Gallery, Edinburgh

★★★★★

The work of the Edinburgh-based poet, filmmaker and artist Angus Reid deserves to be better known.

This installation (at the Axolotl Gallery which is, sadly, soon to close) presents a journey — emotional, physical and spiritual. At its core are the ideas of love, loss and redemption.

Last year, accompanied by his teenage daughter, Reid traversed six peaks in the Pentland Hills, which run in a northeast to southwest axis for around ten miles due south of Edinburgh.

Although the walk itself was arduous, it was neither dangerous nor overwhelming, and was completed in around four or five hours.

But unlike the Munro-bagging, sporty mentality of most competitive hill walkers, Reid's purpose was altogether different — and exceptional.

The notion of poetry framing and informing landscape (and vice versa) is not new — indeed, the idea arguably lay at the core of Romanticism, as espoused by Wordsworth and Coleridge in their *Lyrical Ballads*. Somehow, the process

of walking became poetic and, in a sense, the landscape breathed poetry into being.

The peaks, valleys, wind, rain and sunshine somehow generated the stuff of metre, rhythm, rhyme and syntax.

Reid's poetic form is unusual, if not unique. Each of his 140-syllable

inextricably linked with walking, thinking, and feeling. The landscape moulds the poet's thoughts and the thoughts become bound to the "path" he is walking.

As if to emphasise this, the name of each peak — Caerketton, Allermuir, Castle Law, Turn House, Carnethy — is embedded as a mesostic, in highlighted font, within the text of each poem. The last named peak is Scald Law. It may be toponymical happenstance but the Old Norse (and contemporary Icelandic) term for poet is *skald*.

Reid underscores his approach with bold, stark, stylised silhouettes of the Pentland peaks. (It's worth remembering that, etymologically, the root of "topography" is "a description of place"). Although graphically formalised, these hills are recognisable and resonate with reality. Around the walls of this exquisitely proportioned Georgian drawing room, image follows word, just as thought follows form.

Reid gave a bold and moving performance of this quiet, elegiac, celebratory sequence that was full of bardic dignity and lyrical poise.

These were not merely spoken words, but images, thoughts, feelings and ideas, merged and forged in a walk through the poet's mind and soul.

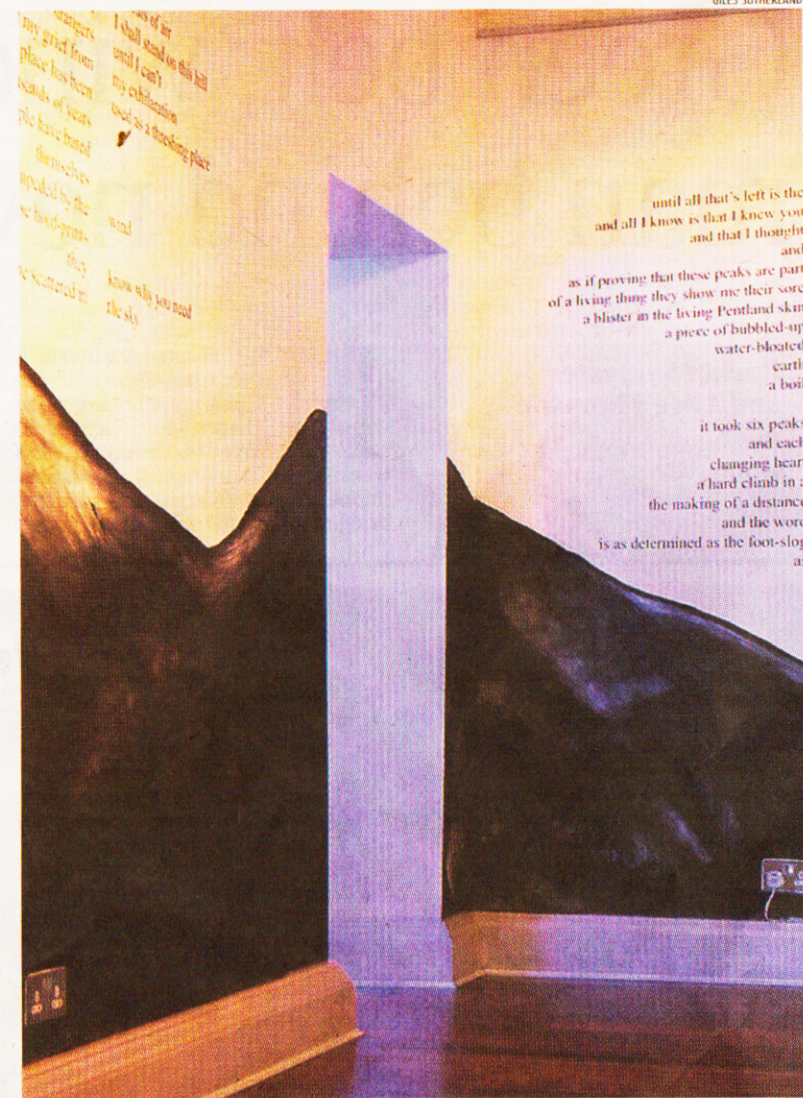
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An ambitious project is bringing Shakespeare's bloodiest plays to the Balkans and back

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sonnets has been literally bisected by a vertical typographical line, using left and right justification. These sonnets form part of a much longer series — a "book of days" in the tradition of Petrarch and others.

The first lines of 118/365 read:
It took six peaks to walk away from you
and each was a hard climb in the fierce wind
the topography of a changing heart
the making of a distance between us
The process of writing is thus



Poetry informs the landscape, and vice versa, in Angus Reid's installation

First night

GILES SUTHERLAND