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The Twisted Arcade. 'Martin Creed Work No.1059 (The Scotsman Steps)'

Citation for published version:

Patrizio, A 2015, 'The Twisted Arcade. 'Martin Creed Work No.1059 (The Scotsman Steps)'' , *Architecture and Culture*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 219-243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2015.1067039>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1080/20507828.2015.1067039](https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2015.1067039)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Architecture and Culture

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The Twisted Arcade: Unconnected Thoughts on Martin Creed's *Work No. 1059*

Introduction

This paper presents a public commission by artist Martin Creed through an experimental essay form that replicates the structural features of the artwork itself. Creed's work is entitled *Work No. 1059* (Creed has been numbering his artworks sequentially since 1986) and consists of a flight of one hundred and four steps that join two streets in Edinburgh, part of a refurbishment project by Edinburgh City Council and Edinburgh World Heritage. In this essay we walk from the lowest point on Market Street to the uppermost level on North Bridge, naming as we go each of the different marble steps sourced from twenty-seven countries. The steps had previously fallen into disuse, and were eventually closed. In 2011, they were re-opened as an artwork and a public right of way, the Scotsman Steps. They are encased within an octagonal, turreted stone tower, originally part of *The Scotsman* newspaper building. The whole forms part of a Category A listed structure built in 1899 by architects James Dunn and James Finlay. Commissioning Creed's *Work No. 1059* was at the instigation of The Fruitmarket Gallery, which lies near the bottom entrance to the steps.

Two 'subtexts' inform the essay. The first is Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, a repository of insights into urban atmospheres, evocative written fragments, here twisted playfully in Creed's *Work No. 1059*. The second is a classic Enlightenment text by William Shenstone called *Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening* (1764), a canonical contribution to the aesthetics of the picturesque. The proposition is that *Work No. 1059* can be seen as a dark and late flowering of an urban picturesque.

Landing 0 Black Forest Gold [Pakistan]

Prior to the installation of Martin Creed's *Work No. 1059*, the Scotsman Steps comprised a mixture of plain stone and concrete. The turret's walls were formed from stone clad inside with glazed tiles, with wrought iron metalwork over the ten apertures that punctuate the exterior face.

Step 1 Bianco Gioia [Italy]

Over time, the steps had fallen into disuse. Dark and foul-smelling, the staircase was widely perceived as dangerous – its twists offered themselves up as hangouts, shelters or impromptu urinals.

Step 2 Pierre Bleu [Belgium]

There are two public access points to *Work No. 1059*: from the first step of Pakistan marble, called Black Forest Gold, at the ground level on Market Street near Waverley Railway Station (Fig.1) or from the top step of Azul Macaubas marble from Brazil that lies adjacent to the Scotsman Hotel entrance on North Bridge above. (Fig.9)

Step 3 Picasso Green Light [India]

Work No. 1059 was commissioned by The Fruitmarket Gallery in collaboration with architects Haworth Tompkins. The project nests within a refurbishment of the whole site by Campbell and Arnott architects.

Step 4 Fior di Pesco Carnico [Italy]

The work, which we think of here as a Benjaminian arcade in twisted form, has no intermediate entry point. There is no clear view to the steps from the outside, encased as they are inside a stone tower. (Fig.2)

Landing 5 Rosso Alicante [Spain]

Despite brass title plates at the top and bottom of the work and the availability of a guide leaflet and website introducing the work and naming its marbles, as the steps themselves have no individual inscriptions, once you are on them you are lost in a world of descant marble where, in effect, the path up and down are one and the same (following Heraclitus).

Step 6 Arabescato Carrara [Italy]

The marbles for *Work No. 1059* each meet the standards of any normal pavement and were selected because of their strength and their resistance to salt, cracking and

slipperiness.

Step 7 Pietra del Cardoso [Italy]

Marble makes good flooring material (only its cost makes it rarely used on the ground), and forms what John Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice* called “incrusted architecture.” It is “*the only one in which perfect and permanent chromatic decoration is possible* [...] [C]lothed with the defence and the brightness of the marble, as the body of an animal is protected and adorned by its scales or its skin, ... all the consequent fitnesses and laws of the structure will be easily discernible.”¹

Step 8 Crema Valencia [Spain]

Across eighty-eight standard steps interspersed with sixteen larger landing slabs, hence one hundred and four steps in all, the horizontal treads and vertical risers of each step are unique, not repeated elsewhere in *Work No. 1059*.

Step 9 Lipica Unito [Slovenia]

In an unpromising context, Creed has introduced a work (or more accurately a *re-work*) in marble that binds together an extraordinary number of themes – globalization, mental health, musical scales, the picturesque – whilst persistently counterpointing the luxury and the poverty of materials and of experience.

Landing 10 Calacatta Oro Vagli [Italy]

The poetic elegance of Creed’s *Work No. 1059* is always undercut by its rude, prosaic position and the previous use of the staircase by clubbers, drinkers and the homeless.

Step 11 Rosso Verona [Italy]

The flow of Creed’s marble was in previous decades prefigured by that of urine and vomit. As the steps slowly work their way into the fabric of the city and inevitably lose some of their freshness and novelty, no doubt some aspects of the steps as repository, stopover and latrine will return.

Step 12 Verde Jasmine [India]

Commonalities exist with one of Creed's earlier works, 'Sick Film' (*Work No.610*, 2006), which features men and women entering the picture frame and vomiting directly on to a white floor, so encouraging a reading of the steps as always and inevitably a kind of a therapeutic *gut* within the city body.

Step 13 Giallo Siena [Italy]

Work No. 1059 is a 'mending' within the city; a curated and curative structure alleviating an unwelcome wound in the city's fabric and stitched from materials that will become increasingly invisible to passersby over time.

Step 14 Brown Fossil [Morocco]

Benjamin touched on this interplay between curating, collecting and concentration - "Perhaps the most deeply hidden motive of the person who collects can be described this way: he takes up the struggle against dispersion. Right from the start, the great collector is struck by the confusion, by the scatter, in which the things of the world are found... The collector... brings together what belongs together..."²

Step 15 Breccia Sarda [Italy]

The steps have a syntactical role, in the sense that two separate parts of Edinburgh (between Market Street and North Bridge) come into direct contact through this work; "a lovely work of art framed by two neighborhoods" as Benjamin appreciatively thought of the marble-floored Passage Véro-Dodat in Paris.³

Step 16 Nero Belgio [Belgium]

The steps mark the juncture between two very different trades – one in fruit, the other in newspapers, both now extant merely as echos. Former place of rural-urban exchange, The Fruitmarket now designates the contemporary art gallery that commissioned Creed's piece. The publishing offices of the *Scotsman* newspaper are present only in names of the hotel and the steps themselves, both of which bear the newspaper's title.

Landing 17 Rosa Norvegia [Norway]

This interstitial place registers the fruit stalls and the printing presses as two now-absent 'elsewheres', giving the site and the artwork it contains a nostalgic air – no longer linked to the trading past, no longer urgently useful, the steps can become aestheticised, picturesque.

Step 18 Grafite [Iran]

As a refurbishment *Work No. 1059* is to some extent a tidying up, a sanitisation, a smoothing out. "By the end of the eighteenth century the picturesque had become another example of how humans came to accommodate potentially unprepossessing scenery. The physical world could be seen more pleasantly, occupied and visited more safely, if it were thought of as a painting. So it was filtered through sensibilities honed on a study of graphic representations of the world," writes John Dixon Hunt in his framing of the picturesque.⁴

Step 19 Giallo D'Oriente [Turkey]

In speaking about his first thoughts on Edinburgh, Creed observed that the city always struck him as a place of steps, a medieval city folded around numerous hills and wound tightly at its core amongst steeply compressed levels and sudden changes in altitude.

Step 20 Grigio Tao [Tunisia]

The Scotsman Steps are legally designated as a road rather than a walkway so subconsciously or otherwise locals tend to think of the steps as syntactical and transitional, a link within an urban chain.

Step 21 Rosso Daniel [Spain]

And roads or streets, for Walter Benjamin, "are the dwelling place of the collective. The collective is an eternally unquiet, eternally agitated being that... experiences, learns, understands, and invents as much as individuals do within the privacy of their own four walls."⁵

Landing 22 Fior di Pesco Fantastico [Italy]

The artwork's transitional character, its role as a place of passage, will grow more pronounced as the artwork settles in, becoming a familiar part of the public's everyday experience of navigating the city (though for some, *Work No.1059* will always be a destination in its own right).

Step 23 Giallo Reale Rosato [Italy]

Work No. 1059 is among the newest in a long cultural lineage of prominent steps reaching back to ancient architecture in Egypt, Indonesia and elsewhere, and built by societies wishing to symbolize ascension, life after death or pilgrimage.

Step 24 Arabescato Rosso Orobico [Italy]

Steps are manifest in iconic twentieth-century Western works such as Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending the Staircase No.2* (1912) or Blinky Palermo's mural paintings from his *Treppenhaus* (staircase) series of the 1970s.

Step 25 Botticino Classico [Italy]

The enclosed nature of *Work No. 1059* suggests the setting of the Pergamon Altar in its dedicated museum in Berlin, where a flight of steps greets visitors as they enter the museum's 'sanctuary'. Or perhaps *Work No. 1059* is the twisted sister of De Sanctis and Specchis's Spanish Steps (1723–1725) that join Rome's Piazza Trinità dei Monti with the Piazza di Spagna.

Step 26 Fossil Green [Turkey]

A modest monument in stepped form is the set of sculptures by Giuseppe Penone entitled *Eroded Steps/Contour Lines* (1989), which the artist cast directly from inside a Halifax textile mill (every step gently worn down across its center) in honor of the millworkers who trod its steps over centuries.

Step 27 Arancio di Selva [Italy]

Films and novels such as John Buchan's *The 39 Steps* (1915), Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) gravitate towards

steps and staircases in their pivotal moments.

Step 28 Caramel [Brazil]

Near *Work No. 1059* on Princes Street sits another home for twisted steps – the Scott Monument, a sandstone structure over 61m high with 287 steps to its top, designed by George Meikle Kemp in 1846 to commemorate the life of Walter Scott, novelist and poet, and including at its base a sculpture of the subject carved from Carrara marble by John Steell.

Step 29 Breccia Aurora [Italy]

The steps in the Scott Monument are functional, with all attention on the High Victorian, neo-Gothic exterior rather than the interior. In relation to them, Creed's work becomes an alternative or anti-monument, or at least a monument turned outside in.

Step 30 Nero Portoro [Italy]

Look further East to Calton Hill and the monument designed by Robert Adam in 1777, marking the life of David Hume in a minimalist, circular structure, a hollow space one can inhabit from the inside, like Creed's, and look out skyward. (Fig.3)

Landing 31 Verde Giada [China]

If Hume's writing was a pillar of eighteenth-century European Enlightenment thought then Creed's work, in intention and realization, comes from a different place - a more disturbing contemporary and psychological 'Scottish Endarkenment'.

Step 32 Rosa Flavia [Egypt]

Calton Hill Cemetery, where Hume's monument is sited, was built originally for the burial of tradesmen and merchants – participants in the emerging global trade that followed industrialization and whose successors seem to inhabit Creed's piece in its homage to marble's worldwide circulation.

Step 33 Crema Imperiale [France]

From the outside, Creed's work is non-descript – all its aesthetic qualities are set in its innards. Hume's monument is non-descript and minimalist from the inside as well as from the outside.

Landing 34 Breccia Paradiso [Italy]

Adam's monument to Hume can be seen clearly from different parts of the city, including from the top of *Work No. 1059*.

Step 35 Bardiglio Fiorito [Italy]

The difference between *Work No. 1059* and all of the other monuments across Edinburgh is its utility, both in the sense that the passage performs a function for pedestrians traversing the city and in the sense that the work has to be directly entered and used in order to be understood.

Step 36 Rosa Tea [Turkey]

Work No. 1059 is useful – it works.

Step 37 Emperador Dark [Spain]

Creed's intervention was always going to require safe and solid steps, fit for public use, whose dimensions, casing, rationale, beginning and end were already set in place as unmovable elements of his brief. (Fig.4)

Step 38 Azul Bahia [Brazil]

Rilke: "A work of art is good if it has sprung from necessity. In this nature of its origin lies the judgment of it: there is no other."⁶

Step 39 Pinta Verde [Brazil]

Beyond what *Work No. 1059* is and how it sits within the city, what were the shaping factors brought to bear by the artist and his own intentions in this work?

Step 40 Nero Lakis [Greece]

Almost arithmetical in its logic, the most often cited principle behind Creed's work is:

‘the whole world + the work of art = the whole world’ (see *Work. No. 146*, 1996, onwards).

Step 41 Giallo Silvia Oro Medio [Egypt]

In an interview on *Work No. 1059*, Creed speaks of his intention to try to include “the whole world” in most of his art, returning again to his motive of fauve naïve ambition, an ambition that often avoids explicit artistic and aesthetic choices.⁷

Step 42 Calacatta Vagli [Italy]

Creed’s proposition that ‘the whole world + the work of art = the whole world’ is a recognition of what could be conceived as the digestive powers of the world, represented in the earth’s capacity to absorb all newly created objects into its structures; Creed is as greedy as the world.

Step 43 Irish Green [Ireland]

An extract from the Fruitmarket Gallery’s commission proposal: “Creed describes the project as a microcosm of the whole world – stepping on the different marble steps will be like walking through the world, the new staircase dramatizing Edinburgh’s internationalism and contemporary significance while recognizing and respecting its historical importance.”⁸

Step 44 Giallo Provenza [Morocco]

As it stands, *Work No. 1059* includes as near to the whole world of marble as logistically feasible (that is, over one hundred of those marbles available from the catalogue of his Italian supplier), with juxtapositions between each of the marble samples arrived at entirely through a process of random numbering.

Landing 45 Bianco Laser [Afghanistan]

Creed determined that each step was to be made entirely of a single marble not repeated elsewhere on the staircase, the order being set out to the suppliers in a diagram with each marble numbered. [Fig.5]

Step 46 Grey Saint Laurent [Italy]

Work No. 1059 is akin to a revisionist Great Exhibition of 1851. Creed's steps condense the Exhibition's encyclopedic array of globally sourced, individually designed artifacts into one repeated form and one material, sourced globally.

Step 47 Rosa Jasmine [India]

This place in Edinburgh becomes a compressed international zone, established by contributions from countries that sell extracted sections of their own territory into the international marble market.

Step 48 Chocolate [China]

Benjamin in *The Arcades Project* appreciatively quotes an early guide to Paris on the Arcades as constituting "a *passage* in a city, a world in miniature..."⁹

Step 49 Bianco Sivec [Macedonia]

Crucially, to view *Work No. 1059* as a Benjaminian 'world in miniature' is to see two faces, one external (the world) and another internal (the staircase) – a twisted arcade that "...opens up to him as a landscape, even as it closes around him as a room."¹⁰ (Fig.6)

Step 50 Pietra Ducale [Italy]

Here is the paradox of the steps – we are presented with a panorama, an array of geological atmospheres from around the globe, crystallized into a very specific architectural solution that is as discrete and partial as the concept is global.

Step 51 Arabescato Grigio Orobico [Italy]

Camillo Sitte, town planner and historian, might have applauded the staircases' conjunction of the performative and the picturesque. In 1889, he wrote: "...if it were feasible, stronger architectural projections, more frequent interruptions of the building line, zigzag and winding streets, uneven street widths, different heights of houses, flights of stairs, loggias, balconies, gables, and whatever else make up the

picturesque trappings of stage architecture would in the end be no misfortune for a modern city.”¹¹

Step 52 Rosa Corallo [Italy]

The steps: a spectrum of material numbered and pre-prepared by the Italian supplier and indexical of their country of origin as well as of marble types.

Step 53 Fantasy Gold [India]

Striking that in a city like Edinburgh where private and commercial wealth is generally kept discretely behind closed doors, we have a work whose opulence echoes the jigsawed, marbled extravagance of Rome’s St Peter’s or the Villa Farnese.

Landing 54 Breccia Venezia [Italy]

If the exuberant flows and scales of Italian Baroque marble are recalled through the marble array of the steps, surely the standardized sizes in Creed provide an appropriately Calvinistic restraint.

Step 55 Lapislazuli [Bolivia]

The steps cannot and do not shed their association with temptation, power and wealth.

Landing 56 Playa Stone [Croatia]

We are close to a defining device of market capitalism here, albeit surely ironically framed – the freedom to choose and to follow one’s material desires using whatever (economic) muscle one has at one’s disposal.

Step 57 Ebano [Tunisia]

Does *Work No. 1059* subvert or celebrate the freedom offered by the market?

Step 58 Botticino Fiorito Dark [Italy]

Any answer must remain ambiguous, given that Creed would never take a straightforward ideological position in any direction – not left or right, not up or

down.

Step 59 Verde Lemon [Greece]

William Shenstone, our first guide through the picturesque, gave us a powerful insight into the attractions and responsibilities of trying to comprehend entire systems (for him, gardens and rock formations; for us marble production).

Step 60 Nero Michaelangelo [Pakistan]

Shenstone wrote, wonderfully apropos of *Work No. 1059*: "...we are placed in the corner of a sphere; endued neither with organs, nor allowed a station, proper to give us an universal view; or to exhibit to us the variety, the orderly proportions, and dispositions of the system. We perceive many breaks and blemishes, several neglected and unvariegated places in the part; which, in the whole would appear either imperceptible, or beautiful [...] But, though art be necessary for collecting nature's beauties, by what reason is she authorized to thwart and to oppose her?"¹²

Step 61 Rosa Peralba [Italy]

Italy supplied the most marble types for *Work No. 1059*, numbering 45 samples; second was India at nine, then Spain and Turkey at five each; Brazil next at four, then at three Croatia, Egypt, Greece and Iran with the following countries supplying the material for one or two steps: Afghanistan, Argentina, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia Herzegovina, China, France, Guatemala, Ireland, Lebanon, Macedonia, Morocco, Namibia, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal, Slovenia, Tunisia.¹³

Step 62 Pietra Orsera [Italy]

It is clear that no relation exists between the size of the originating country and the quantity of material used; all countries are equal and all are permanent members.

Step 63 Breccia Damacata [Italy]

The work in its lightness leaves unacknowledged the abuses, exploitation and global marketeering that underlies the supply of materials across the world – workers, brutal conditions, and surplus value that accrues to marble, as to diamonds, coffee

and oil as they go on their lucrative journeys around the globe. (Fig.7)

Step 64 Verde Rolex [Greece]

It is possible to reflect geopolitically on the arrangement, from indexes of the breakup of Yugoslavia, for example (whose marbles are distributed widely across *Work No. 1059*) to troubled and untroubled borders across the globe.

Step 65 Picasso Gold [India]

Some specific examples would be right at this spot, Steps 63 and 64, where lie marbles from the two empires of the ancient Western world, Italy and Greece.

Landing 66 Grigio Carnico [Italy]

There is no Iron Curtain between stepped pairs 9-10 and 81-82, where Slovenia and Italy lie adjacent as they do geographically.

Step 67 Terrasanta [Italy]

Steps number 18-19 and 74-75 denote one of the oldest and most stable borders in the world, that between Iran and Turkey – whose long-time friendship has only recently been tested by the Arab Spring uprisings and their aftermath.

Landing 68 Rosso Francia [France]

Immediately after steps 18-19 is step 20 from Tunisia, where in December 2010, just seven months before *Work No. 1059* opened, in the city of Sidi Bouzid, the initial spark of the Arab Spring was struck.

Step 69 Rosa Portogallo Dark [Portugal]

Creed's juxtapositions can be (always are) serendipitous and playful – consider steps 79 (Argentina) and 80 (Guatemala), which will evoke for the most ardent South American football fans the moment in Guatemala City when Lionel Messi overtook Diego Maradona's goal-scoring tally for Argentina in their 4-0 victory over the host nation on the 15th June 2013.

Step 70 Picasso Brown [India]

So these stones inside Creed's twisted Edinburgh arcade contain within them multiple transnational histories that surely whisper across to each other like specters.

Step 71 Violita [Italy]

It has been reported by staff at The Fruitmarket Gallery that national delegations have been observed gathering around one of their marbles on the Scotsman Steps, as if to honor the presence of their homeland within the fabric of Edinburgh.

Step 72 Veselye Unito [Croatia]

It may be serendipitous but certainly not irrelevant that eighteenth-century theories of the picturesque had a socio-political aspect for the privileged classes who could afford to shape their own landscapes, enabling them to view threatening aspects of country life as pictorial and aestheticized renderings rather than as practical or ethical problems that demanded action.

Step 73 Bardiglio Nuvolato [Italy]

You will find a perfectly fitting description of *Work No. 1059* if you replace the words 'rocks' and 'trees' with the word 'steps' in this passage by another proponent of the picturesque, William Gilpin: "No two rocks, or trees are exactly the same. They are varied a second time by combination; and almost as much, a third time, by different lights and shades, and other aerial facts."¹⁴

Step 74 Rosa Sabrina [Iran]

The Scotsman Steps have become a kind of vertical marble garden of the city, where (co-opting terms used by Shenstone) "the grace of novelty" reigns, and where 'variety appears to me to derive good part of its effect from novelty; as the eye, passing from one form or color, to a form or color of a different kind, finds a degree of novelty in its present object which affords immediate satisfaction.'¹⁵

Step 75 Midas Gold [Turkey]

The steps in their numerous corkscrew turns align with Shenstone's advice to garden designers to avoid straight views and long prospects and so stop visitors anticipating in advance the route they are about to walk.

Step 76 Rosso Amaranto Dark [Italy]

Shenstone advocated the importance of areas of "undecorated space" to set off the variety to be found elsewhere in the landscape, areas that are represented in the severe and rudimentary decoration of the ceiling, the overhead lighting and the exterior of the Scotsman Steps.¹⁶

Step 77 Reper [Italy]

Benjamin: "As rocks of the Miocene or Eocene in places bear the imprint of monstrous creatures from those ages, so today arcades dot the metropolitan landscape like caves containing the fossil remains of a vanished monster: the consumer of the pre-imperial era of capitalism, the last dinosaur of Europe."¹⁷

Step 78 Verde Italia [Italy]

If you look closely, there are remains of shells and creatures in some of the marble steps in *Work No.1059*, such as Brown Fossil on Step 14 and Fossil Green on Step 26, but this is an urban cave devoid of the commercial fossil remains, the shops, that haunted Benjamin's arcades.

Landing 79 Azul Cielo [Argentina]

From the 'blue skies' of Argentina at this step to the blue veins seen by Ruskin at St. Mark's: "marbles, that half refuse and half yield to the sunshine, Cleopatra-like, 'their bluest veins to kiss' – the shadow, as it steals back from them, revealing line after line of azure undulation, as a receding tide leaves the waved sand."¹⁸

Step 80 Giallo Daniel [Guatemala]

As Shenstone and many others around him realized, gardens are not places isolated from social pressures and interactions but spaces in which the tensions of the

modern age can be writ large. The same applies to the marbles of the Scotsman Steps.

Step 81 Paonazzo [Italy]

Shenstone and the picturesque live on through their influence on another major Scottish artist – Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925-2006) – who acknowledged and reworked Shenstone’s words openly in his own *Unconnected Sentences on Gardening*, 1980.¹⁹

Step 82 Lipica Fiorito [Slovenia]

Whilst the differences between Creed and Finlay are obvious to all who know their work, there are strange points where their themes touch through the picturesque, such as in the counterpointing of *simplicity* and *complexity*, or in the capacity to make the viewer look *on to* as well as immerse themselves *in to* the artworks they created.

Landing 83 Rosso Lepanto [Turkey]

Many famous formal gardens seek to contain the world, often as a kind of living museum of elsewhere, with samples and miniature versions of distant places. So too is *Work No. 1059* a gathering of world marbles. Both forms, gardens and Creed’s work, carry with them a darker shadow of colonialism and collecting.

Step 84 Trani [Italy]

Benjamin: “The true method of making things present is to represent them in our space (not to represent ourselves in their space.)... We don't displace our being into theirs; they step into our life.”²⁰

Step 85 Piasentina [Italy]

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century art writing provides fertile ground for reading Creed’s work, though perhaps the work belongs more closely to a Victorian/Edwardian flowering centred around visual design and materials, as exemplified by the following passage in one of John Ruskin’s notebooks where he speaks admiringly of variety and color: “It has been our aim to make all our houses

and churches, alike; we have squared our windows — smoothed our walls; straightened our roofs — put away nearly all ornament [,] inequality, evidence of effort, and ambiguity, and all variety of color. It has been our aim to make every house look as if it had been built yesterday; and to make all the parts of it symmetrical [,] similar and colorless.... All this is done directly in opposition to the laws of nature and truth.”²¹

Step 86 Bianco Namibia [Namibia]

“...the best tints are always those of natural stones... I think I never saw an offensive introduction of the natural colours of marble and precious stones,” writes Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice*.²² By invoking the full spectrum of qualities that Ruskin celebrates such as natural colour, variety, and ornament, as well as those qualities he berates such as monotony and similarity, *Work No. 1059* signifies the differences between Edinburgh’s Medieval Old Town and Georgian New Town which it links.

Step 87 Nero Marquinia [Spain]

There is nothing Creed says that suggests an intentional allusion to the aesthetics of the picturesque, and to detect such a move would strike a false note in Creed’s carefully constructed pranksterism.

Step 88 Sunset Gold [Lebanon]

The Scotsman Steps are physically and visually demanding; caught up in their hard, echoing, garish surfaces, you can never see more than a few steps ahead. Creed captured their dysfunctional functionality at the inauguration of *Work no. 1059*, when he performed a new song with acoustic guitar from the steps themselves.

Step 89 Verde Gressoney [Italy]

Creed spoke and sang of Edinburgh as a place of ubiquitous staircases, where invariably there seems to be “a headcase on the staircase with a suitcase.”²³

Step 90 Breccia Capraia [Italy]

Creed’s original idea for the Scotsman Steps was to create a musical stair (as he did

in between the two floors of his earlier exhibition *Down Over Up* at The Fruitmarket in 2010), such an idea echoing the movement in time required to experience both music as a form and the steps as a piece of public art.²⁴

Step 91 Verde Acquamarine [India]

The gallery exhibition *Down Over Up* drew on one of Creed's fundamental thematic and artistic devices – that of the incremental scale – with its music staircase, numerous works organized around the up/down axis, and its insistent stacking, scaling, balancing and accumulating of units as diverse as nails, cacti, stools and, of course, musical notes.

Step 92 Rosso Levanto [Italy]

Note that in Latin or Italian the word *scala* refers both to built steps and the musical scale, binding the terms in language – and introducing the idea that we do indeed literally *scale* the Scotsman Steps in both musical and experiential terms.

Landing 93 Giallo Reale Giallo [Italy]

As well as the concordant parallels with musical instruments in the layout of the steps, *Work No. 1059* has discordant, palpitant notes too.

Step 94 Rosso Inferno [Italy]

The marbles of *Work No. 1059* are set somewhat like a piano keyboard in the equal size and weight of most of the steps, though rather than being structured around the black/white binary of the piano, *Work No. 1059* has one hundred and four different colors open up the piano's register and provoke extravagant thoughts of an international musical instrument in which every note is new, important and distinct from its neighbor (as it is on a piano, despite the Western convention of the 12-note scale). (Fig.8)

Step 95 Fior Di Crema [Bosnia Herzegovina]

This order that is simultaneously disruption, connoted through the tangential relationship between the steps and a piano keyboard, is typical of Creed's covert

interest in madness and mental health.

Landing 96 Picasso Green Dark [India]

Reflecting on why he works as he does, Creed writes: “I work to feel better. I produce things to help me to live... Living and working is a matter of coming to terms with, to face up to, what comes out of you.”²⁵

Step 97 Giallo d’Istria [Croatia]

Creed’s working method has a peculiar spatiality, a condensed intensity; for him ‘...ideas are at the top and the bottom... Feelings come up, thoughts go down, and somewhere in the middle they meet each other.’²⁶

Step 98 Grigio Antracite [Italy]

Art critics have occasionally recognized Creed’s clandestine concern with mental health – for example, Massimiliano Gioni observed that “Martin Creed’s work has an intimate, personal, even melancholy sphere that all too often gets overlooked. On and off, up and down, open and closed are all expressions that could just as easily be applied to moods, happiness and depression, euphoria and dysphoria.”²⁷

Step 99 Verde Pavone [Iran]

Here’s Benjamin: “Where the sphere of planning creates such entanglements of closed room and airy nature, then it serves in this way to meet the deep human need for daydreaming ...”²⁸

Step 100 Rosso Asiago [Italy]

For Benjamin “the interior is the asylum of art”²⁹ – an arresting image of the madness of his arcade that has been twisted by Creed to form the Scotsman Steps.

Step 101 Bianco Carrara C [Italy]

Ruskin observes in his notebooks that artistic aspiration should seek to capture all significant features of the world. The artist’s sensibility should also ensure that this variety inscribes itself in the work on an emotional level.

Step 102 Verde Guatemala / Imperiale [India]

For Ruskin the “whole function of the artist in the world is to be a seeing and feeling creature; to be an instrument of such tenderness and sensitiveness, that no shadow, no hue, no line, no instantaneous and evanescent expression of the visible things around him, nor any of the emotions which they are capable of conveying to the spirit which has been given him, shall either be left unrecorded, or fade from the book of record.”³⁰

Step 103 Silvia Oro [Egypt]

There is something in the pitch of this – Ruskin’s intensity bordering on instability – that binds Ruskin’s Venetian stones to Creed’s stones from virtually everywhere else, run through as they all are with lithic melancholia.

Landing 104 Azul Macaubas [Brazil]

Finally to arrive at the uppermost step with one of William Shenstone’s unconnected sentences: “Art, indeed, is often requisite to collect and epitomize the beauties of nature; but should never be suffered to set her mark upon them.”³¹ This guides us to assert that Creed has produced a late flowering of the picturesque, set within the city, a collection and an epitome, in Shenstone’s terms, of the beauty of nature, yet one which does not suffer to set ‘art’s mark’ upon nature but to alter only minimally its form and surface in order to achieve among the most modest yet intense symbols of humanity in all its high and low forms: namely, a step.

Footnotes

1. John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, edited and abridged by J G Links, Harmondsworth: Penguin 2001 (1853), p.154
2. Walter Benjamin *The Arcades Project*, (trans Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin) Cambridge Mass: Harvard UP / Belknap Press, 2002, p.211
3. Benjamin, ‘On Passage Véro-Dodat’, quoting J A Dulaure, *ibid.*, p.33

4. John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque. Studies in the history of landscape architecture*, Cambridge, Mass. / London: MIT Press, 1992, p.5
5. Benjamin, op.cit., p.423
6. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, New York: Norton, 1954, p.20
7. Video interview with the artist, available online at <http://fruitmarket.co.uk/exhibitions/scotsman-steps/>, 2011 (accessed 9.3.15)
8. Anon, 'The Scotsman Steps Edinburgh Pre-Application Planning Statement for Martin Creed Art Work', unpublished document, Edinburgh: The Fruitmarket Gallery, 2010, p.5
9. From an *Illustrated Guide to Paris*, in Benjamin, op.cit., p.3
10. Benjamin, *ibid*, p.417
11. Camillo Sitte, *The Birth of Modern City Planning* (with a translation of the 1889 Austrian edition of his *City Planning according to Artistic Principles*): George R Collins and Christiane Crasemann Collins, New York: Rizzoli, 1986, p.247
12. William Shenstone's 'Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening' (1764) in *The Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone, Esq*, Vol.II, London: R & J Dodlsey (1764) p.142-143
13. There are a further five marbles cited in the guide – numbers 105-109 – unused spare stock but all standing in, presumably accidentally, for an expanded Yugoslavia: Giada White [Macedonia], Fior di Crema [Bosnia Herzegovina], Blu Venezia [Croatia], Crema Nuova [Croatia] and Verdi Alpi [Italy].
14. William Gilpin 'On Picturesque Travel', from *Three Essays* (1792), in Alasdair

Clayre, *Nature and Industrialisation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, p.25

15. Shenstone, op. cit., p.127

16. Shenstone, *ibid.*, p.127

17. Benjamin, op.cit., p.540

18. Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, op.cit., p.148

19. See Ian Hamilton Finlay, 'Unconnected Sentences on Gardening' in *Nature Over Again After Poussin*, Collins Gallery, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 1980; 'More Detached Sentences on Gardening in the Manner of Shenstone', *PN Review* 42, 11:4 (1984), ed. Michael Schmidt, Manchester.

20. Benjamin, op.cit., p.206

21. John Ruskin notebooks, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, Eng. misc. c. 218, from George P Landow, online at: <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/ruskin/atheories/3.2.html>, accessed 31.5.13), n.p.

22. John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, op.cit., p.103

23. Martin Creed, inauguration video, available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YiYCMwJtj4>

24. Fiona Bradley (ed.), *Martin Creed. Down Over Up*, The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh 2010

25. From *Work No. 989*, in *Martin Creed: Works*, London: Thames & Hudson (a version of which was published in *The Times* 31 January, 2009), 2010, p.989

26. 'Interview. Tom Eccles with Martin Creed', *ibid.*, p.x

27. Gioni, *ibid.*, p. xxiv

28. Benjamin, *op.cit.*, p.423

29. Benjamin, *op.cit.*, p.9

30. Ruskin notebooks, *op.cit.*, n.p.

31. Shenstone, *op.cit.*, p.142

Image Captions

Figure 1 Martin Creed *Work No. 1059* (2011), Market Street entrance. Courtesy the artist / The Fruitmarket Gallery. Photography: Gautier Deblonde

Figure 2 Martin Creed *Work No. 1059* (2011), interior view. Courtesy the artist / The Fruitmarket Gallery. Photography: Gautier Deblonde

Figure 3 Martin Creed *Work No. 1059* (2011), interior view. Courtesy the artist / The Fruitmarket Gallery. Photography: Gautier Deblonde

Figure 4 Haworth Tompkins Architects, *Proposed Floor Plans* (2010). Courtesy The Fruitmarket Gallery

Figure 5 Haworth Tompkins Architects, *Scotsman Steps Marble Installation Order* (2011). Courtesy The Fruitmarket Gallery

Figure 6 Martin Creed *Work No. 1059* (2011), interior view. Courtesy the artist / The Fruitmarket Gallery. Photography: Gautier Deblonde

Figure 7 Martin Creed *Work No. 1059* (2011), interior view. Courtesy the artist / The Fruitmarket Gallery. Photography: Gautier Deblonde

Figure 8 Martin Creed *Work No. 1059* (2011), interior view. Courtesy the artist / The Fruitmarket Gallery. Photography: Gautier Deblonde

Figure 9 Martin Creed *Work No. 1059* (2011), North Bridge entrance. Courtesy the artist / The Fruitmarket Gallery. Photography: Gautier Deblonde