

Olivia Plender
Rise Early,
Be Industrious

20 April –
17 June 2012



A 'museum of communication' by Olivia Plender, which focuses on the evolution of mass education.

Presented in association with Arnolfini, Bristol and Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow.

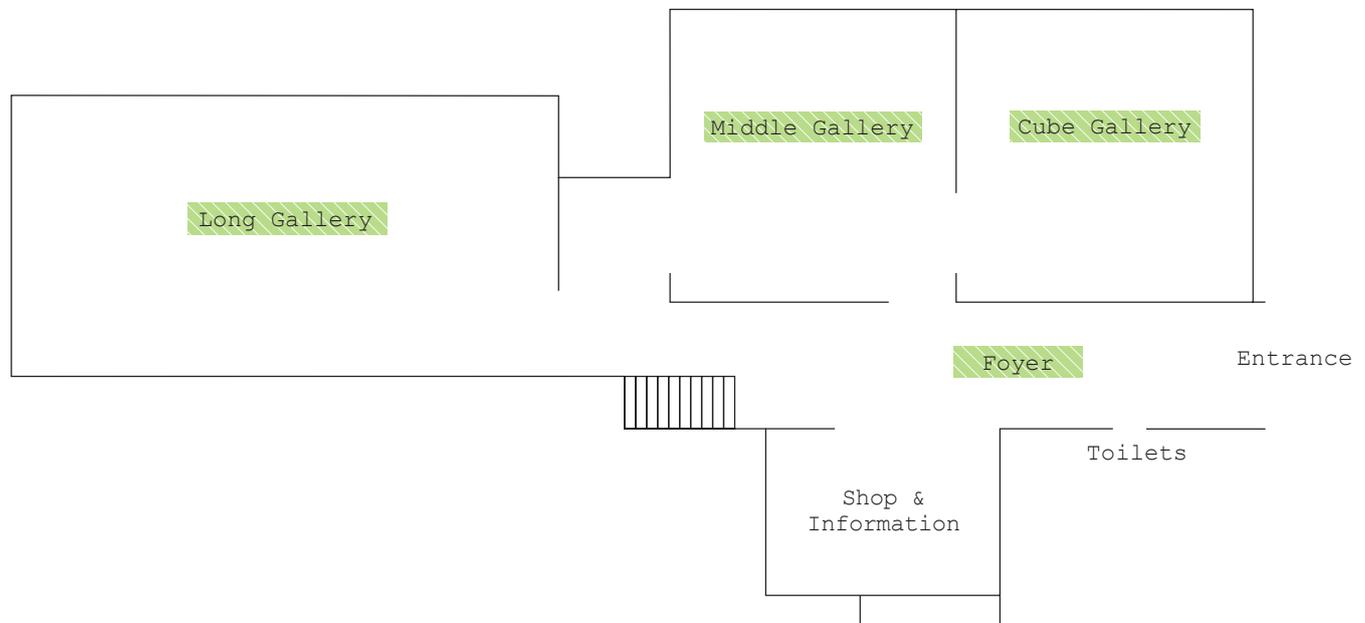
ARNOLFINI CCA:

Exhibition generously supported by Milton Keynes Museum. With thanks to The Open University. Olivia Plender has received support from the National Lottery through Arts Council England.



About the Exhibition

Rise Early, Be Industrious is the first survey exhibition by British artist Olivia Plender (b. 1977), bringing together sculpture, embroidery, posters, board games, architectural models and a video produced over the last ten years. Devised as a 'museum of communication', four room-sized installations are organised thematically, drawing on a broad range of references to explore how attitudes towards mass education have evolved over time. The artist also questions how official historical narratives are constructed, looking at the hierarchies behind the 'voice of authority' that is traditionally produced by educational institutions within the public sphere, such as the museum, the academy, the national library and the media.



Cube Gallery

The Cube Gallery presents the installation ***Words and Laws (Whose Shoulder to Which Wheel?)*** where a collection of printed material, games, objects and posters reveals Plender's interest in the history of popular printing and political satire. The room includes a newly commissioned hanging mobile, *Hortus Conclusus (Enclosed Garden)* (2012), and several toys encouraging public participation. Accompanied by a medieval garden plan laid out on the gallery floor, the mobile makes reference to agriculture and the formation of social hierarchies, comprising elements from the British passport's royal coat of arms and a feudal country estate, alongside a series of exploited raw materials and references to human toil and poverty. *Set Sail for the Levant* (2007) is a board game based on the sixteenth century 'Royal Game of the Goose', the first recorded example of a racing game involving dice. It parodies the historical struggle of the commoner to achieve social and material success in life by presenting debt as the only feasible option. The game's cycle is a downward one until the sole avenue of release from the crisis is to 'set sail to the levant, where the law can't reach you'. *Social Construction* (2012), an architectural toy and posters, based on a nineteenth century model developed by German educational reformer, and pioneer of kindergarten, Friedrich Fröbel, invites visitors to assemble thirty-one building options from the wooden blocks and instructions supplied.

The installation in the Cube Gallery also includes various allegorical and satirical objects, like enlarged pieces from a board game: a wicker beehive, *Honey Makes Money Makes Honey* (2012), symbolic in the Victorian period of the perfect industrious society, and *Stockholm Duck House: Proposed Monument to British Parliamentary Corruption, Circa 2009* (2012), a wooden replica of a duck house which became the media's symbol for the MPs' expenses scandal in 2009.

Middle Gallery

The New Jerusalem installation in the Middle Gallery explores the relations between labour, economy and religion. A new model made by Plender, *The Truth Itself Speaks Through Me* (2012), represents a scene from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the most widely-read book in the UK after the bible between the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries. This publication was instrumental in educating new factory workers of the industrial revolution, illustrating the principal that the only route to paradise was through

hard work. Another, earlier model, *Empire City – The World on One Street* (2009), partially reconstructs the site at Wembley where the British Empire exhibition took place in 1924, an event intended to educate the British public about trading relationships within the Empire in order to demonstrate the apparent benefits of Imperialism. The year-long event also played a key role in promoting the emerging leisure and tourism industries, as well as the westward expansion of London, which promised a new suburban lifestyle. *Market* (2009), a video shot in a street market incorporating contemporary footage of Wembley stadium and its surrounding residential areas, considers the current reality of local trade, commerce and housing.

The installation also includes two banners: *Britannia Receiving her Newest Institution* (2012), hand-embroidered and influenced by the Arts and Crafts style, showing an allegorical image of Britannia holding a department store; and *How Paul's Penny Became a Pound* (2012), based on a nineteenth century book that taught children about banking.

Long Gallery

The Long Gallery re-creates a 1970s style TV studio titled **Open Forum** (2008 – ongoing), featuring a large stage, audience 'conversation pit', television monitors, and a world map. The installation contains archive material related to experimental art education in the UK including The Open University's interdisciplinary Art and Environment course. Begun in 1976, the influential course's chief agenda was to re-think the relation between art and society, leading to other experimental art and social context courses across the UK.

Three videos from The Open University are included: *Children and Video* (1976) is the record of a day in which young children, aged between seven and nine, worked with light-weight video cameras and recorders to dramatise and direct two different stories; *Play and Place* (1976) demonstrates how children's play evokes the larger environment on a miniature scale with sequences showing children creating dens in trees, hedges and rocks; and in *Whatever Will Be* (1977), James Dator provides his own analysis of the modern world and how he believes the future can be improved through alternative lifestyles, communes, and adventure playgrounds.

While offering a platform for further discussion and interaction, Plender considers the history of the Open University and its relation to the BBC as a means to explore mass education, democracy and the Reithian idea of television as a 'common culture' (John Reith was the founder of the BBC, and the corporation's first director general).

Foyer

Finally, MK Gallery's Foyer is transformed into an **Entrepreneurial Garden** (2010 – ongoing) that imitates a red, blue, green and yellow Google style working environment with relaxed seating, a coffee machine, plants, table football and basketball hoop, along with motivational prints. This installation seeks to explore how distinctions between work and leisure, public and private, are collapsed within the apparently playful workplaces characteristic of contemporary media companies. Plender draws parallels between Google's stated mission to 'organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful' with the claims to universality of the national library, or enlightenment museum, to ask what kind of knowledge and information is privileged by these different frameworks.

Visitors are encouraged to use the *Entrepreneurial Garden* as a working environment. An accompanying release agreement (paraphrasing those found on social media platforms) states that any intellectual property produced within the space becomes the property of MK Gallery, and that in reading the text, users of the space immediately indicate consent to its terms.

The exhibition also includes a sixty-page version of *The Masterpiece* (2001-2006), a graphic narrative about the life of a fictional artist in 1960s London, bringing together all five issues of the comic book, printed in one volume for the first time.

With its strong architectural dimension, involving the construction of platforms and architectural models and a deliberate emphasis on play and educational, game-like structures, the exhibition invites visitors to participate and 'perform' while considering how social roles and models of society have been constructed over the last few hundred years.

About the Artist

Olivia Plender (b. 1977) lives and works in Berlin and has exhibited worldwide. Her research-based practice varies from graphic novels to performance, video and installation. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Adieu Adieu Apa*, Gasworks, London (2009); *Information, Education, Entertainment, Marabouparken*, Stockholm (2007) and *The Folly of Man Exposed or the World Turned Upside Down* at Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt (2006). Selected group exhibitions include: *British Art Show 7*, Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham and Hayward Gallery, London (2011); *Newspeak: British Art Now*, Saatchi Gallery, London (2011); Taipei Biennial, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan (2010); *Altermodern*, Tate Triennial, Tate Britain, London (2009); *Art Now Live*, (2007) Tate Britain, London (performance); *How to Endure*, Athens Biennial, Athens, Greece (2007); Tate Triennial, Tate Britain, London, (2006); Busan Biennial, Busan, South Korea (2006); BMW - 1X Baltic Triennale of International Art, CAC, Vilnius, Lithuania (2005); Romantic Detachment, PS1/ MoMA, New York (2004).

Publication

An exhibition catalogue, co-produced by MK Gallery, Arnolfini and Centre for Contemporary Arts will incorporate installation documentation from the three venues, alongside research material and be published later this year.

Thanks

The artist wishes to thank Redfern Barrett, Gasworks Gallery, Celia Plender, Sophia Plender, Heather Purcell, Patrick Staff.

Foyer

Entrepreneurial Garden

2010 – ongoing

Mixed media installation, Astroturf, lava lamps, fake plants, sofas, seating, table football, basketball hoop, hammock, motivational prints, contract printed on poster paper, wastepaper bins, whiteboard, coffee machine, coffee mugs, props
Courtesy the artist

Cube Gallery

Words and Laws (Whose Shoulder to Which Wheel?), 2012

Mixed media installation including the following works:

Hortus Conclusus (Enclosed Garden)

2012

Hanging mobile, wood, paint; floor piece, green tape, hay bales
Courtesy the artist

Social Construction

2012

Architectural game and posters based on Friedrich Fröbel's sixth 'gift' (inventor of the Kindergarten)
Wood, offset-lithographic print on poster paper
Courtesy the artist

Set Sail for the Levant

2007

Two board games, mixed media
Courtesy the artist

Stockholm Duck House: Proposed Monument to British Parliamentary

Corruption, Circa 2009

2012

Wood and lead
Courtesy the artist

Horse (Raisa): Proposed Memorial to a Loyal Servant. Circa 2012

2012

Wooden horse
Courtesy Milton Keynes Museum

Honey Makes Money Makes Honey

2012

Wicker beehive
Courtesy the artist

The Pecking Order

2012

Two chickens, wire, papier mâché, paint
Courtesy Milton Keynes Museum

Middle Gallery

The New Jerusalem, 2009 – 2012

Mixed media installation comprising fabric, ceiling fan, and the following works:

Britannia Receiving Her Newest Institution

2012

Fabric embroidered banner
Courtesy the artist

How Paul's Penny Became a Pound

2012

Painted banner
Courtesy the artist

Empire City – The World on One Street

2009

Architectural model, mixed media
Courtesy the artist

The Truth Itself Speaks Through Me

2012

Model, mixed media
Courtesy the artist

Market

2009

Video, duration 7 min.
Courtesy the artist

Long Gallery

Open Forum, 2008 – ongoing

Mixed media installation, platform, screens, wall painting, monitors, oil on canvas paintings, lamps, desk, table, fake plants, props
Courtesy the artist
Props courtesy Milton Keynes Museum

Videos on monitors:

Children and Video

1976

Produced by Richard Callanan; contributor Kathy Dunn

Open University Course TAD292 'Art and Environment'

Video, duration 24 min. 17 sec.

Courtesy The Open University

Play and Place

1976

Produced by Andrew Crilly; contributor Roger Hart

Open University Course TAD292/04 'Art and Environment'

Video, duration 24 min. 30 sec.

Courtesy The Open University

Whatever Will Be (edited extracts)

1977

Produced by David Jackson; contributor James Dator

Open University Course TAD292/12 'Art and Environment'

Video, duration 16 min.

Courtesy The Open University

Events Programme

See website for full event listings
www.mkgallery.org/events

Talks & Tours

In Conversation

Olivia Plender discusses the themes and ideas behind her work
Saturday 9 June, 3pm, free
Pre-book online or at the Information Desk

Audio Described Tour

Free. For visitors with additional access needs
Monday 21 May, 2pm

Family Events

Free, just drop-in.

Start the Art

Parent & toddler sessions
Every Tuesday, 11am – 12noon
24 April; 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 May;
5, 12 June

Mini Makers

Artist-led workshops suitable for accompanied children ages 4+
Every Saturday, 1pm – 3pm
21, 28 April; 5, 12, 19, 26 May;
2, 9, 16 June

June Half Term Family Workshops

Artist-led activities inspired by our current exhibition. All ages welcome.
Dates to be confirmed.

Scratch Nights

Every Thursday evening, these free events present a broad range of cross-cultural activities by emerging artists, including live music, sound art, film, performance and spoken word.

Friday Night Films

All screenings start at 6.30pm

Friday 20 April

All the Memory of the World (1956)
Dir. Alain Resnais (Cert. U, 22 mins)

Statues Also Die (1953)

Dir. Chris Marker and Alain Resnais
(Cert. U, 30 mins)
Films selected by Olivia Plender

Friday 27 April

Up in the Air (2009)
Dir. Jason Reitman (Cert. 15, 109 mins)
Selected by Olivia Plender

Friday 4 May

The Play House (1921)
Dir. Buster Keaton (Cert. U, 18 mins)

The Electric House (1922)

Dir. Buster Keaton (Cert. U, 19 mins)
Presented with live music score

Friday 11 May

Sylvia Pankhurst, Everything is Possible (2011)
Dir. Ceri Dingle & Viv Regan (90 mins)
Selected by Olivia Plender
Introduced by director Ceri Dingle

Friday 18 May

Nosferatu the Vampyre (1979)
Dir. Werner Herzog (Cert. 15, 107 mins)
Selected and introduced by Clint Trofa

Friday 25 May

MK Film Makers Network Event

Friday 1 June

My Dinner with Andre (1981)
Dir. Louis Malle (Cert. 12, 110 mins)
Selected by Olivia Plender

Friday 8 June

A Short Film About Killing (1988)
Dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski
(Cert. 18, 84 mins)

A Short Film About Love (1988)

Dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski
(Cert. 18, 86 mins)
Films selected and introduced by Clint Trofa

Friday 15 June

Klassenverhältnisse (1984)
Dir. Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub (Cert. PG, 127 mins)

Tickets £5 (concessions £3)
Pre-book at the Information Desk
or on 01908 676 900

Organised in collaboration with Independent Cinema MK

See website for full event listings
www.mkgallery.org/events

Jon Adams: Artist Talk

Wednesday 16 May, 6pm, free
Pre-book online or at the Information Desk
Jon Adams talks about the ideas behind his two-year mapping and collecting project Look About, elements of which will be on display at MK Gallery from 20 April – 27 May 2012.