

### Pushwagner Soft City

28 June –  
2 September

#### Exhibition

An epic satire of capitalism and life in the modern metropolis by visionary Norwegian artist Hariton Pushwagner.

#### Events

Live music, performance, film and video by Norwegian artists, and workshops and talks inspired by Pushwagner's work.

[www.mkgallery.org](http://www.mkgallery.org)

#### Produced with

Hauger Vestfold  
Kunstmuseum, Norway

Museum Boijmans Van  
Beuningen, The Netherlands

Exhibition supported by



NORSK KULTURRÅD  
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FRITT ORD

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Office for Contemporary Art Norway



NORWEGIAN EMBASSY

## About the Exhibition

**Pushwagner: *Soft City*** is the first solo exhibition outside of Norway by artist Hariton Pushwagner (born Oslo, 1940), bringing together drawings, paintings and prints made over the last forty years. With its literary allusions and piercing social commentary, his work has many affinities in the family of twentieth-century science fiction and its depictions of modern metropolitan life. While revelling in the appeal of post-war American consumer culture and the glamour of Pop Art, Pushwagner was equally inspired by the non-conformity of the Beat poets, and particularly by William Burroughs's notion of control in his 1961 novel *Soft Machine*.

## Middle Gallery

*Soft City* (1969-75) is Pushwagner's defining creation. Produced intermittently in Oslo and London between 1969 and 1976, the 154-page graphic novel encapsulates a generation's disenchantment with capitalism and life in the modern city. It registers a day in the life of a couple and their small child in a vast, dehumanised, dystopian metropolis. Their automated existence is characterised by the repetitive form of the drawings, whose recurring arrangements of cars, buildings and people create a dizzying effect. The humdrum lives of Pushwagner's characters allude to Russian spiritualist George Gurdjieff's (1866 –1949) descriptions of people in a state of 'waking sleep', while the menacing controller in charge of life in *Soft City* and the pills the family swallows on a daily basis evoke Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). The novel's design also conjures up references to the world of film (Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, 1927) and to the modernist architecture of Le Corbusier and others.

## Cube Gallery

*A Day in the Life of Family Man* (1980) is a series of thirty-four silkscreen prints with a gaudy pink colouring that depict the trappings of power, and pursue a number of the same themes as Pushwagner's earlier work. While charting the transition from the book format to the wall, the obsessive repetition and endless reworking of almost identical images reveal his interest in mass production, mass distribution and making his work available to broad audiences. An animation by the artist extends his use of similar themes and images to another medium, while the painting *Manhattan* (2004), his largest work to date, amplifies the staggering impact of modern city scapes.

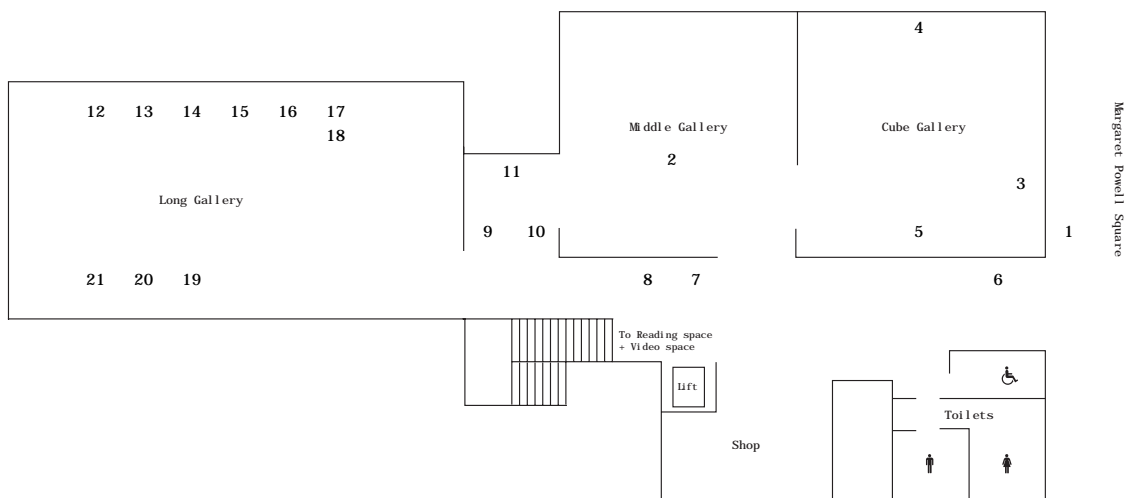
## Foyer

The foyer includes a number of more recent, brightly coloured images. *Pling Plong* (2010/11) depicts one of the principal characters in Pushwagner's mythology, 'The Boss', an omnipotent bureaucrat who sits behind a massive desk of levers and switches, remotely observing and controlling the world via a giant screen. Other recent works, including *Honk City* (2010/11) and *Night Life* (2010/11), deal with the excesses, wealth and decadence of Western society, both celebrating and critiquing the glamour and exotic nature of 1950s American culture (television, film and cars) that dominated Norway following the end of the Second World War. Pages from a pictorial novel, *Dadadata* (1985), are shown alongside early drawings depicting one of *Soft City*'s central characters, baby Bingo.

## Long Gallery

*The Apocalypse Frieze* comprises seven intricate and obsessively detailed paintings, whose titles have largely been made up to depict the artist's own mythological universe: *Heptashinok* (1988); *Dadadata* (1987); *Gigaton* (1988); *Jobkill* (1990); *Oblidor II* (1991); *Klaxton* (1990) and *Self-Portrait* (1973-1993). Inspired by Pushwagner's long-term collaboration and friendship with Norwegian science-fiction writer Axel Jensen, it shows endless processions of haggard figures, doggedly advancing towards Armageddon. Factories double up as death camps and the ravages of war are perpetuated under the watchful eye of robotic men in suits. These works, grouped for the first time as the artist intended, in the style of Jan Van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* (1432), juxtapose the devastation of war with the excesses of commerce. *Self-Portrait*, one of the seven paintings, suggests that the artist's mind is spiralling out of control, as the watchful eyes of thousands of female nudes witness faceless robots marching down the vortex to oblivion. *The Apocalypse Frieze* is presented alongside a series of early drawings, book covers and notebooks with sketches made during Pushwagner's travels through Europe, in homage to artists such as Hieronymous Bosch and Vincent Van Gogh.

Pushwagner's epic satire of capitalism and life in the modern city blatantly exaggerates and ridicules the symbols of war and industry. This critique of power, money or greed, most poignantly expressed through the giant mouth on the Gallery's façade, takes on a particular resonance in the context of today's financial crises and their immeasurable social consequences.



All works courtesy Pushwagner Collection, Oslo, unless otherwise stated.

1. **Pushwagner Mouth**, 2012  
Vinyl

Middle Gallery

2. **Soft City**, 1969-75  
Pictorial novel, 154 pages

Cube Gallery

3. **Soft City Animation**, 2010  
DVD, 3 mins. 30 secs.

4. **A Day in the Life of Family Man**, 1980  
34 screen prints

5. **Manhattan**, 2004  
Oil on canvas

Foyer

6. **The Pill**, 2010/2011  
Digital graphic artwork (hand coloured)

7. **Honk City**, 2010/2011  
Digital graphic artwork (hand coloured)

8. **Night Life**, 2010/2011  
Digital graphic artwork (hand coloured)

9. **Preliminary Soft City drawings of Bingo**, 1969

10. **Dadadata**, 1985  
Ink on paper

11. **Pling Plong**, 2010/2011  
Digital graphic artwork (hand coloured)

Long Gallery

**The Apocalypse Frieze:**

12. **Self-Portrait**, 1973-1993  
Ink and acrylic on mount board

13. **Heptashinok**, 1988  
Acrylic and ink on paper, on board  
Lillehammer Art Museum

14. **Oblidor II**, 1991  
Acrylic and ink on paper, on board  
Courtesy Galleri K, Oslo

15. **Klaxton**, 1990  
Acrylic and ink on paper, on board  
Private Collection

16. **Jobkill**, 1990  
Acrylic and ink on paper, on board  
National Museum of Art, Architecture  
and Design, Oslo

17. **Gigaton**, 1988  
Acrylic and ink on paper, on board  
Courtesy Galleri K, Oslo

18. **Dadadata**, 1987  
Acrylic and ink on paper, on board

19. **Vitrine**; from left - right:

**Self-Portrait**, 1957  
Pencil on paper

**The Artist's Father in his childhood home, Oslo**, 1955  
Pencil on paper

**The Artist's Father Sleeping**, 1955  
Pencil on paper

**Drawing Book**, 1961  
Mykonos - Rhodes  
Ink on paper

**Drawing Book**, 1961  
Antakya - Turkey  
Pencil on paper

20. **Vitrine**; from left - right:

**Drawing Book**, 1959  
Paris - Mallorca  
Pencil on paper

**Drawing Book**, 1959  
Tanger Beach  
Ink on paper

**Drawing Book**, 1959  
Tanger Beach  
Pencil and ink on paper

**Images from Drawing Books**, 1959 - 61  
Digital images

21. **Vitrine**; from left - right:

**Das Kranke Tier**, 1980

**Oblidor Guidebook**, 1978-79  
Ink and body colour on paper

Axel Jensen, **Epp**, 2002

Jean Echenoz, **Ved Klaveret**, 2006

Axel Jensen, **Og resten står skrivd i stjernerne**, 1995

Eva Ramm, **noe må gjøres**, 1968

**Tawa Djinn**, 7", 1984

Sturmgeist, **Manifesto Futurista**, 2009

First Floor Reading Space

**Pushwagner**

Documentary / 2011 / 73 mins.  
Directors: Even Benestad &  
August B. Hanssen

First Floor Video

Cat Kramer & Zack Denfeld:

**Smog Tasting**

Two short videos, filmed in Bangalore (2011) and Milton Keynes (2012), which use meringues to create site-specific snap shots of air quality.

First Floor Video Space

27 June - 15 July

**Who Controls the Controller?**

Curated by Natalie Hope O'Donnell

17 July - 5 August

**Man and Machines**

Curated by Natalie Hope O'Donnell

7 August - 2 September

**Norwegian Artist Film 1960-1980**

Curated by Atopia

A K Dolven: Sound Installation

**seven voices**, 2011

Located in Margaret Powell Square

Stepping on the pedal triggers the world's most translated hymn, L'Internationale (1871), sung by seven young Norwegians. Courtesy Wilkinson Gallery, London.

Stian Ådlandsivk: July Project Space Exhibition

Ådlandsivk uses film and photographic material from the Paralympic archives as a starting point for a series of new sculptural and collage works.

# Norwegian Season of Events at MK Gallery

Film Screenings  
Live Music  
Talks and Workshops

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**Fri 29 June / 6.30pm / £5, concs £3**

Film Screening: *La Jetée* (1962)

Chris Marker's visionary short film, constructed entirely from still images.

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**Sat 30 June / 7pm / Free**

Live Music: *Ande Somby*

Ande Somby presents an evening of Sami singing, one of the oldest musical traditions still alive in Europe.

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**Thurs 5 July / 7pm / £5, concs £3**

Film Screening: *Until the Light Takes Us* (2008)

A documentary which chronicles the history, ideology and aesthetic of Norwegian black metal.

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**Fri 6 July / 6.30pm / £5, concs £3**

Film Screening: *THX 1138* (1971)

George Lucas' first film starring Robert Duvall portraying a dystopian future.

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**Sat 7 July / 7pm / £4, £3 advance**

Live Music: *The Family Elan + support*

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**Weds 11 July / 6 - 8pm / £10, £25 for all three**

Animation Workshop 1

Create your own stop-frame animation and flip book.

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**Thurs 12 July / 7pm / Free**

Live Music: *Susanna K Wallumrod + support from Trestle Records*

Curated by Ny Musikk.

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**Fri 13 July / 6.30pm / £5, concs £3**

Film Screening: *Gattaca* (1997)

A man classified as genetically inferior wishes to leave the human underclass and travel to the stars.

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**Sat 14 July**

Live Music: *To be confirmed*

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**Weds 18 July / 6 - 8pm / £10, £25 for all three**

Comic Book Workshop 1

Work with artist Paul Rainey to create a comic book.

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**Thurs 19 July / 6 - 9pm / Free**

Comic Book Fair

A one-day comic fair, where some of the best UK-based comic creators display and sell their work.

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**Fri 20 July / 6.30pm / £5, concs £3**

Film Screening: *Blade Runner* (1982)

A futuristic exposition set in 2019 in which 'replicants' are manufactured to be indistinguishable from humans.

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**Sat 21 July / 7pm / £4, £3 advance**

Live Music: *Nope + support*

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**Weds 25 July / 6 - 9pm / £10, £25 for all three**

Animation Workshop 2

Create your own stop-frame animation and flip book.

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**Fri 27 July / 11.30am - 2.30pm / Free**

Cycle Cinema

A cycled-powered cinema where cyclists link their bikes up to dynamos to collectively power the film screenings.

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**Weds 1 August / 6 - 9pm / £10, £25 for all three**

Comic Book Workshop 2

Work with artist Paul Rainey to create a comic book.

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**Thurs 2 August / 7pm / Free**

Live Music: *Christian Blom + support*

Curated by Ny Musikk.

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**Fri 3 August / 6.30pm / £5, concs £3**

Film Screening: *A Scanner Darkly* (2006)

An undercover cop becomes involved with a dangerous new drug, which leads to grave circumstances.

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**Sat 4 August / 7pm / £4, £3 advance**

Live Music: *Felix + Beniot Pioulard*

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**Weds 8 August / 6.30pm / £3, £2**

Talk: *Paul Gravett, Graphic Novels*

Paul Gravett is a London-based freelance journalist, curator, lecturer, writer and broadcaster, who has worked in comic publishing and promotion since 1981.

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**Thurs 9 August / 6.30pm / £5, concs £3**

Film Screening: *Alfred Jarry Superfreak* (1988)

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**Fri 10 August / 6.30pm / £5, concs £3**

Film Screening: *Brazil* (1985)

British science fiction fantasy film set in a dystopian world where the inhabitants rely upon poorly maintained machines.

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**Weds 15 August / 6 - 8pm / £10, £25 for all three**

Comic Book Workshop 3

Work with artist Paul Rainey to create a comic book.

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**Thurs 16 August / 7pm / Free**

Live Music: *Kim Myhr + support*

Curated by Ny Musikk.

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**Fri 17 August / 6.30pm / £5, concs £3**

Film Screening: *Videodrome* (1983)

An innovative mix of horror and sci-fi.

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**Sat 18 August**

Live Music: *To be confirmed*

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**Weds 22 August / 6 - 8pm / £10, £25 for all three**

Animation Workshop 3

Create your own stop-frame animation and flip book.

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**Thurs 23 August / 6.30pm / Free**

Living Room Cinema Event curated by

*Pernille Leggatt Ramfelt*

An evening of 16mm films.

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**Fri 24 August / 6.30pm / £5, concs £3**

Film Screening: *Alphaville* (1965)

An agent is sent to the space city of Alphaville, where he must find a missing person and free the city from its tyrannical ruler.

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**Sat 25 August / 6.30pm / Free**

Improv Night

An open session for musicians and sound artists.

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**Weds 29 August / 6 - 8pm / Free**

Animation Screening

A screening of the animations created during the workshops.

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**Thurs 30 August / 7pm / Free**

Live Music: *Jana Winderen + support*

Curated by Ny Musikk.

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**Fri 31 August / 6.30pm / £5, concs £3**

Pushwagner Documentary Screening

Documentary about Norway's most famous living painter, and MK Gallery's current exhibitor, Hariton Pushwagner.

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**Sat 1 September / 7pm / Free**

Live Music: *Nils Økland + support from Trestle*

Nils Økland is an innovative violinist and Hardanger fiddle specialist who is creatively expanding the range of the traditional music of his homeland. Curated by Ny Musikk.

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