

MK Gallery

Teacher Resource Pack

This resource pack can be used as part of pre-visit preparation or to accompany your visit.

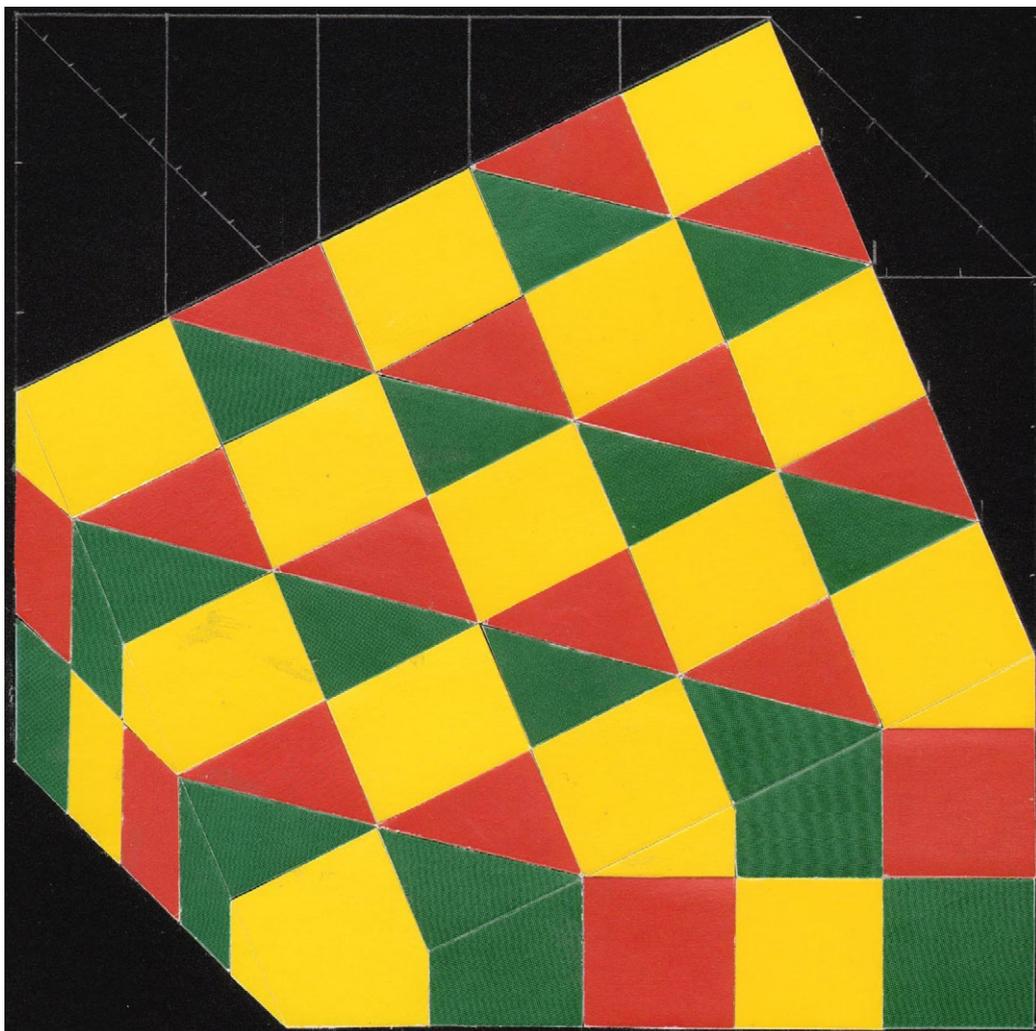
It includes a short introduction to the artist and his work, including key themes, related artists and movements, along with things to think about, do and discuss.

www.mkgallery.org

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Exhibition

Gareth Jones
15 April - 26 June 2011



Supported by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



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About the artist

Gareth Jones was born in 1965 and grew up in the new city of Milton Keynes. He studied Fine Art at Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic and has worked in London since the start of the 1990s. In 2006 he received a Paul Hamlyn Award for Visual Arts.

Previous solo exhibitions include Seven Pages from a Magazine, Platform, London, 2002, Helmut Jacoby: Milton Keynes Drawings, 38 Langham Street, London, 2003, Cubitt Gallery, London, 2003. Group exhibitions include British Art Show 6, touring, 2005, The Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 2007, Room Divider, Wilkinson Gallery, London, 2010, Construction and its Shadow, Leeds City Art Gallery, 2010 – 11.

About the work

British artist Gareth Jones presents his first major solo exhibition in a public gallery. Describing it as a 'retrospective of new work' Jones returns to earlier projects and filters them through his experience of growing up in Milton Keynes. In the Cube Gallery the site specific installation, New City, 2011, presents a digital artwork developed from an extended period of research in Milton Keynes. The artwork uses a sequence of original publicity photographs created to sell the new city to its future citizens. These photographs document the extraordinary Modernist architecture of the 1970s, creating an imaginative space for the viewer that relates directly to the environment surrounding MK Gallery.

The three sculptural pieces displayed in the Middle Gallery have developed from Gareth Jones' earlier work, Harlequin Dressing Room, 1996, in which he created a fictional domestic space for the theatrical harlequin figure. The idea is revisited in these new sculptures, with Jones' clearly drawing aesthetic references from the low cost materials and modular structures evident in Milton Keynes' architecture. The sequence of twelve framed cigarette adverts displayed in the Long Gallery were collected by the artist from 1970's Sunday colour supplements as he was growing up in the newly formed Milton Keynes. The suave male models, posing with the classic Gitanes cigarette brand, represent the glamour and decadence of the decade and, now frozen in time, they symbolise the ideal of eternal youth. The scaled down form of display in the Long Gallery draws on Gareth's memory of living in a town that was still in the process of being built. The viewer is invited to occupy the vacant space, and give new meaning to the work.

Things to think about

Cube Gallery

The screen in the Cube Gallery is displaying a series of photographs. What are they of? Do they seem to be linked together? In what way are they linked? Are they telling us a story?

Some of the photographs show us a place, do they make you want to visit that place? Do you recognise anything? Do they trigger a memory? How do they make you feel?

A number of the photographs show us buildings, what do you notice about the shapes in the architecture of these buildings? Do you think these are old or new buildings?

What do you notice about the colours in the photographs? Is there a particular colour that seems to be in most of them?

The photographs were taken some time ago, why do you think the artist wants to show us old photographs instead of newer ones? Have you seen the places in these photographs recently? How have they changed?

What do you notice about how the work is displayed in the space? Does the way it is presented remind you of anything?

Does this piece of work have a title? If it does, what does the title tell you about the work?

Middle Gallery

What are the three pieces of artwork in the Middle Gallery? Look at each of them closely without touching them; what materials do you think they are made from? Do you think these materials are expensive or cheap to buy?

Are all of the objects a similar shape, or different to each other? Are the shapes simple or detailed? Do you think the artworks took a long or short time for the artist to make?

What colours are there in these three pieces of art?

One of the pieces is patterned, what shape is used to make the pattern? Does the pattern remind you of anything?

The three artworks in this room are a reinvention of Gareth Jones' earlier work Harlequin Dressing Room. Can you see how the artist might have been inspired by the Harlequin when he was making these artworks? What do you know about Harlequins?

One of the artworks contains some items – can you tell what these items are? Which of the other artworks could they be connected to?

One of the artworks is made of Mirrors, what happens when you look inside it?

Do any of these artworks remind you of the photographs you saw on the screen in the Cube Gallery? Do any of them remind you of buildings you have seen in Milton Keynes?

Do these artworks have titles? If they do, what do they tell us about the ideas that the artist is expressing?

Long Gallery

The Long Gallery has a number of photographs on just one of its walls, why do you think the rest of the space is empty? How does the space make you feel?

What do you notice about the frames that the pictures are displayed in?

What do you notice about the pictures? Are they big or small, colourful or dull? Where do you think the pictures are from?

What do you notice about the people in the pictures?
How are they dressed? What are they doing?
Are any of the pictures adverts for something?
Do you see adverts like this nowadays?

Can you guess how old the pictures are? What clues are there in the pictures that help you guess?

Does anything else in these pictures remind you of the other artworks you have seen in this exhibition? In what ways are the works in each gallery related to each other?

Window Box

The window box shows us pages from a book called 'A Picture of Dorian Gray' by Oscar Wilde, each page has a statement on it. What do you think about the statement 'All art is quite useless'? Do you agree or disagree?

What about the statement 'It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors'? What does this statement mean? How does this statement make you think differently about the exhibition?

Things to discuss

Suggestions for Key Stages 1-3: Archives and Memory

What do you remember about Milton Keynes from when you were growing up? Has anything been built, or changed since then? What do the images on the screen in the Cube Gallery tell us about the way Milton Keynes was when it was first being built? The images are from an archive, what do you know about archives? Why might it be important to record the way we live in 2011/ the way our town is changing? Can you think of photograph albums/scrap books at home that could be an archive of the way you live? Can you imagine what people in 50 years' time might think about the city of Milton Keynes in 2011?

Suggestions for Key Stages 4-6 and above: Utopia

When Gareth Jones' work was shown in the exhibition British Art Show 6 at the Hayward Gallery, he was interviewed by the art historian Jon wood. When asked about the drawings of Milton Keynes by Helmut Jacoby which feature in his work, Gareth Jones said:

'I grew up in Milton Keynes and the environment of that place, at that moment in time, is key to my work. [Helmut Jacoby's drawings are] very utopian, and utopia obviously is a place that can't exist. The drawings seem to depict some kind of parallel universe, an ideal for living which wasn't realised.'

What do you think makes a utopia? What would a utopian town or city look like? Do you think the plans for Milton Keynes as a utopian or ideal city have failed or succeeded? Why do you think this? Is it possible for everyone's idea of 'perfect' to ever be the same? If you were planning a city, would you try and make it into a utopia? What would you do differently if you were planning Milton Keynes?

Things to do

Work in groups to plan and design your own 'new city'. How would the buildings be designed, what would they look like? What materials would you use to make them?

What places around Milton Keynes do you have a special memory of? Make a story-board/picture of that memory. Try using photographs and collage to bring it to life! Think about how our senses, like seeing, smelling and touching, help us to remember past events.

Design and make your own harlequin mask using this template and different collage materials. Remember to think about pattern and colour!
familycrafts.about.com/od/makingmasks/ss/EyeMaskTemplate.htm

Build a structure using cubes from this template, what different structures can you make?
www.mathsisfun.com/geometry/cube-model.html

Colour in this fun harlequin picture!
www.hellokids.com/c_12607/coloring/family-people-and-jobs-coloring-pages/circus-coloring-pages/harlequin-coloring-page

Find out more about Milton Keynes

Visit the City Discovery Centre in Bradwell Abbey
www.mkcdc.org.uk

Visit the Living Archive in Wolverton
www.livingarchive.org.uk

Keywords

Milton Keynes
Architecture
Heritage
History
Spectator
Space
Memory

Identity
Documentary
Fiction
Archive
Harlequin
Utopia

Related artists & movements

Conceptual Art
Minimalism
Arte Povera
Joseph Beuys
British Art Show 6 (2005)
Andrea Zittel
Helmut Jacoby
James Lee Byars
Modernist
Architecture
Dan Graham
Giorgio de Chirico
Milton Keynes Public Art (including
Bernard Schottlander and Liliane Lijn)
17th Century Dutch Landscape Painting

Word Definitions

Architecture: The design of a building, how it is made and how it looks.

Spectator: A person who looks on or watches, an onlooker, an observer. In an art gallery, the spectators are the audience who look at the artwork.

Harlequin: A comic character usually masked, dressed in multi-coloured, diamond patterned tights and carrying a wooden sword or magic wand.

Utopia: An imaginary place or state of things in which everything is perfect.

Archive: a collection of historical documents or records relating to the activities of a person, family, community, or nation.

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