

News Release from Milton Keynes Gallery

1 Nov – 7 Dec 2003

Archigram: Experimental Architecture 1961-74 & Piranesi: The Imaginary Prisons

Admission free

Private view Fri 31 Oct 17.30 – 20.00

All press and media welcome

“An exhibition of Piranesi’s work is always a treat. The Archigram exhibition complements it by providing a modern take on fantasy architecture, a genre the Italian master made his own.” (Royal Academy of Arts Magazine, Autumn 2003)

Two contrasting but related exhibitions open at MK G this November, both of which feature visionary architecture. One explores the 18th century artist Piranesi’s celebrated series of etchings of imaginary prisons, the other the work of the 1960s British experimental architecture group, Archigram.

Archigram, whose name derives from ARCHItecture and teleGRAM, were renowned for their innovative concepts, visionary projects and for the production of a publication of the same name. The group’s membership comprised Warren Chalk, Peter Cook, Dennis Crompton, David Greene, Ron Herron & Micheal Webb. Particularly active between 1961 and 1974, the majority of their work was theoretical. The group’s ideas focused on architecture for a future urban life, and the role of culture and technology within this. The result was the creation of radical alternatives to cities and houses that responded to space travel, subculture and the new technologies of the 1960s and 1970s. In 2002 Archigram won the prestigious Royal Gold Medal for Architecture award by the RIBA, in recognition of their lasting influence on architecture, and there will be a major exhibition of their work at the Design Museum, London, 3 Apr – 4 Jul 2004. The show at MK G includes an audio-visual piece, prints and drawings.

Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778), perhaps best known for his views of ancient and modern Rome, created powerful works of imaginary architectural settings. *The Imaginary Prisons (Carceri D’Invenzione)*, presents Piranesi’s most celebrated series of etchings. The images of cavernous spaces have a nightmarish quality that gripped the Romantic Artists for a century after his death. Their enduring influence can be seen in the contemporary futuristic urban visions of cinema.

Ten years after they were originally published in the late 1740s, Piranesi reworked *The Imaginary Prisons* series, darkening them both literally and figuratively. This exhibition shows both versions side by side, offering a revealing insight into his creative process.

Also presented are some of the finest of the British Museum's Piranesi drawings, which highlight his fluid handling and rich tonalities of red chalk and brown wash, evocative of his Venetian homeland. The exhibition traces Piranesi's transition from conventional scenographer to his establishment in Rome as one of Italy's most original artistic talents. *Piranesi: The Imaginary Prisons*, is a National Touring Exhibition organised by the Hayward Gallery for Arts Council England. Showing at York City Art Gallery until 29.10.03, and at Victoria Art Gallery, Bath, 20.12.03-29.02.04 after MK G.

RELATED EVENTS

Sat 1 Nov | 11.00-11.30 | No need to book

Free Family Exhibition Tour | Join a short, informal introduction to the Archigram & Piranesi exhibitions before starting Saturday Art Trolley activities.

Sat 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 Nov & 6 Dec | 11.00-13.00 | Free | No need to book*

The Saturday Art Trolley | Art activities for ages 4-12 based on the current exhibitions.

*Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Wed 5 Nov | 13.30-14.00 | No need to book

Free Exhibition Tour Join a member of MK G staff for an 'Art for All' informal tour of the Archigram & Piranesi exhibitions.

Wed 26 Nov | 19.30 | Tickets £5 (£3 concs) to include a glass of wine

In Conversation with Peter Cook

An opportunity to hear Peter Cook, a member of the innovative and influential architectural group Archigram, talk about the history of the group in relation to the current architectural scene. Doors open at 19.00 for pre-talk viewing.

Press Listing

1 Nov-7 Dec 2003

Archigram: Experimental Architecture 1961-74 &
Piranesi: The Imaginary Prisons

Fantasy architectural designs from the 1960s by the acclaimed British architectural group Archigram, paired for complementary contrast with Piranesi's 18th century etchings of imaginary prisons.

Milton Keynes Gallery, 900 Midsummer Boulevard, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3QA.
Tel: 01908 676 900. Admission Free. Open Tues-Sat 10.00-17.00, Sun 11.00-17.00.
Closed Mondays and for exhibition changeovers. Visit www.mk-g.org for details and related events information.

Press information and images

Contact Katharine Sorensen or Lorna Gemmell on 01908 558 302 or email k.sorensen@mk-g.org

Ends

Date of Issue: 20.10.03