

British artist Gareth Jones (born 1965) 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. He describes the new city as ‘the most ambitious social project of its kind in the UK, a benchmark for Modernist architecture, progressive town planning and the radical ideals of the 1960s and 1970s’.

Often rooted in the minimalist aesthetic and utopian ambitions of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, Jones’ work engages with the politics of identity and display, examining ideals for future living. His fascination with the social vision that surrounded the formation of Milton Keynes leads him to test the fetishistic or iconic status of materials, from magazine pages and electrical tape to polystyrene and mirror, while playing with the modular and serial construction techniques that inform the city’s famous design.

Cube Gallery

New City, 2011, is a digital artwork made during an extended period of research in Milton Keynes, primarily at the City Discovery Centre. Re-presenting the work of photographers hired by the Development Corporation to sell the city to its future citizens, Jones celebrates the heroic Modernist architecture and pioneer communities that emerged from the landscape.

The selection of photographs has been guided by the artist’s memory and is arranged in fluid sequences that use the logic of dreams to re-create the extraordinary environment of Milton Keynes in the 1970s. ‘City as Playground’ explores the geometrical, high-tech style epitomised by Wolverton Sport Club’s yellow fibreglass pavilion, popularly known as ‘The Pineapple’, or the futuristic leisure centre in Bletchley, both subsequently demolished. ‘Homes for Milton Keynes’ builds on American Conceptual Artist Dan Graham’s influential 1967 magazine project *Homes for America*, presenting a mixture of architectural exteriors and show-home interiors that combines housing for rent and for sale. This visual essay reflects one of the founding ideals of the new city: opportunity and freedom of choice.

‘Creating Communities’ shows the care taken to welcome new arrivals to the city, through Community Houses and local centres, while, in stark contrast, a vivid sequence on the city centre under construction evokes the Italian Surrealist painter Giorgio de Chirico’s enigmatic urban vistas. The overlap between art and design is further explored in a sequence that views the intersection of architecture and landscape through the lens of seventeenth century Dutch landscape painting.

This work develops a project from 2003 by Jones, *Helmut Jacoby: Milton Keynes Drawings*, which re-presented the futuristic visualisations for the new city as drawn in the 1970s by one of the twentieth century’s foremost architectural renderers, to create an image of the ideal city.

Middle Gallery

The figure of the harlequin, an enigmatic performer and agent of misrule defined by a diamond-patterned costume, makes frequent appearances in Jones’ work. An earlier sculpture, *Harlequin Dressing Room*, 1996, imagined the domestic environment of this fictional character, an idea developed here as a minimalist boudoir, including a laundry basket and dressing table. *Harlequin Box*, 2011, contains the surplus material discarded after constructing *Sliced Cube No. 2*, 2011, while *Mirror Box*, 2011, creates multiple, circular reflections of the viewer.

These three variations on a 30 × 30 × 30 cm cube – sliced, halved and opened – test the potential of low cost DIY materials to luxurious effect, while emulating the modular nature of Milton Keynes. At the same time, they contain numerous associations – *Sliced Cube No. 2*, comprised of 81 geometric components, for example, draws on memories of public sculpture in Milton Keynes, notably works by Bernard Schottlander (1924–1999).

Long Gallery

Twelve Men, 2011, presents a single-room installation using a series of Gitanes cigarette adverts that featured in Sunday colour supplements in the 1970s, with blue aluminium frames that suggest French cigarette packaging. Jones explores the politics of desire as suave male models pose with this classic brand, exuding the impossible glamour and decadence of the decade. Collected as he was growing up in the newly formed Milton Keynes, these images were also used by Jones to illustrate an edition of Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1891, a tale of Faustian pacts and eternal youth.

Jones views the Long Gallery as a kind of modern ballroom, in which the scaled-down display creates a theatrical and powerfully charged atmosphere, inviting the viewer to occupy the space and prescribe meaning to the work.

Entrance Space

A multi-view postcard mailed to the Gallery Director is pinned to the wall, with the message ‘What time is this place?’. *Postcard*, 2011, intended by Jones as a ‘love letter to the Welfare State’, represents the Utopian impression of an ideal city. *Poster*, 2011, Blu-tacked to the wall, restores to visibility a defining publicity image of the new city and is available for visitors to take away. These images, along with the magazine pages in *Twelve Men* and the photographs in *New City*, use found publicity material to explore how identity is constructed through architecture, advertising and art.

The window box contains a selection of provocative aphorisms by Oscar Wilde, as laid out in Jones’ acclaimed edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, published by Four Corners Books, 2007. Four of the most provocative statements are exposed, including ‘It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors’, ‘When critics disagree the artist is in accord with himself’ and ‘All art is quite useless’. These statements anticipate a dialogue between the artist, viewer and artwork in the context of Jones’ exploration of the social and cultural landscape of Milton Keynes in the 1970s, approached through memory and seen against the backdrop of political change.

Biography

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.

Events

Gareth Jones

Gareth Jones has curated a programme of talks and films to accompany his exhibition.

Talks

Pre-book at the Information Desk or on 01908 676 900.

Thursday 5 May / 6.30pm / Free
Derek Walker on the Milton Keynes Team
A rare opportunity to hear Derek Walker, Chief Architect and Planner of Milton Keynes (1970–76) speak about the original Milton Keynes design team.

Thursday 26 May / 6.30pm / Free
What about having our future back?
A discussion around Utopia with architectural critic Owen Hatherley, architect Derek Walker and artists Liliane Lijn and Gareth Jones.

Gareth Jones

Thursday 9 June 2011 / 6.30pm / Free
Gareth Jones and Michael Bracewell in Conversation
Hear artist Gareth Jones discuss his work with writer, novelist and cultural commentator Michael Bracewell.

Tuesday 21 June (Summer Solstice) 6.30pm / Free
Community in Art
Participants in this event include artists Boyd & Evans and Roger Kitchen, co-founder of The Living Archive.

Friday Night Films

Selected by Gareth Jones to accompany his exhibition, this film programme unites a group of maverick British directors, artists and cultural icons, including Christopher Isherwood, Derek Jarman, David Bowie, Glenda Jackson and Lindsay Anderson. Spanning the years 1944–1994, the season covers a fifty-year period that sees the emergence of the Welfare State, the birth of Milton Keynes and the eventual dominance of neo-liberalism as an economic philosophy. Ideas around the English landscape, the life of the artist and the social revolutions of the 1960s, move in and out of focus.

All film screenings start at 6.30pm / Tickets £5 (concessions £3) / Pre-book at the Information Desk or on 01908 676 900.

Friday 15 April
Cabaret (1972)
Starring Liza Minnelli, Michael York and Joel Gray
Dir: Bob Fosse (Cert. 15, 124 mins)
Liza Minnelli and Michael York star in the film musical that helped to shape the taste and style of a generation. An irresistible combination of Christopher Isherwood’s *Berlin Stories*, the song writing of Kander and Ebb and the choreography of Bob Fosse, who also directs. ‘Leave your troubles outside!’. This film screening will be introduced by Gareth Jones.

Friday 22 April
A Canterbury Tale (1944)
Dir: Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger (Cert. U, 124 mins)
The English landscape is the uncredited star of Powell and Pressburger’s extraordinary World War II update of Geoffrey Chaucer’s picaresque medieval narrative. A tale told simply for the pleasure of telling, while meeting wartime propaganda requirements with beguiling ingenuity.

Oliver Reed

Friday 29 April
If... (1968)
Dir: Lindsay Anderson (Cert. 15, 111 mins)
Lindsay Anderson hits the 1968 *zeitgeist* on the head with a strangely believable tale of bloody insurrection at an English public school. Malcolm McDowell emerges as a surly icon of silver-screen rebellion, in a thoroughly British mould.

Oliver Reed

Friday 6 May
The Last of England (1987)
Starring Tilda Swinton
Dir: Derek Jarman (Cert. 15, 87 mins)
Derek Jarman’s super-saturated film collage is a howl of rage and loss produced against the backdrop of the emerging Aids crisis. This intensely personal meditation on how it feels to be an artist in the Thatcherite wastelands has lost none of its power over the last twenty-five years.

Friday 13 May
The Man Who Fell To Earth (1976)
Starring David Bowie
Dir: Nicolas Roeg (Cert. 18, 120 mins)
There were rock stars and there was David Bowie, and *The Man Who Fell to Earth* captures him at a moment of extraordinary, personal beauty – a vulnerable alien cast adrift in a world of mechanical relationships.

David Bowie

Friday 20 May
Abigail’s Party (1977)
Starring Alison Steadman
Dir: Mike Leigh (Cert. PG, 100 mins)
In the character of Beverly, Alison Steadman created one of the most terrifying women ever to walk the English stage. Subsequently

filmed for the BBC’s legendary *Play for Today* slot, Mike Leigh’s satire on the suburban middle classes of the 1970s slowly unfolds as a Shakespearean tragedy of domestic proportions.

James Fox

Friday 27 May
The Servant (1963)
Starring Dirk Bogarde and James Fox
Dir: Joseph Losey (Cert. 15, 112 mins)
Sublime gay icon Dirk Bogarde puts darkness at the heart of Harold Pinter’s taut tale of class, power and role reversal, set in the London home of aristocrat James Fox. ‘I’m a gentleman’s gentleman, and you’re no bloody gentleman’, one of many unforgettable lines.

Patrick Keiller

Friday 3 June
London (1994)
Dir: Patrick Keiller (Cert. U, 85 mins)
Patrick Keiller’s elegant and episodic narrative leads us across the surface of a city perceived to be in decline, but actually in the process of re-emerging as a Capitalist behemoth. Being wrong has rarely looked more interestingly right.

Oliver Reed

Friday 10 June
Women in Love (1969)
Starring Oliver Reed, Alan Bates and Glenda Jackson
Dir: Ken Russell (Cert. 15, 131 mins)
D. H. Lawrence and Ken Russell, two unlikely avatars of the 1960s sexual revolution, join forces to cast Alan Bates and Oliver Reed in the greatest nude wrestling scene of all time. The word ‘maverick’ just about begins to describe *Women in Love* – and wonderful Glenda Jackson walked off with an Oscar.

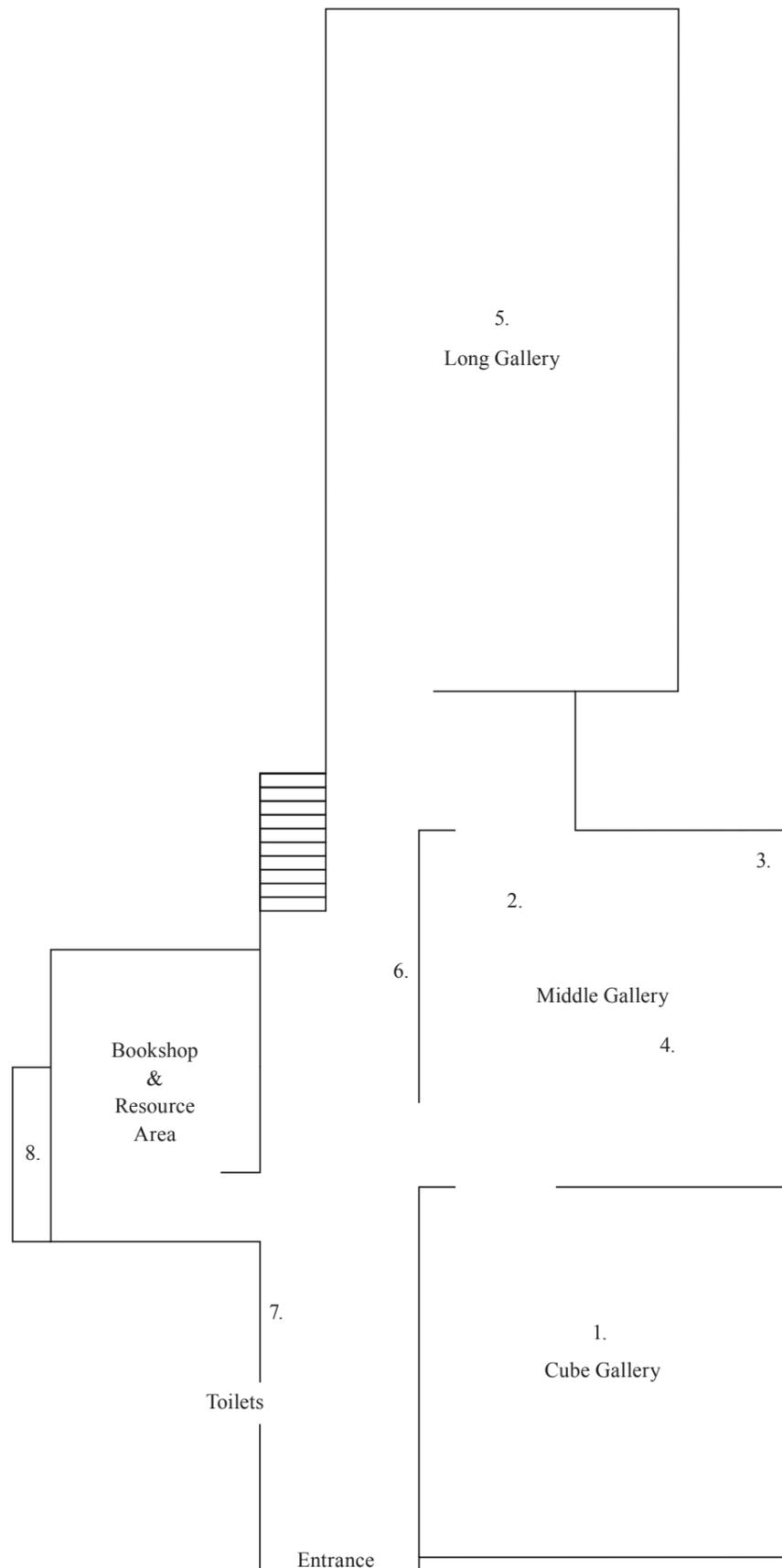
Peter Greenaway

Friday 17 June
The Draughtsman’s Contract (1982)
Dir: Peter Greenaway (Cert. 15, 103 mins)
Peter Greenaway’s baroque seventeenth century masterpiece revels in a conceptual symmetry more commonly seen in visual art. A murder mystery, a love letter to the English landscape tradition, and a cold analysis of the relationship between artist and patron. Michael Nyman’s musical score plays a starring role.

Independent Cinema MK and MK Gallery are working in collaboration to create a programme of Friday Night Film screenings selected or curated by artists and connected to MK Gallery current exhibitions.

David Bowie

Friday 24 June
Closing Event
On the final weekend of the exhibition Gareth Jones will introduce the screening of an additional work, specially produced for MK Gallery. Details to be announced.



1. *New City*
2011
Digital projection
Dimensions variable

New City features the work of photographers hired by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, principally John Donat (1933–2004). Also featured are photographs by Ivor Leonard, Jo Reid & John Peck and George Thompson.
 2. *Harlequin Box*
2011
Polystyrene, card, paper, electrical tape
30 × 30 × 30 cm
 3. *Mirror Box*
2011
Plywood, mirror
30 × 30 × 30 cm
 4. *Sliced Cube No. 2*
2011
Card, paper, electrical tape
81 parts
Overall dimensions 31 × 31 × 31 cm
 5. *Twelve Men*
1971–2011
Mixed media
12 parts
Overall dimensions vary with installation
 6. *Postcard*
2011
Mixed media
Unlimited edition
10.5 × 15 cm
 7. *Poster*
2011
Mixed media
Unlimited edition
36.6 × 25.7 cm
 8. *Window Box:*
Spreads from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
Words by Oscar Wilde.
Art by Gareth Jones.
Published by Four Corners Books, London, 2007
- All works courtesy the artist

Gareth Jones

15 April – 26 June 2011