

The Life and Times of Milton Keynes Gallery

By Mark Leckey, Martin McGeown and Milton Keynes Gallery

Milton Keynes Gallery

16 April – 27 June 2010

In response to an invitation from Milton Keynes Gallery to make an exhibition on occasion of its tenth anniversary year, British artist Mark Leckey and Martin McGeown, Director of Cabinet Gallery, London, have collaborated to produce a series of new works.

Drawing from the Gallery's ten year history of exhibitions and projects, and from the very architecture and fabric of the building, Leckey and McGeown have used video footage, installation photography, press material and architectural plans from the Gallery's archive so that the Gallery itself becomes an incubator of its own history – a reflexive, sentient, exhibition-making machine, revisiting its past and dreaming about its future.

Cube Gallery

In the Cube Gallery, a pink model of the Gallery on a revolving plinth in front of a green screen is filmed live by a video camera. The image of the model is projected onto the gallery wall using technology which overlays the green screen with an assortment of background images, representing fantasy architectural forms by a broad range of artists including Hermann Finsterlin, Michael Asher, A. R. Penck, Donald Judd, J. D. Williams and from urbanist and cultural theorist Paul Virilio's book 'Bunker Archaeology' (1975).

Inspired by Science Fiction films such as Andrei Tarkovsky's 'Solaris' (1972), Leckey and McGeown wanted to breathe life into the Gallery, to present it as conscious entity, with its own fantasies of what might have been. The pink model of the Gallery and the numerous other variations made in wood, foam, concrete, plasticine, polystyrene, plaster and resin installed in the window box are like replicants – or slightly distorted versions of the original – as if spawned by the Gallery itself.

Middle Gallery

In the Middle Gallery, a new CGI film, *From the Long via the Link to the Middle to the Cube* made in collaboration with artist Tim Bacon, presents an uncanny likeness of the empty Gallery, through smooth and mechanical 'camera' work. It provides a strange, disembodied view of the galleries, exploring the psychological effects of the institution's empty spaces.

Alongside the film are a series of black and white prints, enlarged from original drawings by Viz cartoonist Lee Healey. In response to a series of written prompts from Martin McGeown about the organisation's history, architecture and context, Healey, who has never visited the Gallery, sketched a series of different scenarios. The results are humorous interpretations of the Gallery building itself, with odd combinations of previous exhibits, including Gilbert & George, Marcel Broodthaers and Cathy Wilkes. In one of the cartoons, an oversized finger prods the building in a literal enactment of Lecky and McGeown's approach to this project, which is also echoed in a Franz Kafka quote in the corridor that exhorts you to '...push your head through the wall...'.

In the Link space that leads to the Long Gallery, hundreds of thumbnail images representing almost every exhibition staged at Milton Keynes Gallery over the last ten years are mounted on the wall. This index of past exhibitions is randomly ordered but grouped by artist in a way that recalls web searches such as Google images or Flickr.

Long Gallery

In the Long Gallery, a film titled *Vache Concrete* (French for Milton Keynes' ubiquitous motif of concrete cows) makes reference to Belgian Surrealist Rene Magritte's 'Vache Period' in 1948, a short lived period of crude paintings that caricatured the styles of other artists. A work by British artist Gavin Turk, previously exhibited in Milton Keynes Gallery, made use of the multiple pipes Magritte included in one of these paintings called *Le Stropiat*, which also appear in Lee Healey's drawing of Gilbert & George.

The film itself is composed entirely from the Gallery's archival material using a genre of cinematography where the camera explores and investigates in a way that often recalls famous moments in sci-fi films including Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982). The script, which splices together extracts from press releases and catalogues with quotes that range from Sigmar Polke to The Smiths, is read by an authoritative computer-generated voice. The ordering of the material and the sequence of events are scrambled so that, "All that remains is photographic evidence and memory...". Lecky and McGeown's intention was always to create some kind of computer programme into which the Gallery's archive could be fed so that it would produce innumerable permutations of the Gallery's past and provide a blueprint for other self-generating and self-perpetuating exhibition-making machines.

Milton Keynes Gallery

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