

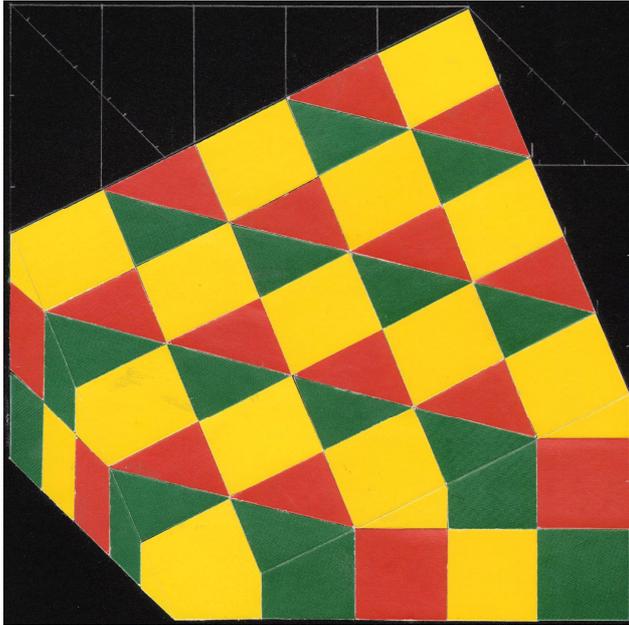
MK Gallery

News Release

Gareth Jones

15 April – 26 June 2011

Preview: Thursday 14 April 6-10pm



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.'

Jones came to prominence in the early 2000s with a series of exhibitions in London: *Seven Pages from a Magazine* (Platform, 2002) brought together a sequence of Lambert & Butler cigarette advertisements from the mid-1970s, depicting an idealised world of smokers in chic metropolitan interiors; an installation at Cubitt Gallery (2003) presented a field of structures that distorted and embellished the form of a standard plinth; while *Helmut Jacoby: Milton Keynes Drawings* (38 Langham Street, 2003) re-presented the futuristic visualisations for the new city, as drawn by one of the 20th Century's foremost architectural renderers, to create an image of the ideal city.

Often rooted in the minimalist aesthetic and utopian ambitions of the founding fathers of Milton Keynes, Jones' work engages with the politics of identity and display, examining how images were used to generate ideals for future living. Jones' 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 Fablon to polystyrene and stainless steel, while playing with the modular and serial construction techniques that inform the city's famous design.

For his exhibition at MK Gallery, Jones has proposed three interconnected installations and a number of supplementary projects. In the Cube Gallery, the artist presents *New City, 2011*, a digital artwork made using publicity photographs commissioned by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation to sell the city to its future citizens. These images, selected during an extended period of research in the city, document and celebrate the heroic Modernist architecture that sprung fully formed from the landscape.

In the Middle Gallery, Jones presents three variations on a 30 x 30 x 30 cm cube; sliced, halved and opened. Like the earlier series of plinths, these works test the potential of different materials while emulating the modular nature of Milton Keynes. At the same time, they contain numerous associations. *Sliced Cube No 2, 2011*, comprised of 81 geometric components, draws on memories of public sculpture in Milton Keynes as well as the figure of the harlequin, an enigmatic acrobat or performer traditionally defined by a diamond-patterned costume, who makes frequent appearances in Jones' work.

In the Long Gallery, Jones presents a single-room installation using a series of Gitanes cigarette adverts that featured in Sunday colour supplements in the 1970s, with frames suggestive of cigarette packaging. Jones again explores the politics of desire as suave male models pose with this classic brand, exuding the impossible glamour and decadence of the decade. 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.

Alongside the installations there will be a number of other works and events produced by Jones. A talks programme including participants such as Derek Walker (Chief Architect and Planner of Milton Keynes from 1970-76) and architectural critic Owen Hatherley will look at changing attitudes towards the idea of utopia ('What about having our future back?') and the way the arts have been used in Milton Keynes ('Community in Art'). There will also be a film programme spanning 1944 to 1994, 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. This will conclude with a closing event, in which Jones will screen an additional work specially produced for MK Gallery.

There will also be a multi-view postcard of an ideal city, a poster that puts a defining publicity image for Milton Keynes back into circulation, and a window display of provocative aphorisms by Wilde on the role of art and the artist, as laid out in Jones' edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Considered as a whole, the exhibition represents a synthesis 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. As such, inevitable tensions between ambitious formalism, social planning and historical reflexivity are exacerbated, and the buoyant optimism of an earlier era is uncompromisingly pitted against present realities.

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. Group exhibitions have included *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. 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. In 2006 he received a Paul Hamlyn Award for Visual Arts and in 2007 he made a new edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* for Four Corners Books. Gareth Jones is based in London.

Notes to Editors

Related Events Programme

Gareth Jones has curated a programme of talks, films and events to accompany his exhibition at MK Gallery (15 April – 26 June 2011). All talks and film screenings start at 6.30pm and pre-booking is required. Talk tickets are free; film tickets cost £5 (concessions £3). Bookings on T: +44 (0)1908 676 900.

Friday Night Films

A programme of films spanning the years 1944 to 1994, a fifty year period that saw the emergence of the welfare state, the birth of Milton Keynes and the eventual dominance of neo-liberalism as an economic philosophy. Jones will introduce the screening of *Cabaret* on 15 April. Screenings start at 6.30pm. Tickets £5 (concessions £3). Presented in collaboration with Independent Cinema MK. For full programme listings please visit the website [here](#).

Talks

Thursday 5 May 2011

Talk: Derek Walker: Milton Keynes - The Art of Illusion

A rare opportunity to hear Walker, Chief Architect and Planner of Milton Keynes (1970-76) speak about the original Milton Keynes design team.

Thursday 26 May 2011

Talk: what about having our future Back?

Discussion with architectural critic Owen Hatherley, architect Derek Walker, and artists Liliane Lijn and Gareth Jones.

Thursday 9 June 2011

Talk: 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 2011 (Summer Solstice)

Talk: Community in Art

Participants include artists Boyd & Evans and Roger Kitchen, co-founder of The Living Archive.

Closing Event

Friday 24 June 2011

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.

Supporters

Gareth Jones has received support from the National Lottery through [Arts Council England](#) and research funding from [The Open University](#). With thanks to [Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre](#) and the Exhibition Circle of Friends.



MK Gallery Supporters

MK Gallery receives core funding from Milton Keynes Council and Arts Council England South East.



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MK Gallery

MK Gallery, 900 Midsummer Boulevard, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3QA.

Located in Theatre District, Milton Keynes, MK Gallery is one of the UK's leading public galleries, presenting a programme of international contemporary visual art. Open Tuesday–Friday 12–8pm, Saturday 11am–8pm, Sunday 11am–5pm. Admission free. www.mkgallery.org

Further information

For press interviews, information or images please contact:
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Ends

Date of issue: 8 April 2011