

Our Silver City, 2094 Walkthrough

Transcript

While every effort has been made to provide an accurate written record of this event, some errors may exist in this transcript.

If you require further information please contact cmasters@nottinghamcontemporary.org

SPEAKERS

Olivia Aherne, Karen Lunt, Simon Withers

00:00 Olivia Aherne

Hi, I'm Olivia, I'm the curator of exhibitions here at Nottingham Contemporary and I was one of the people that worked on this group show, *Our Silver City, 2094*. The show was conceived by an artistic team and it was based on a methodology by a curator and graphic designer, Prem Krishnamurthy. The methodology really centres collaboration and group work. And so the artistic team was conceived and included different artists, thinkers, writers - Celine Condorelli, Grace Ndiritu, Femke Herregraven and the novelist and writer Liz Jensen. The show is also complemented with a publication, a novella written by Liz Jensen. And we're really seeing this exhibition as a novel as exhibition, exhibition as a novel. The Silver City has undergone decades of pandemics, wars, conflicts, we see a real change - the show asks us to travel in time. And we explore lots of different works from painting, collage, moving image, sculpture, and even some archival objects and objects from historical collections. These are a series of maps of Nottingham which are on loan to us from the School of Geography from the University of Nottingham. And there are a series of maps that look at lots of different things from the geography, the structure of the city, but also the flooding areas, how people move through the city, their journey to

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work. For us, it really became an exercise in thinking about how people use maps to navigate, but also to map other things, other ecologies and other economies. And I think it's really a provocation to think about how we might use maps in the future. So this work is a work called Ciel by Nicola L who is a Moroccan artist who was based in New York in the US, and was very much associated with the pop art movement. Nicola L was working in textiles and using lots of plastics and fabrics in her works, and created this series in the 60s and 70s that were these sort of skins, these kind of outfits, which originally would have been performed in or would have invited audiences to actually wear and Ciel is the French word for sky, and Nicola L would have these words sort of stencilled across the pieces of fabric or the skins to sort of remind us about our bodies, and our body's relationship to the environment in which we live. So this is a work by a Japanese conceptual artist On Kawara. And the work is from a lifelong series of date paintings, where On Kawara would take a newspaper from the city he was in on a particular day, and would then paint the date as shown on the newspaper. He would then spend all day painting this work and at the end of the day, if he had not finished the painting, he would then destroy this work as it would not have been made on that day. There are many dates in the series, I think there are about 3000 works. Some of them have historical social significance. Others have more of a personal biographical significance for the artist. This work here is the day before the fall of the Berlin Wall, so of major historical significance and sort of acts as a time capsule of a certain moment in time. I think I've always imagined the artist sort of spending all day working on this work, really sitting with that date and remembering, sort of recognising that passing of time.

03:47 Simon Withers

Hello, I'm Simon Withers and I'm a gallery assistant here at Nottingham Contemporary. I'm here to talk in gallery two about some aspects of various artists who are on show in this gallery. To set the kind of tone of it is the installation is

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really kind of settled by Celine Condorelli. And although prior to this show, her background is very much in architecture as well as art, but she hadn't considered herself as an image maker. She's contributed this by having three large printed works. And some of those explore the aspect of this gallery is about the nature of colour being introduced within future thinking relating to this exhibition in 2094. I'm very much looking at just three artists with this, of which Delphine Reist is this work here Cartouches. Briefly, the cartouche is an oval form from the Egyptian period with an underline at the bottom. And what this would signify is the idea of the text enclosed within the cartouche is of a real name. It was also used in hieroglyphs. And that was seen as what were described as either a circuit, or a ring representing eternal protection. The work has also been described as creating an accidental painting. And to that, in some ways, it's also been described as some form of animal, and its connections to the nature of the animal world with things like squid and octopus, cuttlefish and nautilus who either change colour, depending on light, either as a form of protection, or sometimes in the form of octopus is what they would do is like squirt black ink out to protect themselves or to hide themselves in a cloud of black. And I also saw it as a sort of almost like evacuation. So what this animal is doing is evacuating these kind of coloured liquids. Agnieszka Kurant's work here called Air Rights 7, shows a meteorite hovering majestically over a white plinth. And what it does is represent the artist in a way that she's interested in contemporary economics, and also the digital life of the internet, and things like Wikipedia. But ultimately, she explores the peripheries of the cause and effect of both of these upon our lives, and even future thinking. And also to that the embodying of the absurdities and the precariousness of a speculative value. With this, it was very much related to you could say the kind of financial aspects. And to this, I thought I would add that I see this also, that is also referenced, I think, within Liz Jensen's novella about the idea of the Black Swan and the Black Swan theory. Now what this is, in as much that as far as the Europeans are

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concerned, it was seen as an almost as absolute that Black Swans didn't exist. And it wasn't till about 1726, that when two were brought over from Australia, that in some ways, what was considered as absolute truth, now became a doubt, and then became a reality that Black Swans existed. And Black Swan theory is basically the idea of an extremely rare event that has severe consequences. And it is something that is suggested could not be predicted beforehand. Although after the event, and after the fact many felt a claim it could have been predictable. And so this was very much related to the idea of how do you make the financial markets much more stable, and less prone to fear factor. There's one aspect of this also that would be like to kind of explore in some ways is its relationship to that idea of chaotic order, and in part the work of Mandelbrot the French American mathematician, and the idea of self similarity in nature, and the uncontrolled elements of life. And in some ways, this object is a black swan. And likewise, there is possibly other elements within gallery two that echo that nature. Isa Genzken's work *World Receiver* is a piece of concrete, a cenotaph, something impotent. It is potentially the missing part. It is made of concrete. And it echoes within this exhibition the fact that concrete is the second most used substance in the world after water. During production, it accounts for 8% of greenhouse gas and global emissions. Portland stone cement, a limestone of the Jurassic period of which we've got various fossils also made of limestone, accounts for carbon dioxide, which is also a major greenhouse gas. One aspect of concrete is the idea of its end of life. Concrete damage can be occurred and attributed to trapped water, sea water, freezing, and bacterial corrosion. It is possible with the idea of kind of lost knowledge is if we went back to Roman concrete is a completely different kind of constituent and one, I believe, we are still looking to decipher exactly how it was made. Whereas they used volcanic ash. Roman concrete could be set and cast and hardened underwater. And as it gets older is meant to get harder and harder. And it's interesting as much that we're potentially projecting the idea of a drowned world in less than

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100 years time of which the very fabric of our concrete which it is predicted, we will increase the amount of concrete that we'll be using and constructing in the future may well be lost to us as a source of solidity. So in some ways, as a material, one could say that again, it's becoming an illusion, it's already lost. And maybe this World Receiver echoes that.

10:34 Karen Lunt

I'm Karen Lunt, and I'm going to talk a little bit today about this piece of work by Revital Cohen and Tuur van Balen. Before that, though, I just want to talk a little bit about artists and their materials. Before the middle of the 19th century, when you were apprenticed as an artist, as a painter, part of what you learned was the making of paints, pigments and colours. And the part of your desirability as an artist was made up of your ability to make the best pigments, the best colours and colours that lasted over time. And then in the middle of the 19th century, an American artist invented paint that could be with paint in a tube that you could take out with you. Before too long, this was mass produced, and by the second half of the 19th century, little tubes of paint were available to buy by anybody really. And because of this kind of development, for the first time, artists were able to leave their studios and go out with their portable easels and sit in a field or wherever to look at a landscape and paint it from life. Without this development, you'd have never had Monet and his water lilies, you wouldn't have been able, he wouldn't have been able to paint the movements of light across water. And the whole, you can argue that the whole of Modern Art and what became contemporary art is predicated on this small technological innovation. Because without portable tubes of paint, you wouldn't have got any Expressionism or anything that came after, which takes us to this picture. Now in this gallery, we're looking at an art world that has gone through apocalyptic times, whether it be number of natural disasters, and we can presume that nobody's still operating paint factories. And so artists are once again, dependent upon their own ingenuity and initiative to create their own pigments. This work, Blue

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Roan is part of a set of eight that the artists produced for an installation, and it's made of animal, horse, ashes from bones, stuck on to stainless steel background, and they're coloured to reflect the colouring of a blue roan horse. Looking at that picture, when I first looked at it, I felt quite ambivalent about whether that was an ethical thing to do, to use the the remains of a dead horse to make a decorative item. I was perhaps particularly affected by the fact that my daughter owns a blue roan pony horse and has done for the past 12 years or so. And I'm very fond of him and I know him very well. And I questioned whether it would be a suitable and to him to end up as a decorative piece on someone's living room wall. And then I thought some more and I researched a little bit into the artists and I found that they've got a long history of questioning gambling, gambling industries, which use the bodies of dogs and horses in particular, for entertainment and for profit. And looking at the greyhound, well looking at the gambling industry. For most horses who can happily live for over 30 years, their racing lives are over in about four years. And the same for dogs who typically live about 15 years. And so every years tens of thousands of these animals are made redundant by the industry that produced them and maintained them. A few of the lucky ones might end up going out to stud. And a few might be bought cheaply by teenage girls or become pets, by rehoused by greyhound trusts and so on, but most of them are killed. And this is the sort of this is what the artists are trying to communicate, have a debate about, tell us about. I also thought about bone china, and the fact that that's, the clue's in the name - it's made of bones and it's been made for centuries, using the remains of bones. And horses are used to produce gelatine, and glue and various other things. So there we are. That's what I want to say about that. Make your own mind up.

16:12 Olivia Aherne

So here we are in gallery three of the exhibition, and this is an installation designed by artist Grace Ndiritu. It's titled The Temple and it includes works by many other artists.

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The temple is a structure that Grace worked with a studio called Set Works. And the structure is influenced by different references, from Buckminster Fuller's 1950s housing project, to sweat lodge structures built by indigenous communities. Something that Grace was really thinking about when conceiving of this gallery was what would galleries look like in the future? What would be the purpose of museums, would they be spaces for conversation, for exchange, a moment to be calm in, to sit amongst art and experience it in a different way. We see a range of works in here by lots of different artists, mostly reflecting on the idea of the handmade, so you'll see works that are textiles, you'll see collage that's been made by hand, sculpture and objects as well as some historical artefacts and archival material.

17:21 Simon Withers

In gallery four, I'm going to be referring to what is a Roman curse tablet, that these objects are written to recover stolen objects. And it was useful frequently to dedicate the thief to a God in order to recover the objects. The translation of this one has proven to be kind of quite difficult on the material that I've located. But basically, what it says is I make a note of two gators, an axe, a knife, a pair of gloves, whether a low man or a privileged one, two parts to the God and him. It trails off, but what has been suggested that it could conclude with and him burn in hell. This is where it gets quite interesting, in as much that this tablet is written, basically in Latin, but with two Britannic words, there are misspellings, there are abbreviations, and there are oversights. And if this had been Latinized, it may well say something like the cursed persons shall not be able to speak or eat any longer. The tablet was discovered at Red Hill, Ratcliffe-on-Soar in Nottingham, and it was found amongst with three other ones in about 1963. In 1990, it was believed that and confirmed that it was the site of a Roman temple. And the God that this was dedicated to was the god Jupiter, which in Greek is Zeus. And in Roman, Jupiter is referred to as the sky father. And I think that ties in very nicely with the work that we've got in gallery four.