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Inbetween Spaces

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Inbetween Spaces

Artists have often used billboards as a device to politically charge a privately owned advertisement space, within a public arena. Billboards provide a rare opportunity for individuals and groups to claim back spaces, which are more often than not, for the sole use of private corporations competing for public attention. In an attempt to infiltrate these spaces, artists have temporarily bought billboard sites, interrupting the supposedly seamless surface of capitalist imagery. However if we take a cursory look at some of the most effective and affective billboard artworks in recent history, we can see that the seams of advertising space are teaming with artists' interventions.

New York City has been the location for two important, personal transformations of the billboard site. The increasing amount of electronic advertisement hoardings has been an invasive and strangely exciting development in even the most peripheral cities. In Spring 2000 Swiss artist Pipilotti Rist was commissioned by the Public Art Fund to make an artwork to occupy the Panasonic Screen in Times Square. Rist's proposal was *Open My Glade*, an individual invasion of this iconic public space. The painful dislocation of individuals was symbolised, through technology, in a visceral way. Passersby and tourists in Times Square, would have been shocked to be confronted by a woman mixing saliva, red lipstick and bright green eye shadow by squashing her face vigorously against the transparent screen. Witnessing Rist, seemingly trapped and attempting to break out of the screen, the viewers would be helpless, unable to assist in her plight, and assaulted by these excruciating screen images. In the early nineties Felix Gonzalez-Torres produced his billboard projects, such as the black and white photograph of an unmade bed, *Untitled*, at 31-33 Second Avenue at Second East Street, again in New York, and again installed at the bequest of a mega-art institution, The Museum of Modern Art. Like Rist he spoke of a wish to infiltrate the urban space in a similar way to a virus. And yet again in the United States, between 2004-2005, the Walker Art Centre Billboard project commissioned five artists to make work, whilst the main building was closed, on a 14-by-48-foot billboard located northeast of the Walker and the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden in downtown Minneapolis. Takashi Murakami, Yoko Ono and Matthew Barney were amongst the artists approached.

Like advertisements, these artists attempt to draw the viewer into their work engaging with them on a personal level, in an attempt, not to sell to the public, but rather to provoke a shock, that there is no commercial intention behind it. Of course this is to ignore the fact that artists have a commercial stake in the world, especially when backed by a mega bucks institution. It is interesting to note that more and more advertisers are adopting campaigns, which keep the consumer guessing, alluding to a product in increasingly esoteric ways, baffling this consumer at least. It seems that these advertisers are aping the strategies of artists, so that purpose is the only differentiating factor.

Bringing this short text back to the North West, there have been many instances of artists ready, willing and able to explore this heavily chartered territory of the billboard, *Inbetween Spaces* being the latest in the line. What is anticipated through the bus and walking tours of the various sites around Manchester, Salford and Beswick, is that the journey will be an important element in the project. The billboards will provide both sentences and punctuation in an essay of the marginal in and around the urban sprawl.

Joe Devlin

The present is known as the present only through evidence of a past that was once a present.

Joe Devlin's practice employs the use of marginalia. Working in libraries over the years has led Devlin to search for clues relating to past readers interaction with books. Devlin reads the library rather than just the books contained in it. For the billboard project he will be showing a blank, yellowed, dog-eared page taken from a book by the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida.

John Goodwin

Recently included in East International 06, Goodwin submitted photographs of his family as they grew up in Manchester, these intimate images he sees as moments between moments. He is interested in the fatigue of the image and a continued fascination with other people's snapshots. Former international rugby player (toured NZ with England 1985) turned painter. MA Fine Art Manchester. Currently Fine Art Tutor at Plymouth College.

Pam Holmes

Creates photographic docudramas. The work is a critique of cultural constructions and aims to challenge context and provoke conversations with the audience; the images act as mirrors to allow the viewer to project their own personal narratives. Recent projects include *Here+Now* 2006, *4Elsewhere* - Art06, *Don't be afraid* - PRI 2005.

Inés Rae

Works with photographic media, video, and text to explore ideas around the vernacular and everyday. Recent projects include: *Kurl up n Dye*, Cube 2006; *Settling In*, curated with Jo Lansley, 2006; *Mind Where You Look*, Gallery Oldham 2005; *Joy*, International 3, Manchester 2004; *A Real Work Of Art*, Folly Gallery, Lancaster 2003.

Suzanne Smith

Some things are never appropriate and they are the best. Sometimes graffiti feels like boys taking back the streets from The Man and making them more intimidating for The Ladies. Some people think everything they think is worth saying. Sometimes I get angry and sometimes I think SIT DOWN AND SHUT UP MY BOTTOM FEELS FUNNY BUT WHO GIVES A SHIT.

Born 1974, Nottingham. Studied Fine Art at Manchester Metropolitan University. Recently exhibited at Kiasma, Helsinki 2006 and The Lowry, Salford 2007.



Inbetween Spaces

Coinciding with Look 07, *Inbetween Spaces* is at various billboard sites around Manchester. It is an exhibition exploring the idea of the advertising billboard as a potential channel for artistic communication.

The project arose out of Inés Rae's book publication *Kurl up n Dye* which explores the vernacular in the British high street. Her series of photographs and typography set out to examine the pockets of creativity and spontaneity in some small businesses, and an element of this survives here with one image carrying a reference to the word play and visual puns on the backstreets.

The project was then expanded to include artists whose work could have a dialogue with a billboard site and whose work is, in some way, marginal. Some of the artists achieve this through reference to specific issues, while others are more playful, from a portrait of a sales assistant in the retail district to an image of how the city is becoming the entertainment centre of the North. Ultimately the images put on the advertising billboards are of things we would not normally expect to see there, challenging some assumptions about the use of such spaces. The work of five artists is featured; Joe Devlin, John Goodwin, Pam Holmes, Inés Rae and Suzanne Smith.

The sites can be viewed from the road or by pedestrians, making the work accessible to anyone taking a particular route around the city; either to and from work, while shopping, or purposefully following the map enclosed.

The project takes place over different sites in diverse and sometimes marginal locations and consequently the spaces between the billboards become part of the exhibition, heightening our awareness of our urban habitat and our expectations of images.

LAUNCH AT CUBE, FRIDAY 27 APRIL, 6-8.30PM, 113-115 PORTLAND STREET MANCHESTER M1 6FB, T. 0161 237 5525
 Bus tours will take place at the launch (6.30pm and 7.30pm). Maps will be available on the opening night and at www.myspace.com/inbetweenspaces07

48-sheet billboard sites					
SITE	PANEL	ADDRESS	POSTCODE	AREA	ARTIST
1465	01	366 ASHTON NEW ROAD	M11 3DL	BESWICK	PAM HOLMES
2234	02	12-16 TODD STREET	M3 1WU	MANCHESTER	INÉS RAE
3620	01	WHITWORTH STREET WEST	M1 5NG	MANCHESTER	INÉS RAE
7056	02	34 SHUDEHILL	M4 1EY	MANCHESTER	SUZANNE SMITH
3220	01	CHAPEL STREET/QUAY STREET	M3 5JQ	SALFORD	JOHN GOODWIN
1185	02	ALBION STREET	M1 5LN	MANCHESTER	JOE DEVLIN



02 INÉS RAE
12-16 TODD STREET

03 SUZANNE SMITH
34 SHUDEHILL

04 JOHN GOODWIN
CHAPEL STREET/QUAY STREET

07 PAM HOLMES
366 ASHTON NEW ROAD

CUBE

05 JOE DEVLIN
ALBION STREET

06 INÉS RAE
WHITWORTH STREET WEST