

PRESS RELEASE

A Bucolic Frolic: Distractions from the Modern

29 June – 18 August 2012

Private view:

Thursday 28 June 6-9pm

Andrew Cross, Roger Dean, Jonathan Gent, Merlin James, Peter Kinley, Bob Law, George Shaw, Mark Wallinger.

Organised in collaboration with Andrew Cross

A Bucolic Frolic: Distractions from the Modern takes a look at some tendencies to be found in English art, design and music from 1960s to the present day which indicate a particular refusal to accept an inevitable onslaught of economic and technological modernity, preferring instead visions of alternative worlds and reinterpretations of the existing one. The exhibition groups together painting, photography, graphic design, architectural propositions and material related to the music and politics of the outdoor free festival movement.

Rather than an un-tethering from earlier cultural reference, or seeking the comfort of a nostalgic Romanticism, suggested in this exhibition is something that is much more of an awkward but necessary renegotiation with landscape and the ancient to be found in expressions of the sometimes fantastic and utopian; a desire to embrace the past as part of the future, the combining of the spiritual with the directly political, the local with the cosmic, the wandering and ephemeral as much as the permanent.

The exhibition will feature drawings and sketchbooks by designer Roger Dean. Famous for his LP cover designs from the 1970s, the architectural propositions shown here extend his distinctive visionary landscapes into realisable places for future utopian living. Forging his own distinctive trajectory, at variance with the much more strictly formal art of the time, Dean's otherworldly blend of the ancient and the future pre-empted the highly eclectic styles of art and design seen today.

Central to much late 20th century English modernism was a fine line between figurative art and abstraction. It was a tussle explored particularly well by Peter Kinley and Bob Law. In his paintings of rural Wiltshire Kinley renders a quintessential landscape into the simplest set of painting motifs to provide a highly specific mapping and description of place. The more abstract art of Bob Law possessed a formal rigor often far greater than many of his contemporaries yet it was also informed by a sensitivity to ideas of mythology and place. His Field Drawings are a diagrammatic account of landscape experienced as a site for temporary artistic and spiritual occupancy.

By contrast the highly representational paintings of George Shaw comprise a sustained enquiry into the memory of lived places on the suburban fringe; the characteristic landscape of childhood adventure and teenage boredom. Yet these places are the inspiration for an artistic vision in the Romantic tradition that invests all landscapes whether of an ancient past or modern present with equal poignancy.

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The photographs of Andrew Cross are a revisit to the landscape of his childhood Wiltshire, a landscape often at variants with the rustic idyl informed by agricultural expediency, military occupancy and hard fought battles over rights.

The desire to escape from the urban jungle of Glasgow leads Jonathan Gent to depict himself as a knight embarking on a grail quest to Glastonbury, whereas Merlin James's painting of a piper in motley, taken from a seventeenth century garden sculpture, harks back to an earlier age of pastoral music making.

Mark Wallinger's maquette for his 52m high monument of a white horse to stand alongside the A2 at Ebbsfleet in Kent reflects on both the historical English landscape and the modern transport system that links the UK to continental Europe. England's pastoral island utopia now only twenty minutes by train under the Channel to France.

As part of the exhibition a selection of archival material exploring aspects of the 1960s counter-culture and the free festival movement will also be displayed.

The *A Bucolic Frolic* project will also include screenings from 4-8 July at the Dye House in South London of two films by Andrew Cross exploring the relationship between music and space. *The Solo*, a film featuring the music of Carl Palmer, and a new work featuring the music of Nik Turner. Cross brings Turner and Palmer together for the first time since the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival. It was on the official Festival stage that supergroup Emerson, Lake & Palmer made their highly successful first major public appearance while Nik Turner and Hawkwind famously performed for free on an unofficial stage outside the festival's notorious steel boundary fence.

The Dye House
Nutbrook Studios, 33 Nutbrook St. London SE15 4JU
Screenings will be at 1pm, 2pm, 3pm, 4pm, 5pm.
Special evening private view: Saturday July 7th 5-8pm

Accompanying both exhibition and film screenings will be a free newsprint publication that will include articles on the landscapes of the outdoor music festivals of the 1970s and 80s by Rob Young; on the possibilities of temporary and mobile architecture as proposed by Cedric Price and archigram, among others, by Adrian Friend. These texts will be accompanied by a miscellany of images, poetry and other material relating to the themes of the exhibition.

The *A Bucolic Frolic* project has received support from Southampton Solent University.

For further information, please contact:

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