

Press Release: May 2012

Invisible Forces

An exhibition about why contemporary life is so difficult for so many



Dr Hairy In..., Edward Picot, since 2010

Featuring:

Class Wargames, Kimathi Donkor, The Hexists, IOCOSE, Dave Miller, Laura Oldfield Ford, Edward Picot, Olga P Massanet and Thomas Cade Aston, and YoHa.

Sat 16 June - Sat 11 August 2012

Open Thu-Fri 2-6pm, Sat 11am-6pm

Opening Event: Sat 16 June, 2-5pm

Free public play, games, making and discussion

Please check our website for schedule

www.furtherfield.org/gallery

“I’m as angry as hell and I’m not going to take it any more”

Howard Beale, Network 1976

Our social, economic and cultural institutions are being dismantled. Control over the provision of social care, urban and rural development, and education is being ceded to the market, facilitated by unseen technological and bureaucratic systems.

Undeterred, the artists in this exhibition meet the challenges that ensue with clear eyes, spontaneity, experimentation and a sense of adventure. This selection of installations, digital video, net art, painting and drawings deal with conspiracy, money, politics and hidden signals.

As part of *Invisible Airs*, **YoHa** (Graham Harwood & Matsuko Yokokoji) attempted to read 20,000 comma separated lines of Bristol City Council’s apparently open-data. After which they understood that power reveals itself through multiple layers of boredom. They constructed four pneumatic contraptions which reveal the relations contained within the fields and the people affected. A video made by Alistair Oldham documents their art project *Invisible Airs, Database, Expenditure & Power*. *Invisible Airs* was commissioned by The University of the West of England’s Digital Cultures Research Centre (DCRC) in collaboration with the Bristol City Council’s B Open data project.

This is shown alongside *Data Entry*, a video that investigates how databases operate on us and through us by looking at the work of

midwives and women in labour. “Databases move through us, allowing new forms of power to emerge... [they] order, compare, sort and create new views of the information they contain. New perspectives amplify, speed-up and restructure particular forms of power as they supersede others.”



Expenditure Rider, YoHa, 2011

Edward Picot is an artist and writer who also works as an administrator in the UK health service. His seriously funny soap-gone-wrong, *Dr Hairy In...*, chronicles the trials, tribulations and cogitations of an ordinary (but slightly hirsute) general practitioner - with hilarious results!* Dr Hairy’s struggles with NHS bureaucracy are brought to life in a series of satirical video shorts, featuring puppetry performances given by a child’s doll and screened in a doctor’s waiting room, as an installation.

“It was like watching Team America set in the NHS” says Ian Hislop, (broadcaster, editor of *Private Eye* and NHS patient).

In one episode, Dr Hairy becomes suspicious and confused when Tina, the receptionist, recommends that he should use Open Office,

the free alternative to Microsoft Office software. “People do things for money, don’t they? They don’t just sit around doing difficult and complicated things just out of interest or just for the sake of helping each other out. Imagine if they did. The world would be completely different. What kind of world would it be? A geeky sort of non-crispy, non-telly watching sort of a world.” (The video series was created using Open Source tools such as the Gimp, FreeSound, Kdenlive and Audacity).

The Internet – a world-spanning database with billions of creators – shapes and reflects the production of social, political and economic realms by the prevailing powers and those actively resisting them. The Arab Spring, the Occupy movement, Anonymous and Wikileaks show how increased access to tools, debate and distribution of culture has motivated and enabled new forms and styles of individual and collective action, changing how agency is perceived and politics is done.



Toussaint L'Ouverture at Bedourete, K Donkor, 2004, oil on linen, 136 x 183cm

Kimathi Donkor's *Toussaint Louverture at Bedourete*, is a history painting made with oils on canvas that depicts an icon of anti-slavery struggles who, in his lifetime, was smeared as a reprehensible war lord. Created to mark 200 years since the independence of Haiti, the

image shows the leader of the Haitian 1791-1804 revolution in a pose reminiscent of the Jacques Louis David's *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*, surrounded by inspired revolutionaries in a battle that led to the creation of Haiti as the first slave free nation in history. This triumphant imagery is now inserted into history as its digital duplicates circulate the Internet along with other controversial war heroes come villain-pariahs. In a short film by Ilze Black, Dr Richard Barbrook and Fabian Tompsett of Class Wargames interview Donkor about the work.



Walsall dérive. 1972//1981//1992//2013
Laura Oldfield Ford, 2012

Laura Oldfield Ford's recent drawings are the result of walks (or 'Drifts') through deserted urban spaces in the part of East London being prepared for the 2012 Games. They depict layers of failed utopias of the past and present and imagined futures. Known for her poetic and politically tuned ink drawings produced in print and online in her zine *Savage Messiah* (www.savagemessiahzine.com), Oldfield Ford documents her psychogeographic explorations, in text and image, of the city as a site of social conflict, melancholy and political resistance.

When the 18th century economist Adam Smith described an invisible hand, animated by the self interest of trading individuals, that would produce a self-regulating economy for

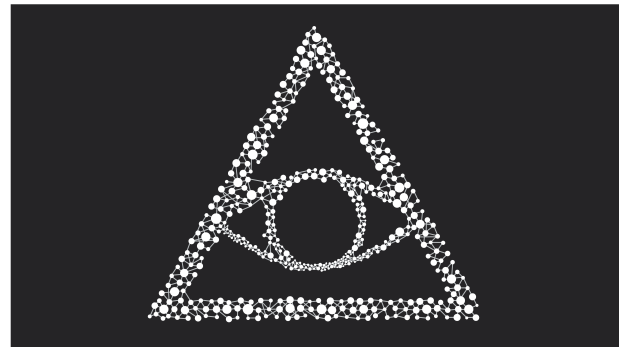
the maximum prosperity and liberty of general society, he could not have foreseen the transformations wrought in trading or in politics by the arrival of the personal computer along with computer networks.

Net artist **Dave Miller** presents two agitprop posters and a pamphlet of images reproduced from his interactive, multi-layered, online narrative *Bankers Bonuses*. Miller worked with software he created himself to combine hand drawn illustrations with images gathered from Internet searches, and provocative (sometimes preposterous) statements made by powerful people about the ethical questions arising from the economic crisis. His work illuminates their machinations and is shot through with intense feeling “...we are mostly fed superficial information by official media channels, and we feel helpless. But we should be angry.”



Bankers Bonuses, Dave Miller, 2011

Since the crash of 2008, Smith’s invisible hand can be re-envisioned as *Thing*, the disembodied hand of *The Addams Family*, scrabbling across globalised information networks, cut loose from the social body, rendered invisible by speed, powered by ever-more-lunatic algorithms – a crazed servant, fetching and carrying bets and commands for the masters of total consumerism.



A Crowded Apocalypse, IOCOSE, 2011-12

Italian artist group **IOCOSE** has created *A Crowded Apocalypse*, a net art project that exploits crowd sourcing tools in order to simulate a global conspiracy. The “crowd” assembles its own conspiracy and then protests against its protagonists and effects. The work exploits the fertility of network culture as a ground for conspiracy theories which, in common with many advertisements, are persuasive but are neither ultimately provable or irrefutable. In order to hold sway, conspiracies point to a body of evidence; a part of which must ultimately always be out of reach advancing the belief that each of us is a heedless agent in a mysterious master plan. *A Crowded Apocalypse* is commissioned by AND Festival and Furtherfield.

As we scan our cultures for maps, role-models and alternative ways of living, we often find images of our society that are shaped by hidden, controlling forces. By naming, revealing, tracking, playing, making, subverting and transforming the tools, circumstances and figures that give rise to current crises, we enlarge the debate and extend our freedoms.

* Important note. *Dr Hairy In...* is NOT a critique of socialised medicine and so we include a disclaimer: “The creators of this piece would like to point out that they all work in the National Health Service and are completely devoted to it.”).

Events

Free public play, games, making and discussion run alongside the exhibition.

3 Keys - *The River Oracle* with *The Hexists* is a game of chance, and divination in association with *Moving Forest, Act 0* (www.movingforest.net). It attempts to invoke the relationship between the divinatory functions of our contemporary 'influencing machines' (cybernetic systems and game theory using data-mining, data profiling and data protection) and traditional magical ones, creating new machines in the process. Using tools such as cards, dowsing, stick throwing to interpret phenomena in the landscape, historical and current, 'readings' can be cast, allowing associative action, language and thought to determine what might happen in the future, to create a path, an artwork.



The Witches and *3-Keys* workshop at Furtherfield Gallery, *The Hexists*, 2012

Summer board games and talks about the 1791-1804 Haitian Revolution, will be led for two Saturdays by Class Wargames' Dr Richard Barbrook and Fabian Tompsett in conversation with the artist Kimathi Donkor about his subversion of Napoleonic imagery accompanied by an afternoon playing Guy Debord's *The Game of War* and Richard Borg's *Commands & Colors*, two Napoleonic-era military strategy board games. In a short film by Ilze Black, Dr Richard Barbrook and Fabian Tompsett interview Donkor about the work.



Playing Guy Debord's *The Game of War*, Class Wargames

Dave Miller's Finsbury Park Radiation Walk will reveal the mobile phone radiation levels to which we are exposed on a daily basis. Participants will measure radiation levels, GPS positions on a large map of the area, creating a collaborative artwork (poster sized map of local radiation).

Olga P Massanet develops *Technologies of Attunement*. These are machines, interfaces and contraptions of any kind that allow two bodies to tune into each others rhythms. P. Massanet has been working **with Thomas Cade Aston** to build a custom made VLF antenna to monitor ionospheric disturbances caused by solar storms. For this exhibition they invite makers and thinkers to participate in a creative sprint and come up with ideas on how to make these disturbances felt. Whether it's a device, a visualisation, a sonification, or a poem, participants will design interfaces to tune into some of the most powerful forces that permeate our world.

About the Artists

Rachel Baker (The Hexists)

Rachel is a network artist who collaborated on the influential irational.org. Her art practice explores techniques used in contemporary marketing to gather and distribute data for the purposes of manipulation and propaganda. Networks of all kinds are “sites” for Baker’s public and private distributed art practice, including radio combined with Internet (Net.radio), mobile phones and SMS messaging, and rail networks.

Kayle Brandon (The Hexists)

Kayle is an inter-disciplinary artist/researcher, whose work is sited within the public, social realm. She predominantly works in collaborative and collective fields; a working method which informs much of her ethos around the making of art. Her main areas of interest are in the relationships between the natural and urban worlds and Human/Non-human relations. She investigates this field via physical intelligence, provocative intervention, observation, self-guided exploration and collective experiences.

Class Wargames

Class Wargames is an avant-garde movement of artists, activists, and theoreticians engaged in the production of works of ludic subversion in the bureaucratic society of controlled consumption. The members of Class Wargames are Dr. Richard Barbrook, author and senior lecturer in the Department of Politics & IR at the University of Westminster; Rod Dickinson, artist and lecturer at University of the West of England; Alex Veness, artist and co-founder of Class Wargames; Ilze Black, media artist and producer; Fabian Tompsett, initiator of London Psychogeographical Association and author; Mark Copplestone, author and figure designer; Lucy Blake, Software developer; Stefan Lutschinger, lecturer, artist and researcher; and Elena Vorontsova, World Radio Network and journalist.

Kimathi Donkor

Kimathi lives and works in London. He attained his B.A. at Goldsmiths and an M.A. at Camberwell College of Art, both in Fine Art. In 2011 he received the Derek Hill Award painting scholarship for the British School at Rome; and in 2010 his paintings were exhibited in the 29th São Paulo Biennial, Brazil.

IOCOSE

IOCOSE has been working in Italy and Europe since 2006. It organises actions in order to subvert ideologies, practices and processes of identification and production of meanings. It uses pranks and hoaxes as tactical means, as joyful and sound tools. IOCOSE thinks about the streets, Internet and word of mouth as a battlefield. Tactics such as mimesis and trickery are used to lead and delude the audience into a semantic pitfall.

Dave Miller

Dave is a South London based artist and currently a Research Fellow in Augmented Reality at the University of Bedfordshire. Through his art practice Dave draws out the invisible forces that make life difficult. His work is about caring and being angry, as an artist. His art enables him to express feelings about the world, to attempt to explain things in a meaningful, yet subjective way, and make complexed information accessible. Recurrent themes in his work are: human stories, injustices, contentious issues and campaigning. Recently he has been very bothered by the financial crisis.

Laura Oldfield Ford

Laura lives and works in London. She studied at the Slade School of Art and completed her MA Painting at the Royal College of Art. She has exhibited extensively including Rokeby and Hales galleries in London, Savage Messiah takes over Late at Tate Britain, The Arnolfini, Bristol, De Appel Amsterdam and the Goethe Institute, New York. She has also recently been commissioned by Art Review. She is currently working on new projects for the Shenzhen Sculpture Biennial in China, the 2012 Gwangju Biennial and the show 'Desire Paths' at the Caja Madrid in Barcelona. A compilation of her zine 'Savage Messiah', which documents her psychogeographic drifts through London, is available on Verso books.

Edward Picot

Edward was born in 1958. He lives in Kent with his dog, wife and daughter, not necessarily in that order. He earns his living as a Practice Manager in a doctor's surgery, and in his spare time he does creative things – usually at the low-tech end of the new media spectrum. He started the *Dr Hairy In...* series – humorous short puppet-videos about a fictional doctor, closely based on his own experiences of working in the NHS – in 2010.

Olga P Massanet

Olga is a media artist and researcher working as co-editor on the Furtherfield website and developing and delivering workshops for the Zero Dollar Laptop project and Furtherfield's Outreach programme. Olga is currently pursuing a practice-based PhD at Goldsmiths. Her research project looks into assemblages of sunlight, human bodies and machines. She is particularly interested on subtle modes of communication across bodies of radically different nature. She looks at the ways in which electronic circuits, computational systems, endocrine processes and neurological happenings intermingle. The tools she develops are speculations about the undercurrents of body communication.

Thomas Cade Aston

Thomas is an emerging sound artist and electronic musician based out of London, UK and Toronto, Canada. His composition, production and performance work explores the dark and meditative fringes between technical, cerebral and somatic experience. Recent work includes ambient electronic compositions for Space Video (*Turbulence/Revised Projects-Vancouver*), an interactive soundscape for A Place to Reflect (*Nuit Blanche-Toronto*) and a highly anticipated electronic A/V performance at NewFormsFestival 11 (Vancouver). Thomas is busy at play in the spectrum, pursuing an MA in Interactive Media at Goldsmiths College, UK and readying for the launch of his debut LP *Greenwich Mean Time* with Hybridity Music this summer.

YoHa

Graham Harwood and Matsuko Yokokoji - YoHa (English translation 'aftermath') have lived and worked together since 1994. YoHa's graphic vision, technical tinkering, has powered several celebrated collaborations establishing an international reputation for pioneering critical arts projects. Harwood and Yokokoji's co-founded the artists group Mongrel (1996-2007) and established the MediaShed a free media lab (2005-2008). In 2008 they joined Richard Wright to produce *Tantalum Memorial* shown in 9 countries and 15 cities over 4 years. In 2010 YoHa produced *Coal Fired Computers* before embarking on a series of works about the lived logics of database machinery including *Invisible Airs*, *Data Entry* in 2011 and *Endless War* in 2012.

More about Furtherfield

Co-founded by Ruth Catlow and Marc Garrett in 1997, Furtherfield provides platforms for art, technology and social change. Furtherfield is now a dynamic, creative and social nerve centre where upwards of 26,000 contributors worldwide have built a visionary culture around co-creation – swapping and sharing code, music, images, video and ideas.

Furtherfield Gallery, formerly HTTP, has established an international reputation as London's first dedicated gallery for networked and media art, hosting regular exhibitions and public events since 2004. With the support of Haringey Council the gallery is now based at McKenzie Pavilion in the heart of Finsbury Park.

Furtherfield Gallery

Furtherfield Gallery opening hours

Open Thu-Fri 2-6pm, Sat 11am-6pm

Free public play, games, making & discussion

Please check our website for schedule

Free admission to exhibitions and events

Furtherfield - a living, breathing, thriving network

www.furtherfield.org - for art, technology and social change since 1997

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