

Division of Labour

1 - 10 December 2016

Open Saturdays, 12-5pm or by appointment

Concluding Rogue Project Space's 2016 artistic programme, Division of Labour invites four artists to respond to the place for industry as Manchester seeks to re-brand itself as a place for presentation, leisure and professional habitation. Curated by Rogue studio member **Lucy Harvey**, new works by **Robin Megannity**, **Jenny Steele**, **Jenny Walker** and **Helen Wheeler** explore the place for artistic, industrial and commercial production as the city enters a monumental shift in identity.

The artists' social function and place has informed new work by Rogue studio member **Robin Megannity**. Using the processes and media commonly associated with traditional and contemporary art production he examines the transformation of incidental objects through the deliberate and painstaking process of artmaking. Responding to the abstraction of ideas and the mythology of the artist in contemporary art history Megannity's work illustrates why artistic communities are a soft target for urban planners who seek to estrange the complexities of artistic production from the presentation and commodity value of the finished artwork.

The disparate relationship between knowledge-based practice and production has informed **Craigiehall to Brackenfell, The Green Room & Vaudeville** and **Hella, Arcadia to Dunoon** by Rogue member **Jenny Steele**. Informed by research into the influential Edinburgh Weavers and Printers between the 1920-40s, Steele has explored an approach to production that closely unified the artist with manufacture, resulting in challenging modernist textiles which were available to the mass market. The boundaries between fine art, decorative art and consumer culture have become increasingly distinct and now operate within hierarchical relationships which fluctuate dependent on their audience.

In **What Was Is No Longer, Glass Shades for Electric Light** and **The Art of Broken Pieces**, **Helen Wheeler** has responded to the appropriation of Manchester's industrial legacy for commercial and residential space. Through archival research into the former Percival Vickers glass factory in nearby Ancoats, Wheeler explores the historical pastiche of Manchester's Victorian identity which is being embraced alongside contemporary deindustrialisation in varying states of success.

The city's expansion also threatens the overlooked and often marginalised industries which practice on its hinterlands. In **The Land Beyond**, **Jenny Walker** considers the daily triumphs over adversity existing in these seemingly desolate spaces in search of an authentic Mancunian identity. As part of her enquiry into the nearby Mayfield development site Walker has invited community focused architecture practice **architecture:unknown** to exhibit The Mayfield Imaginarium. The Imaginarium is a socially engaged project designed to stimulate discussion about the social function and case for diversity within the multi-million-pound redevelopment of The Mayfield Development Site.

"City diversity itself permits and stimulates more diversity" states Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). Displacing industry and production from the city centre will have a detrimental impact not just on the artists, labourers and businesses who work here, but also on the vibrancy of the cityscape. Manchester's aspiration for an increasingly homogenised landscape puts the city in grave danger of losing its true identity.

Artist Biographies - Division of Labour

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Robin Megannity

Originally from the North West, Robin Megannity studied BA Fine Art in Cardiff. Currently based in Manchester Robin has had solo exhibitions at Bureau Gallery, Manchester and Studio Gallery, New Mills. Recent group exhibitions include a series of collaborative events titled *Pleasure Islands*, the first being held at Artwork Atelier in Salford and the second at London Scottish House in Manchester.

www.robinmegannity.com

Jenny Steele

Steele has exhibited widely in the UK and abroad. She is currently Artist in Residence at University of Central Lancashire. Recent commissions include Courtyard Commission for Grundy Art Gallery (2016) and Finding Treblinka for Staffordshire University (2015). Residencies include In Certain Places (2012, Manchester School of Art (2012) and 501 Artspace, Chongqing, China (2011). Recent solo exhibitions include 'An Architecture of Joy' at The Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool (2016), 'Looking Back | Moving Forwards', InCertainPlaces, Preston (2016) and 'The Fair', Glasgow Open House Art Festival (2015). Upcoming exhibitions include a site specific exhibition at The Midland Morecambe (2017). Shortlisted for the Jerwood Drawing Prize 2012, Jenny Steele is a Goldsmiths MFA (2007) and Duncan of Jordanstone (2002) graduate.

www.jennysteele.co.uk

Jenny Walker

Jenny Walker is a Manchester based artist, educator and creative advisor. Her research focuses on understanding and interpreting place through local, regional, and social historical narratives, and the role creative interpretation can play in public and community engagement with these subjects.

Previously she was a senior lecturer at Manchester School of Art and has extensive experience of delivering live student projects with historical themes.

She is currently creative advisor to The Bradford Pit Project and is developing new live student projects with Manchester School of Art as an external partner.

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Helen Wheeler

Winning the 2013 NADFAS North West Bursary Award for Fine Art allowed Wheeler to continue with her studies at Manchester School of Art, where she graduated in 2014 with a Distinction in MA Fine Art. Recently Wheeler has exhibited in several shows, including the Manchester Contemporary, represented by Manifest Arts, and was delighted to be awarded Frist Prize in the 2016 Bankley Open Call.

www.cargocollective.com/helenwheeler

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