

MARKET FORCES

ELLIE HARRISON

***1 NOVEMBER - 17 DECEMBER 2011
VANE, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE***

EXHIBITION GUIDE

MARKET FORCES

‘Market Forces’ showcases work by Glasgow-based artist and provocateur Ellie Harrison. Created over the last two years in response to turmoil within the global economic system, these three installations - *A Brief History of Privatisation* (2011), *The History of Financial Crises and Transactions* (2009) - aim to illustrate and explore aspects of the recent history of capitalism and our role within it.

‘Market Forces’ is introduced by Laurie Penny in the specially commissioned text below and is presented at Vane as part of the 2011 Wunderbar Festival (31 October - 6 November 2011).

INTRODUCTION BY LAURIE PENNY

Ellie Harrison is an artist who looks at the numbers. As artist in residence at Wunderbar, her solo exhibition at Vane and collaborative projects during the festival tread the line between the sublime and the ridiculous, between creation and activism. It’s all intended to get visitors to understand how our world is shaped by everyday engagements with the micro-detail of a macro-financial system that is steering humanity over a cliff of crisis - with a healthy dose of self-irony.

What’s the best way to illustrate the succession of stock-market crashes that have given the lie to aggressive free-market finance? With a lot of popcorn machines going off at once. What’s the best way to comment on the alienation of post-Fordist labour? By pushing a lot of office chairs through central Newcastle (*Desk Chair Disco*, Friday 4 November 2011). How best to help your audience understand the impact of privatisation upon British public services?

With some neon lights and lots of vibrating massage chairs and the implicit invitation to sit down, communicate and laugh about the absurdity of it all. What's the best way to animate the relentlessness of contemporary consumerism? With an old phone that rings every time you buy something, and a Coke can that can dance. Of course.

What makes Harrison so intriguing as an artist is the melange of serious thought and silliness that goes into her installations. For all its playfulness, there is something in Harrison's body of work that smacks of obsession. From her work *Eat 22* in 2001 documenting everything she ate over the course of a year (eat22.com) to this year's 'Market Forces' exhibition, her art is replete with an urgency to get the numbers, to compile facts and figures, to look for patterns and re-create them. There is an anxiety here about art and production, about the weight and process of being a human, and given the focus of Harrison's work - climate change and the crisis of capitalism, work and alienation, money and consumption - that anxiety is poignantly appropriate. Harrison's efforts to source all of the materials for her installations sustainably sets her apart from artists who believe that creative production can be separate from capitalist consumption. One wonders, given the not inconceivable possibility of another stock-market crash before this exhibition closes, where she will sustainably source a twelfth popcorn machine at short notice, but by then we'll probably be too busy clearing up the mess to mind.

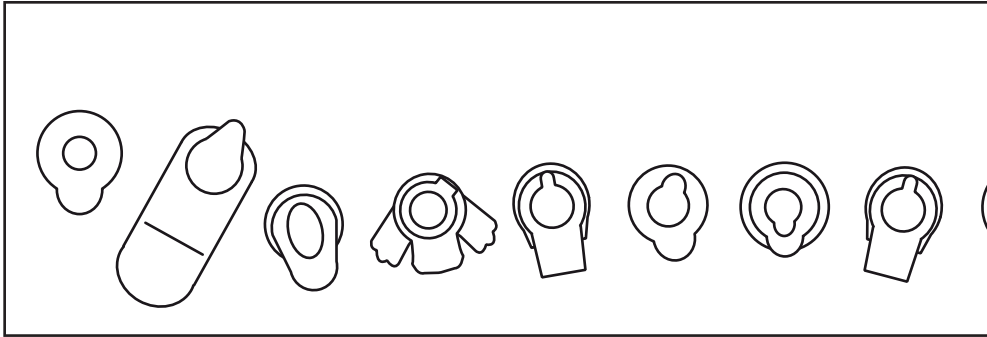
And in these nervous times, we need artists like Harrison more than ever - people who live their politics, who combine abstract creativity with focused work outside the studio, like Harrison's campaign to 'Bring Back British Rail': a heartfelt call for an end to private interest in public transport (bringbackbritishrail.org). This is a new kind of installation art, constructed from the detritus of ordinary lives, inclusive and inviting, even where the invitation is to sit in an enormous vibrating massage chair and think about service provision. And if you think that's silly, bear in mind that there are some people who still believe that deregulated free-market finance is a sensible way to run an economy.

Laurie Penny is an author and journalist who writes regularly for the New Statesman and The Independent. Her first book 'Meat Market: Female flesh under capitalism' was published by Zero Books in 2011. pennyred.blogspot.com

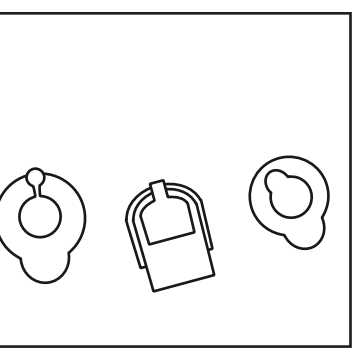
THE HISTORY OF FINANCIAL CRISES

The five hours that Vane is open to the public each day (12:00 - 17:00) is used to represent the century 1909 - 2009. The popcorn machines are activated one-by-one at the times which correspond to the date of each financial crisis.

- 1929: Wall Street Crash
- 1937: US Recession
- 1973: UK Stock Market Crash
- 1987: Black Monday
- 1990: Japanese Asset Price Bubble
- 1992: UK Black Wednesday
- 1997: Asian Financial Crisis
- 1998: Russian Financial Crisis

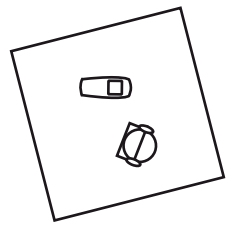


crisis
Russian Financial Crisis
2000: Dot-Com Bubble
2007: The Chinese Correction
2008: Global Credit Crisis



TRANSACTIONS

During the exhibition, Ellie Harrison sends a text message to the mobile phone on the plinth every time she makes a financial transaction (large or small). The phone's alert triggers the dancing Coke can.

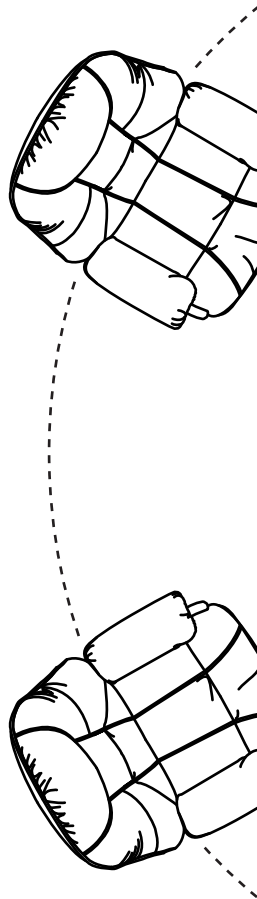


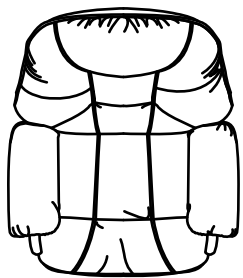
A BRIEF HISTORY OF PRIVATISATION

The six electronic massage chairs are used to represent six key 'public' services or industries: Health, Railways, Gas, Electricity, Telecoms and Post.

Over the course of 15 minutes, the neon-style display scrolls through the dates from 1900 - 2011, changing colour to reflect the political party in power.

The massage chairs switch on at the dates when the corresponding service or industry was taken into public ownership and switch off again at the date when/if it was privatised.

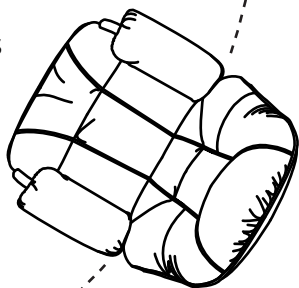




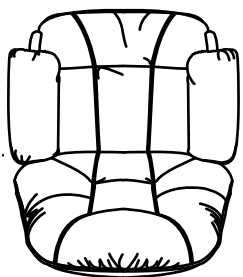
Post



Health



Railways



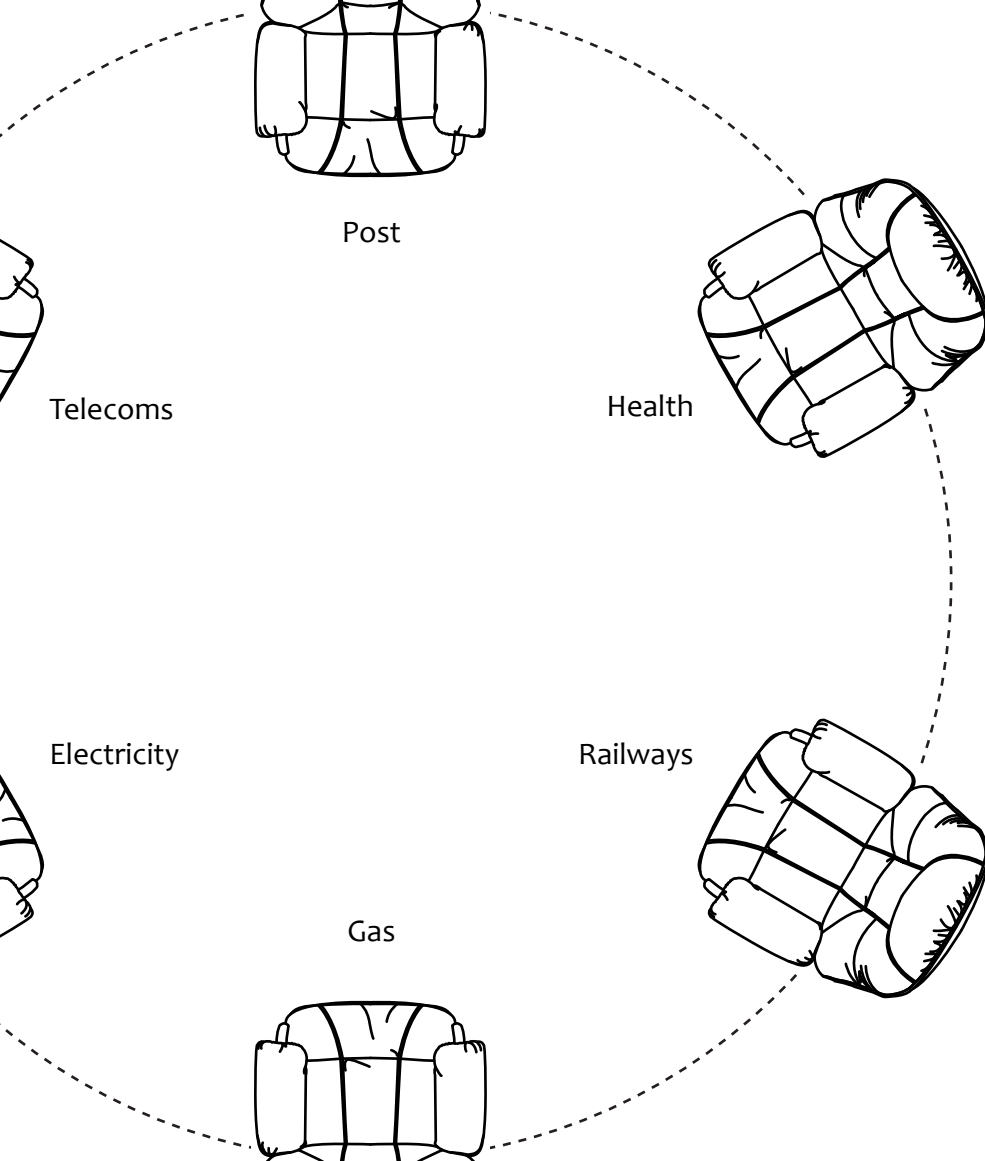
Gas



Telecoms



Electricity





Ellie Harrison's other projects at Wunderbar 2011:

Josie Long / Ellie Harrison: Opening Event

A special introduction to *A Brief History of Privatisation* at Vane by comedian Josie Long as part of the Wunderbar 2011 launch event

Monday 31 October 2011, 19:00 - 22:00

wunderbarfestival.co.uk

Work-a-thon for the Self-Employed

A call to fellow freelancers to unite in an attempt to break the world record for 'the most self-employed people working together in the same place at the same time, over the course of a normal 9-to-5 day'

Thursday 3 November 2011, 9:00 - 17:00

Lit & Phil, 23 Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1SE
selfemployed.me.uk

Desk Chair Disco

A happy collision between the worlds of work and play brings you the roller disco with a difference inside this empty office unit

Friday 4 November 2011, 18:00 onwards

Pandon Building, Trinity Gardens, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 2HJ
deskchairdisco.com

Vane

First Floor
Commercial Union House
39 Pilgrim Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 6QE

Market Forces
Ellie Harrison

1 November - 17 December 2011
Wednesday - Saturday, 12:00 - 17:00

vane.org.uk

ellieharrison.com

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