

**"THE BEST
MINI GOLF COURSE
IN VENICE"**

la Biennale di Venezia

56. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte
Eventi Collaterali

DOUG FISHBONE'S LEISURE LAND GOLF



**FEATURING: JOHN AKOMFRAH, YARA EL-SHERBINI,
DOUG FISHBONE, ELLIE HARRISON, CANDICE JACOBS,
HETAIN PATEL, YINKA SHONIBARE MBE,
LINDSAY SEERS AND EYAL WEIZMAN**



*THE EM15 TEAM WELCOMES YOU
TO ITS INAUGURAL PRESENTATION
AT LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA!*

EM15 is a collective of artist-led organisations and institutions from the East Midlands region of the UK: Beacon Art Project, Lincolnshire; One Thoresby Street, Nottingham; New Art Exchange, Nottingham; QUAD, Derby; Nottingham Trent University and The University of Nottingham.

EM15 has commissioned two projects for its premiere presentation at the La Biennale di Venezia: **Doug Fishbone's Leisure Land Golf**, a fully playable mini golf course, and **Sunscreen** an online project featuring new digital commissions in the form of screen savers from 40 artists with a connection to the East Midlands region; free to download from sun-screen.uk.

Both projects respond to EM15's curatorial approach to the 56th International Art Exhibition – The Leisure Principle. The Leisure Principle considers the concept of tourism and trade as a metaphor to explore current global economic complexities through one of the defining principles of leisure; that of consumption and how this consumption shapes our identity.

DOUG FISHBONE'S INTRODUCTION TO LEISURE LAND GOLF

According to historians of the sport, mini golf enjoyed its golden age around the year 1930. The US Department of Commerce reported 25,000 courses in the United States operating in 1930, with as many as 15,000 being built in that year alone – New York City boasted 150 courses built on rooftops of skyscrapers. Two to three million people played the sport daily, generating more than a million dollars in revenue.[/] The sport quickly caught on in Europe, with one course in Italy in 1931 opened by none other than Crown Prince Umberto himself. As befits an industry with so much competition, some course designers resorted to extremes in order to attract players. In Long Island, NY one golf hole featured a live bear cub in a cage, who would play with the golf balls that were putted through his enclosure. Some courses even featured live orchestras.

Why was the sport so popular? Tim 'Ace Man' Davies and John 'Big Top Ted' McIver suggest "at a time in American society when the polarisation between rich and poor was growing ever greater, these courses proved to be socially inclusive and egalitarian – more so than any "real" golf course. Millions of Americans who wanted to play a round of golf found it either too expensive or exclusive."^{//} Yet even the plutocrats could not resist, with tycoons such as the Vanderbilts enjoying their own mini golf courses on the grounds of their estates.

As with all fads, especially one born during a time of global recession and mounting political instability, it rapidly went bust. But it has never gone away, and the sport remains a popular leisure pastime the world over.

A mixture of spectacle and whimsy for an idle, jaded audience, and a curious legacy of the Great Depression, the game seems a fitting distraction for our own era, as we await the next systemic financial collapse – and, according to some, perhaps, the earth's next extinction level event. However, we can take solace in the realisation that the world may be going to hell in a hand basket, but with putters in hand, at least we can go down swinging.

And so without further ado, ladies and gentlemen,
we invite you to enjoy to *Doug Fishbone's Leisure Land Golf*.

START

[/] Gelders, Jesse F., 'Why Midget Golf Swept the Country', Popular Science Monthly, November, 1930
^{//} Quoted in www.crazygolfmuseum.com/miniature_golf_history.html

YINKA SHONIBARE MBE

FOOTBALL CLOUD



Shonibare explores the complexity of contemporary African identity in his art practice and the power relation between the west and Africa. Football is the perfect metaphor for the economic relationship between ex-African colonies and the west. The football pitch becomes the site where the struggle for economic survival is played out by the African football player for both himself and his team. This explosive tension is represented here by the sculpture of a nuclear bomb mushroom cloud composed of footballs. The individual footballs are decorated with Dutch wax batik textiles which are signatory of the artist.



Yinka Shonibare MBE was born in 1962 in London and moved to Lagos, Nigeria at the age of three. Having described himself as a 'post-colonial' hybrid, Shonibare questions the meaning of cultural and national definitions. His trademark material is the brightly coloured Dutch wax batik fabric bought at Petticoat Lane market in London. The fabric was inspired by Indonesian design, mass-produced by the Dutch and eventually sold to the colonies in West Africa.

yinkashonibarembem.com

HETAIN PATEL

COLOURED PROCESSOR



Hetain Patel's squatting figure is an ongoing symbol in his practice. A characteristically eastern posture, in India it is only adopted by the working and lower classes. The displacement of this posture to Europe in a game of mini golf – itself a working class leisure activity – frames industrial cultural exchange, specifically production lines involved in import/export. Here the player becomes a complicit cog in the machine, hitting the ball through the system, hand cranking the conveyor belt, and listening to the sound of their golf ball pin-balling through the figure's torso, digested and expelled all too quickly before it is picked up and taken on to its next experience. Meanwhile the squatting figure waits for the next player, trying to blend in chameleon-like, with its surroundings.



Patel's multidisciplinary practice uses the body, often his own, to disrupt common yet restrictive notions of identity. Committed to creating dialogues between minority and mainstream cultures, he employs humour and imitation in various forms to transform something seemingly unfamiliar into something surprisingly familiar. Patel is represented by Chatterjee & Lal and is a Sadler's Wells New Wave Associate Artist.

hetainpatel.com

YARA EL-SHERBINI

PUTTING A HOLE IN
THE WALL



Yara El-Sherbini continues to use play as a mode to explore social and political contentions. *Putting a Hole in the Wall* invites players to navigate their golf ball through a series of inflexible and concrete-clad checkpoints, boundaries and border controls in a bid to finally putt the ball through the division wall. El-Sherbini replicates various aspects of the day-to-day reality within contested territories under occupation. This allows the player an almost birds-eye view of how an area has been strategically designed, exploring separation barriers as an historical and universal means to control and limit the movement of people worldwide.



El-Sherbini's playful interdisciplinary practice uses popular culture and humour to engage audiences into questioning social and political systems of power and influence. She appropriates familiar objects, games and social events, to invite audiences to take a look at the society that they live in, often revealing underlying belief systems, drawing audiences into a series of questions that ask 'how do we come to know what it is that we know'. El-Sherbini is represented by La Caja Blanca (lacajablanca.com) and is an Artsadmin Associate Artist.

yaraelsherbini.com

LINDSAY SEERS

CIRCASSIAN
BEAUTY



Lindsay Seers' golf hole for Venice features a figurehead upside down and pregnant, being attacked by two enormous snakes. The figure is Princess Salme of Zanzibar, daughter of a Circassian concubine in the Sultan's harem. Salme became pregnant by a German merchant and was smuggled out of Africa by a British sea captain to Europe; subsequently she was used as a pawn by both the British and Germans in the carving up of East Africa. The golf ball's journey up a steep ramp, over a painting of an anamorphic British naval captain, finds its way through the snakes' bodies. When it is finally spat out, it bounces off a rock painted with an image of a 'Circassian Beauty' from PT Barnum's freak show. You should be able to score a hole in one – you may win, but at what price?

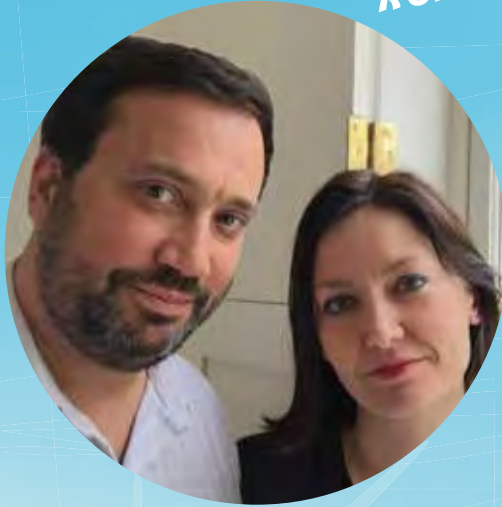


Lindsay Seers works and lives in London. She studied at the Slade School of Fine Art, and at Goldsmiths College. Her works are in a number of collections including Tate, Arts Council, Artangel and the collection of MONA, Tasmania. She has won several prestigious grants and awards such as the Sharjah Art Foundation Production Award; Le Jeu de Paume Production Award; the Paul Hamlyn Award and the Derek Jarman Award.

lindsayseers.info

EYAL & INES WEIZMAN

*THE BRIDGES OF
KÖNIGSBERG*



Based on one of the greatest problems in the history of mathematics, this game takes place on a model of 18th century Königsberg in Prussia, now the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad. The River Pregel breaks the city into several land areas connected by seven bridges. The mathematical conundrum and by extension the aim of the game, is – starting at the central Island – to move through the city, crossing every bridge only once and end back where you began. Immanuel Kant, Königsberg's most famous resident, walked this path daily while conceiving of his 'critiques', but in 1735 Leonhard Euler had already shown the problem unsolvable. His demonstration paved the way to the invention of the mathematics of topology and networks theory. The problem was temporarily solved by the RAF in WWII when it demolished two bridges.



Eyal and Ines Weizman are architects based in London. Eyal is Professor of Spatial and Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London and Director of Forensic Architecture, a forensic agency in which artists, architects, filmmakers and media scholars undertake counter-forensic work aimed at state institutions. Ines is Professor at the Bauhaus University, Weimar, where she directs the Bauhaus-Institute of History and Theory of Architecture and Planning.

forensic-architecture.org & uni-weimar.de/bauhaus-institut

EKOW ESHUN

LEISURE

In June 1764, a young James Boswell, heir to the estate of Auchinleck in Scotland, and future biographer of Samuel Johnson, set off on his Grand Tour of Europe. Continental travel was seen as an obligatory stage in the development of a young man of wealth. But, as one scholar has pointed out, it was also “an excuse to acquire a veneer of European manners, make business and political contacts, and experiment sexually in a more permissive society.” Boswell took to all three goals with relish. He was received at the courts of minor German nobility, visited Rousseau and Voltaire in Switzerland and conducted liaisons with women of every rank, from actresses and courtesans to the wives of the aristocracy and Rousseau’s mistress Thérèse Le Vasseur.

For generations afterward young men disported across Europe with what might be called Boswellian glee. From Byron and Shelley in Italy to Hemingway and Fitzgerald on the French Riviera, the activities of the young and rich provided ample evidence for the existence of what the economist Thorsten Veblen defined as “the leisure class”; a social group whose money and status enabled them to devote their time exclusively to the pursuit of pleasure in “conspicuous exemption from all useful employment.”

The leisure class were an elite. But increasingly through the 20th century it seemed that bountiful amounts of leisure time might become the prerogative of the many not just the few. Keynes predicted that the working week would shrink to 15 hours as wages and living standards rose across society. The notion of expanded leisure opportunities for all reached its apogee in the 1970s under futurologists like Alvin Toffler, who predicted that advances in technology, communications and the service industries would usher in a new post-industrial economy in which workers were liberated from drudgery and manual labour.

Reality has, of course proved bitterly different. The post-industrial age that Toffler hailed with such optimism has led to the deregulation of labour laws, the casualisation of the work force and the outsourcing of industry to the developing world. We live now within an intractable global system in which we work more, not less, than ever and the pursuit of leisure has become another form of commodified enterprise.

Think of the elaborate economic apparatus that surrounds activities such as, say, playing video games, going for a cycle ride through town or following

friends on Facebook. Or how a product like the Apple Watch turns the act of running or walking into a quantifiable task, a service that promises to “learn your activity and fitness levels” and “use that information to... suggest personalised all-day activity goals. It even provides custom reminders to encourage you to achieve them.”

As Marx put it so cogently on observing the mechanisms of the industrial revolution: “The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.”

Perhaps then, the only way to pursue leisure in the 21st century is to experience it as something radically different to merely the absence of work? Maybe it involves a shunning of industry of all kinds and a willingness instead to float, to encounter, to surrender to what may be. This seems to be the principle informing the novels of a raft of contemporary writers. In Teju Cole’s *Every Day is for the Thief*, Jenny Offill’s *Dept* and Tao Lin’s *Shoplifting from American Apparel*, solitary, often unnamed narrators drift through their surroundings, observing the scurrings of the world around them with a detachment that occasionally teeters over into contempt. “You know those people that get up every day, and do things,” says Luis, the protagonist of Lin’s novel. “And are real proactive. And like are getting things done, and never quit their jobs. Those people suck.”

The rewards of disengagement from purposeful activity can be glimpsed most strikingly in the writing of WG Sebald. Walking the coast of south east England or travelling through Mittel Europe, Sebald frequently falls into a profound reverie, a condition that allows him to re-encounter the ordinary world as a place of thrilling, numinous transformation. Here is leisure, the simple act of walking and thinking, reconfigured. Not as work. Not as the absence of work. But as a freedom from order or process; an autonomous zone of personal liberty in which “everything one sees in a dream seems, paradoxically, much clearer. A pond becomes a lake, a breeze becomes a storm, a handful of dust is a desert, a grain of sulphur in the blood is a volcanic inferno.” In the 21st century, leisure is a state of mind.

Ekow Eshun is a writer and cultural commentator. He is the former director of the ICA and chairman of the Fourth Plinth Commissioning Group. He appears regularly on TV and radio and writes for publications including The Observer, The Independent and The Financial Times. His book, Black Gold of the Sun, was nominated for the Orwell prize for political writing.

JOHN AKOMFRAH

*THE TURKEY SHOOT
GALACTICO*



A Turkey Shoot is a military term to describe a moment where the enemy is caught off-guard or out-gunned to the point of creating an unfair victory. Here John Akomfrah likens this scenario to the alarming levels of shootings by police in the USA of unarmed African Americans. An anonymous figure clothed in a hoodie, submits himself to the approaching golf players. Beyond the reference to disenfranchised youth, this particular garment represents the one worn by Trayvon Martin, the 17-year-old African American who was fatally shot by a neighbourhood watch volunteer in 2012. After his killing, the picture of Martin adorned in his beloved hoodie was used by those campaigning for his justice. Through his tragic death and his newly iconic image, Martin inadvertently became a symbol of sacred martyrdom that inspired American society into challenging the nation's criminal justice system. By referencing the victim as a Galactico – meaning someone from another galaxy or alternately, a footballer with superstar status – Akomfrah is celebrating Martin's human value, and highlighting the relationship between racism and perceptions of difference.



CANDICE JACOBS

PLEASURE SEEKERS



Candice Jacobs is an artist exploring the meaninglessness of aspiration within affective labour and cognitive capital frameworks. For this project, Jacobs makes reference to an ongoing research thread within her work, that of the seductive use of capital and gender in popular television game shows. Since the 1950s television game shows have combined seduction and desire with greed and competition, often giving away prizes that relate to gender and escapism. You could win big bucks or the holiday of your dreams, a cafetiere, a fridge freezer or those crystal glasses you never knew you wanted. Thinking specifically about cognitive capitalism, Jacobs uses the game show as a public outlet of exploitation, to manipulate the collective experience and shape our aspirations to achieve the ultimate desires of the human condition.



Jacobs uses exhibition making as a way to explore both on and offline contexts for display, alongside the production of moving images, 3D printed and cast sculptures, digital images, product design, graphic signage and environments that support and develop individual and collective ideas.

meaningfulmeaninglessness.info



In 2012, the cruise ship Costa Concordia was driven onto the rocks off the coast of Tuscany by its captain, who was cavorting on the bridge with a beautiful young woman at the time of impact. As the disaster unfolded, he promptly abandoned ship, leaving his passengers to fend for themselves. Like few other symbols, the modern cruise ship embodies the messy contradictions at work in capitalism's production and delivery of the leisure experience – rigid class divisions, out-of-touch leadership that falls apart in a crisis, off-shore set-ups designed to dodge the tax man, indifference to its workers and to its impact on the environment. The whole arrangement is funded by money freely paid, from people needing a holiday and unaware what such voyages actually drag in their wake, or perhaps just unconcerned.



Doug Fishbone is an American artist living and working in London. His work is strongly influenced by the rhythms and gestures of comedy and humor – he was described by one critic as a “stand-up conceptual artist” – and examines some of the more problematic aspects of contemporary life in an amusing and disarming way. He is particularly interested in questions of relativity and perception, and how audience and context influence interpretation.

ELLIE HARRISON

LIFE RAFT



As the final hole in the Leisure Land Golf course, Ellie Harrison's *Life Raft* – a scale map of the UK floating in the adjacent canal – offers a safe haven to immigrant golf balls that can make the treacherous crossing. In a typically playful way, Harrison's work hints towards a somewhat darker time in the future, when the continued rise in global temperatures creates a vast number of 'climate refugees' desperate to escape to more temperate climes. *Life Raft* takes inspiration from the floating weather map used on ITV's *This Morning* in the '80s and '90s.



Ellie Harrison (b. London 1979) is an artist and activist based in Glasgow. She studied Fine Art at Nottingham Trent University, Goldsmiths College and Glasgow School of Art. Harrison's work aims to investigate, expose and challenge the absurd consequences of our capitalist system – particularly climate change – and to explore the impact free-market forces are having on our society and our individual day-to-day lives. As well as making playful, politically-engaged works for gallery contexts and the public realm, Harrison is also the coordinator of the Bring Back British Rail campaign – which strives to popularise the idea of re-nationalising of the UK's public transport system.

ellieharrison.com

EM15

EM15 is a collective from the East Midlands region of the UK comprising of Beacon Art Project, One Thoresby Street, QUAD and New Art Exchange in association with the academic partners Nottingham Trent University and The University of Nottingham. The aim of EM15 is to inspire a new generation of artists, curators and audiences, to represent diverse cultures and perspectives, and to create long-lasting impacts for the arts ecology in the Midlands and throughout the UK.

em15venice.co.uk

New Art Exchange

New Art Exchange (NAE) Nottingham is the Executive Producer for EM15 and the largest gallery in the UK dedicated to culturally diverse contemporary visual arts. Committed to stimulating new perspectives on the value of diversity within art and society, NAE instigates new models of working to ensure a more inclusive and culturally diverse arts ecology. This activity considers curatorial methods, the way art spaces are owned and accessed, and how the talent of future leaders, artists and producers are developed.

Past and forthcoming exhibitors at NAE include: John Akomfrah, Rashid Rana, Zineb Sedira, Hurvin Anderson, Nari Ward, Christian Marclay, Elizabeth Price, Leo Asemota, Zarina Bhimji and J.D 'Okhai Ojeikere.

nae.org.uk

QUAD

QUAD is an international centre for engagement in contemporary art and film, based in Derby. The year round programme focuses on major exhibitions, professional practice for artists, mass participation, commissions, independent film and the creative use of emergent technologies. QUAD is a charity focused on intercultural dialogue through supporting diverse audiences to engage, develop skills and contribute to contemporary culture. Major projects include FORMAT International Photography Biennale and the UK's largest international portfolio review.

derbyquad.co.uk

One Thoresby Street

One Thoresby Street is a multi-functional artist studio and gallery complex in the heart of Nottingham's Creative Quarter, dedicated to providing experiences that impact and influence contemporary art in the UK and beyond. One Thoresby Street has been built on a history of knowledge exchange, collaboration and collectivity which have taken place over a period of 10 years between over 100 artists. We create unique social experiences shaped by a shared economy of knowledge, to provide new forms of collaboration, stability, economic exchange and critical debate within Nottingham.

onethorsebystreet.org.uk

Beacon Art Project

Beacon Art Project is a not for profit visual art organisation based in rural Lincolnshire, curating events and projects, and commissioning artists to produce work for non-gallery spaces – usually heritage sites. Beacon's mission is to question how contemporary art practice may reside in a rural context, offering a new perspective through collaboration between artist, audience and institution.

beaconartproject.org

EM15 Academic Partner

Nottingham Trent University has an internationally recognised reputation for the provision of high quality art and design education, with educational roots since 1843. Our alumni include many acclaimed artists that illustrate the impact of our education globally.

ntu.ac.uk/art

EM15 Digital Engagement Partners

The University of Nottingham nottingham.ac.uk

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FINISH

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Ellie Harrison portrait, screen shots
from *The Other Forecast* (2013),
a collaboration with artist John O'Shea:
youtube.com/otherforecast

Yinke Shonibare MBE portrait,
James Mollison 2014

Lindsay Seers portrait © Lindsay Seers
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Doug Fishbone portrait © Stuart Leech

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EM15 Curatorial Team
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OF MINI GOLF"***



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