

# **ELLIE HARRISON**

## **BORN IN LONDON IN 1979, LIVES AND WORKS IN GLASGOW**

Ellie Harrison's practice can be seen as emerging from her ongoing attempt to strike-a-balance between the competing roles of 'artist', 'activist' and 'administrator'.

She uses skills and strategies drawn from each of these perspectives to create playful and engaging work, in-and-out of art world contexts, which aims to expose and challenge the systems which control and rule over our lives, be they political, ethical, social or economic.

Her work takes a variety of forms including performance spectacles, interactive installations, collaborative projects, political campaigns, media interventions, lectures, websites and coach trips.

In 2009 she founded the Bring Back British Rail campaign and in 2010 she became the first individual artist to openly publicise an Environmental Policy on her website.

She is the secretary of The Artists' Bond - established in 2011 as the successor to the Artists' Lottery Syndicate - and is a full member of the Scottish Artists Union. From 1 July 2011 - 1 March 2012 she is in receipt of an Artistic Development Bursary from Creative Scotland.

**[ELLIEHARRISON.COM/ENVIRONMENTALPOLICY](http://ELLIEHARRISON.COM/ENVIRONMENTALPOLICY)**

# ELLIE HARRISON

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### Education

- 2010 Master of Fine Art, Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow
- 2003 Postgraduate Diploma in Fine Art, Goldsmiths College, London
- 2001 BA (Hons) Fine Art, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham

### Solo Exhibitions

- 2011 Market Forces, Vane, Newcastle
- 2011 A Brief History of Privatisation, Watermans, London
- 2010 The History of Financial Crises, Market Gallery, Glasgow
- 2010 General Election Drinking Game, Star & Shadow, Newcastle
- 2010 Vending Machine, Glasgow Film Theatre and touring
- 2009 Confessions of a Recovering Data Collector, Viewpoint Gallery, Plymouth College of Art
- 2007 I've Been Watching You, Broadway, Nottingham and touring
- 2005 Gold Card Adventures, Art on the Underground, London
- 2004 Sneezes 2003, Lakeside Arts Centre, Nottingham
- 2002 Eat 22, 291 Gallery, London

### Group Exhibitions

- 2011 Converse/Dazed Emerging Artists Award, London
- 2011 Ha Ha Road, QUAD, Derby & Oriel Mostyn, Llandudno
- 2011 Left to My Own Devices, Inspace, Edinburgh Art Festival
- 2010 Up Periscope (performance), Whitechapel Gallery, London
- 2009 Transfers & Actions (two-person), Mejan Labs, Stockholm
- 2008 A Process of Living, The City Gallery, Leicester
- 2007 Medicine Now (permanent), Wellcome Collection, London
- 2007 OEen Group Show, Israels Plads, Copenhagen
- 2006 Day-to-Day Data, Danielle Arnaud Contemporary Art, London, Apex Gallery, Portsmouth & Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham
- 2004 The End is the Beginning is the End, Colony, Birmingham
- 2003 Treat Yourself, Science Museum, London
- 2002 Minus 20, Gasworks, London

## **Collections**

2007      Eat 22, Wellcome Collection, London

## **Grants & Bursaries**

2011      Artistic Development Bursary, Creative Scotland  
2010      Alt-w Production Award, New Media Scotland  
2008      Leverhulme Scholarship for Master of Fine Art,  
            Glasgow School of Art  
2006      Arts Council England, Grants for the Arts  
2005      Arts Council England, Grants for National Touring  
2002      Arts & Humanities Research Council, Postgraduate Award

## **Residencies**

2011      Two Degrees: Art & Activism, Artsadmin, London  
2008      Braziers International Artists' Workshop, Oxfordshire  
2004      Transition, Art Programme at Victoria Baths, Manchester  
2002      LabCulture, Digital Arts Residency, Watershed, Bristol

## **Curatorial / Networking Projects**

2011      Artists Anonymous, CCA, Glasgow  
2007      Hen Weekend, De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea  
            ([henweekend.org](http://henweekend.org))  
2006      Day-to-Day Data, Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham and touring  
            ([daytodaydata.com](http://daytodaydata.com))

## **Publications**

2009      Confessions of a Recovering Data Collector, published by  
            Plymouth College of Art Press  
            ([ellieharrison.com/confessions](http://ellieharrison.com/confessions))  
2007      Platform for Art: Art on the Underground,  
            published by Black Dog  
2005      Day-to-Day Data, published by Angel Row Gallery  
            ([daytodaydata.com/publication.html](http://daytodaydata.com/publication.html))  
2003      Treat Yourself, published by Science Museum

# **ARTIST'S PROFILE**

**BY MARTIN HERBERT,  
PUBLISHED IN ART MONTHLY  
MAY 2011**

**[ELLIEHARRISON.COM/PRESS](http://ELLIEHARRISON.COM/PRESS)**

# Art

MONTHLY

MAY 2011 | No 346 | UK £4.40 US\$7.40

**Mary Kelly**

Interviewed by Maria Walsh

**Criticism v Critique**

JJ Charlesworth

**Sharjah Biennial**

Kathy Battista • Kathy Noble

**Ellie Harrison**

Profile by Martin Herbert





# Ellie Harrison



*Financial Crises 2009*

*Greed 2002*  
detail



Let's say you want to raise public awareness of the colossal slow-motion civic disaster – to be polite about it – that has been the sell-off of the UK's public utilities since the mid 1980s. What might be required? According to Ellie Harrison's exhibition 'A Brief History of Privatisation', recently on show at Watermans Art Centre in London, the somewhat sardonic answer is: free massages, free crisps and free rides in a children's coin-operated vibrating car. In the venue's darkened main space, a circle of six electronic massage chairs – each representing a public utility (health, railways, gas, electricity, telecoms, post) were synchronised to a DVD projection that, over half an hour, ticked progressively through the years of the last century, the colours flipping primarily between blue and red according to which party was in power. At the date when one of the public services was created, the relevant massage chair powered soothingly on; when it was privatised, the seat switched off again. By the end, of course, only the 'health' chair was still thrumming away; outside, in the real world, the coalition government appears hell-bent on privatising this one too.

Elsewhere were other synced devices: in the lobby, a vending machine programmed to release free crisps whenever search terms relating to the economy appeared in headlines on BBC News's RSS feed; and, parked in the cafe, the aforementioned kids' ride, which became 'free' under the same criterion. Here was an opportunity to discover what might make a casual viewer pay attention to politics (a prospect that swiftly inverted itself as a critique of indolent consumerism: is this really all we want – calorific snacks, massages, infantilisation?) and a demonstration of how the intangible contours of history might memorably and probingly be visualised. The issue of how data is sorted, structured and made meaningful is a key one of our age – see David McCandless's 2010 book *Information is Beautiful* for examples of desiccated facticity turned gorgeously indelible – and has been a central aspect in the London-born, Glasgow-based Harrison's art since her student days. For *Greed*, 2000, aged 21, she went to New York and photographically documented every meal she ate over four days, weighing in and out; two years later, in *Eat 22*, 2002, she followed the same food-diary programme for a year. But

Harrison's practice is far from a straightforward inquiry into how, in order to represent partisan partialities or not, to make one's voice heard.

Driven as she is by a politicised conscience – 'A Brief History...' is nothing if not a sincere, remonstrating response to the annexing of every part of our lives by market forces – Harrison is equally aware of, and absorbs into her art, the problematics and contradictions that attend operating simultaneously as an artist, activist and administrator. The first category, she notes, has an egotistic, look-at-me undertow; the second reflects her morality; the third, underwriting her long-term interest in data, she sees as a function of growing up as a guinea pig of the target-driven culture of neoliberalism. In this sense, projects such as Harrison's recent Artist's Lottery Syndicate – established in July 2010 and convoking some 40 artists in an attempt to win the lottery over the course of a year – are not just wry responses to cuts in arts funding but articulations of the multiple hats an art practitioner today might be required uneasily to wear.

In 2009, Harrison self-published *Confessions of a Recovering Data Collector*, a slim book which operated as a knowing sayonara to an art practice founded on what the introduction described as 'time-consuming, self-imposed projects which both attempted to document, but also plagued, her daily life and routine'. For *Gold*

*Card Adventures*, 2002, she recorded the 9,236km she had travelled on London transport over a year; for *Tea Blog*, 2006-09, she spent three years recording her thoughts while drinking the caffeinated beverage. As the subject of an administrated society, she had absorbed the poison, it seems, and become what Harrison described in the book – in an ostensible session of ‘Hysterical-Historical Praxis Therapy’ with Sally O’Reilly – as ‘the administrator of my own life’. Even though the tessellated project might operate as a critique of her cultural context, she had to give it up. The giving up, of course, serves as a para-artistic statement in itself. Harrison is a tail-biting thinker par excellence; see *My Head’s Swimming*, 2003, a record of her thoughts while doing laps – among them ‘how boring my thoughts must appear’.

Since her *Confessions*, Harrison has been a moving target, her projects dodging between art and non-art, practical purpose and, maybe, parody of bureaucratic process. *Work With Me*, 2007-08, for example, was ‘an international campaign to help find a long-term work partner for Ellie Harrison’, involving a website with extended CV, testimonials, a ‘manifesto’ and an invitation to get in touch. As part of her manifesto, Harrison outlined her belief that ‘an artwork may take any form and use any media that the artist finds most effective for conveying their ideas’, a familiar enough formulation, but one that accrues motive force in a practice that has taken in numerous projects that seem at once extramural and sympathetic to Harrison’s official art. Her ‘Bring Back British Rail’ campaign, for example, launched in 2009, is avowedly not art – Harrison says she pinned a note to her studio wall reminding herself of that fact – but it obviously chimes with ‘A Brief History of Privatisation’ and functions as part of a process of self-definition as an artist, in terms of what matters to her. The discussion group she is currently organising among Glasgow-based artists, ‘Artists Anonymous’, held at the city’s CCA – a ‘support group which aims to provide a safe space for its members to speak candidly, honestly and confidentially to others about the anxieties and stresses of their professional lives’ – may not be art per se. But given that so much of Harrison’s art revolves around what it means to be an artist, and given that, in conversation, she self-consciously identifies even her compulsive work habits with the larger culture’s latent approval of workaholic careerism, ‘Artists Anonymous’ is hardly dissonant with her primary practice.

As such, part of the radical heft of her art lies in its suspension of familiar boundaries, and its suggestion that only such a beclouding of habitual distinctions might allow the artist to operate outside the short-circuiting procedure that identifies art as art and then prevents it from touching on real life. If her non-art verges on art, the inverse also feels true. On 13 June, at Toynbee Hall in London, Harrison is presenting *Work-a-Thon*, an ‘attempt to set a world record for the most self-employed people working together (on their own individual projects) in the same place at the same time, over the course of a normal 9-5 day’ – see [www.selfemployed.me.uk](http://www.selfemployed.me.uk). The participants will be at once alone and together, in what amounts to a blindingly logical, hopeful sidestep of the atomising that attends the self-employed – a rising, barely-on-the-radar, fragile demographic in the UK, as Harrison notes, lacking ‘the luxury of employee benefits or the concept of workplace solidarity’. *Work-a-Thon* is at once a symbolic and potentially literal counterforce, aiming at modelling or realising community. Is it art? Personally, I’d rather not know. ■

MARTIN HERBERT is a critic based in Tunbridge Wells, Kent.



*Confessions of a Recovering Data Collector* 2009

*Work With Me* 2007-08

# **INTERVIEW WITH ELLIE HARRISON**

**BY ALEX GORDON,  
PUBLISHED RMT NEWS  
SEPTEMBER 2011**

**BRINGBACKBRITISHRAIL.ORG**



# RMT *news*

Essential reading for today's transport worker

# SAVE OUR RAILWAYS

**Rally and Lobby of Parliament**

**12.30pm October 25 2011**

Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, London

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**SAVE OUR BUS  
INDUSTRY**  
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[www.rmt.org.uk](http://www.rmt.org.uk)

# BRING BACK BRITISH RAIL!

RMT president Alex Gordon interviews artist/political activist Ellie Harrison, founder of the Bring Back British Rail campaign and asks RMT members to sign up and get involved

Earlier this year I became one of over 3,000 people to sign up to an intriguing social media campaign 'Bring Back British Rail'

[www.bringbackbritishrail.org/](http://www.bringbackbritishrail.org/) BBBR, which uses the British Rail 'double arrow' logo in reverse, says that it will turn the logo the right way round when railways return to public ownership.

Perhaps it's a good thing they are careful how they use a symbol that is still a trademarked logo, since BBBR stickers are popping up all over the place these days on trains, stations and staff uniforms. The BBBR website also does a nice line in T-shirts and even Oyster card holders!

BBBR founder, Ellie Harrison describes this new internet-based movement as "the collective voice of disgruntled rail passengers and disheartened rail employees, calling for a newly unified national rail network run for people not profit".

Ellie also points out that BBBR is a 'meme', which is to say a vehicle for carrying political ideas, symbols or practices throughout society.

"As soon as someone hears the name of the campaign they immediately know exactly what is about," she points out "and the call to Bring Back British Rail appeals to people in a more instinctive, gut-level way than more deliberately 'political' demands for better rail regulation, or renationalisation of private operators", despite the fact it means exactly the same thing.

"This is not 'art'," she insists with conviction, "this is a campaign to get our railways back from greedy privateers.

"It's obvious that people are angry and frustrated with the way the railway system has been run in this country since it

was dismantled and sold off in the '90s, and recent extortionate train fare rises have only made the situation worse.

"I began the campaign two years ago after enduring years of delayed, over-priced and over-crowded journeys around the UK. I finally snapped.

"It was clear from my experience as a passenger, that having so many competing franchises running separate sections of the network was both efficient and unsafe.

"It resulted in people like me getting a raw deal, while the shareholders in private train companies, who probably don't even use the trains, swanned off with our public transport subsidies," she says with gusto.

And Bring Back British Rail



really has struck a chord with people using and working on the railways. RMT joined forces with BBBR and the Campaign for Better Transport only last month for a mass protest outside Waterloo station as huge rail fare increases of up to 13%





were announced.

It coincided with new RMT-commissioned research carried out by Just Economics, which revealed that privatisation has bled £6.6 billion out of the rail industry since 1997 - with a forecast that a further £6.7 billion will be ripped off in the next ten years as train operating companies are given a green light to print money under proposals in the McNulty Rail Review.

Just Economics report author Ellis Lawlor said that figures showed that there are costs to privatisation, not just in social outcomes but also in financial terms.

"Fare increases at this time will put further pressure on cash-strapped families around the country. 'More of the costs of the subsidy to rail are being transferred to passengers who are getting little in return by way of improved services,'" she said.

All this sums up the shared anger and frustration expressed by BBBR founder, Ellie Harrison.

"The East Coast franchise came into public ownership in

2009 after National Express - the company running the franchise at the time - realised it wasn't quite the money-spinner that they'd hoped.

"The point the campaign is making is that running a railway shouldn't be about making money.

"Having a good, sustainable transport system is about providing a valuable service to the people of Britain and not about running a business.

"The East Coast renationalisation proved it is possible, realistic and could actually save us money.

"But the truth is that the greatest hurdle we face is not financial, but rather getting the politicians who allowed the privatisation mantra to permeate public policy in the first place, to admit that they were wrong," she says.

As part of the BBBR campaign, supporters regularly post RMT press releases on the Facebook page to expose the madness of rail privatisation and the greed that drives it.

"Yesterday someone uploaded an RMT statement revealing a surge in profits by private train operator Go-Ahead, confirming

that franchising of UK rail services remains a licence to print money.

"Go-Ahead received subsidies of over a quarter of a billion pounds in 2010/11 on two franchises.

"Southeastern received £218.7 million, for leaving thousands stranded in the snow last winter, and London Midland got £67.3 million, while the company is currently trying to cut jobs in ticket offices and half the frequency that their trains receive deep-cleaning" she explains patiently.

Ellie is excited about working with RMT to step up the fight for a return to public ownership with railways run as a public service, free from the unadulterated greed and exploitation that marks out rail privatisation in Britain.

"Rail privatisation is a one-way ticket to the bank for train operators while passengers face a price hike on tickets of eight per cent, and in some cases more, early next year.

"How can that be right?" she asks.

Ellie recently put on a solo show at a London gallery called 'A Brief History of Privatisation' and her work takes a variety of forms including performance spectacles, installations,

projects, political campaigns, media interventions, lectures, websites and even coach trips.

From September 2002 to 2003 she documented the total distance of all the journeys she made on London Transport in a year (9,236 kilometres), using her Gold Card, yearly travel pass. Her website details each of the 1,495 journeys she made and her 'Gold Card Adventures' exhibition at Piccadilly Circus Underground Station in 2005.

To date nearly 10,000 people have registered a 'like' for Bring Back British Rail on Facebook, so why not join them and become a 'friend' of BBBR to not only express your support but actively by joining other RMT members to spread the campaign and sharing information 'collectively'.

BBBR's latest campaign is an e-petition to the Department for Transport on the government's website, which reads simply: "Re Nationalise Railways - Sign this petition if you would like the railways across Britain to be re-nationalised and merged into a single organisation." So far 3,368 have signed the petition, which has a target of 100,000 by the closing date of 4 August 2012.

If you don't know how to use Facebook yet, phone a 'friend' ■



# **EARLY WARNING SIGNS**

## **JUNE 2011**

Created for Artsadmin's Two Degrees festival, these signs utilise the brazen marketing techniques of capitalism, not as a tool to sell us more, but as a tool to simply remind us of the consequences of our consumption.

In the interests of her new mantra 'reduce, reuse, recycle your art', Ellie Harrison is now facilitator of a lifelong project to tour the four signs to different public locations, so they can continue to 'promote' their cause. The 2012 host venues will be Site Gallery in Sheffield, Dundee Contemporary Arts and the CCA and Trongate 103 in Glasgow.

To apply to be a host venue in 2013, please visit the website below.

Pictured left installed on Commercial Street, London in June 2011.

Photo: Ellie Harrison

**[ELLIEHARRISON.COM/EARLYWARNINGSIGNS](http://ELLIEHARRISON.COM/EARLYWARNINGSIGNS)**



CLIMATE

CHANGE





# A BRIEF HISTORY OF PRIVATISATION 2011

An installation which uses six electric massage chairs to re-enact changes in UK public service policy over the last century.

Each chair represents a key 'public' service or industry: Health, Railways, Electricity, Gas, Post or Telecoms. They are automatically switched 'on' at the dates in which their corresponding service or industry was taken into public ownership and switched 'off' again at the date when / if they were privatised.

Photo: Ben Wickerson

## **Exhibition History:**

12 March - 2 May 2011, Watermans, London

4 August - 4 September 2011, Inspace, Edinburgh Art Festival

1 November - 17 December 2011, Vane, Newcastle

**ELLIEHARRISON.COM/PRIVATISATION**



1914

# **WORK-A-THON FOR THE SELF-EMPLOYED EST. 2011**

Work-a-thon for the Self-Employed is a new world record classification initiated by Ellie Harrison in 2011.

It aims to encourage isolated freelance workers like herself to come together to attempt to break the record for 'the most self-employed people working together (on their own individual projects) in the same place at the same time, over the course of a normal 9-to-5 day'.

The world record of 57 self-employed people was first set at Toynbee Hall on Monday 13 June 2011 as part of Artsadmin's Two Degrees festival (pictured left).

On Thursday 3 November 2011 a second event at Newcastle's Lit & Phil Library as part of Wunderbar festival will attempt to better this.

To register to take part, please visit the website below.

Photo: Toby Smith

**SELFEMPLOYED.ME.UK**



**WORK-A-THON  
FOR THE  
SELF-EMPLOYED**

**LONE WORKER  
UNITE!**



# **ARTISTS' LOTTERY SYNDICATE**

## **1 JULY 2010 - 1 JULY 2011**

A year long experiment for which 40 UK based artists joined forces to attempt to win the jackpot on The National Lottery. Pictured left are members of the syndicate posing with the total annual winnings at the closing party on 1 July 2011.

The Artists' Lottery Syndicate were:

Bruce Asbestos, John Beagles, Dave Beech, Melissa Bliss, Oliver Braid, Mike Chavez-Dawson, Paul Chisholm, Ruth Claxton, Susan Collis, Hannah Conroy, Rhys Coren, Sarah Doyle, Gair Dunlop, Jeanie Finlay, Anna Francis, FrenchMottershead, S Mark Gubb, Ellie Harrison, Russell Herron, Tony Kemplen, Dean Kenning, Paul Knight, Kwong Lee, Low Profile, Peter McCaughey, Ruth McCullough, Samuel Mercer, Liz Murray, Hayley Newman, Adele Prince, Maayke Schurer, Elaine Speight, Marek Tobolewski, Thomson & Craighead, Rich White, Penny Whitehead & Daniel Simpkins, Ben Woodeson, Caroline Wright, Jian Jun Xi and Yoke & Zoom.

Photo: FrenchMottershead

**ARTISTSLOTTERYSYNDICATE.CO.UK**





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# **FAIR GAME**

## **8 - 11 SEPTEMBER 2011**

Devised specifically for the context of the 'art fair', Fair Game is an endurance performance which sees Ellie Harrison gamble her entire artist's fee for the project (£300) with fair goers, by setting-up and running a hoopla stall within the fair grounds.

Punters are invited to take one throw each, free of charge, to attempt to claim some of the artist's earnings as their own. (Ellie keeps as wages all the bank notes which are not won by the end of the fair).

Fair Game was originally commissioned by Market Gallery for Vault Art Glasgow from 8 - 11 September 2011 (pictured left).

Photo: Kate V Robertson

**[ELLIEHARRISON.COM/FAIRGAME](http://ELLIEHARRISON.COM/FAIRGAME)**





The Natural  
Green Bag

# **GENERAL ELECTION DRINKING GAME 6 MAY 2010**

An endurance performance devised by Ellie Harrison to coincide with the 2010 UK general election, featuring Oliver Braid, Ellie Harrison, Paul Knight and Harriet Plewis.

Four 'players' represented the main political parties and attempted to drink one shot of lager for every seat in parliament their party won, live as the results came in throughout the night.

General Election Drinking Game was performed at Star & Shadow in Newcastle in front of an audience (pictured left) from 11pm - 4am. Live coverage was webcast throughout the night as an alternative commentary on the election results. It is now fully archived on the website below.

Photo: Ilana Mitchell

**ELLIEHARRISON.COM/  
GENERALELECTIONDRINKINGGAME**







# **FIREWORKS DISPLAY**

## **26 JUNE 2010**

This performance spectacle is a one-woman attempt to re-enact a chronology of 'the history of revolution' over the course of the last 360 years via the medium of pyrotechnics.

First performed at the Closing Party of the Glasgow School of Art Master of Fine Art Degree Show at the Glue Factory on 26 June 2010 between 11pm - midnight.

Photo: Paul Knight

**[ELLIEHARRISON.COM/FIREWORKSDISPLAY](http://ELLIEHARRISON.COM/FIREWORKSDISPLAY)**



# **DESK CHAIR PARADE ELLIE HARRISON & ADELE PRINCE 2009**

A participatory performance devised by Ellie Harrison & Adele Prince (Sports Day), in which a group of willing volunteers - office workers, shoppers and gallery goers alike - freewheel through the streets on ordinary office chairs.

Originally commissioned by Castlefield Gallery in Manchester as part of their 25th Anniversary celebrations on 2 August 2009.

A second Desk Chair Parade and a new 'Desk Chair Disco' takes place on Friday 4 November 2011 in Newcastle as part of Wunderbar festival. For more information and to take part, please visit the website below.

Photo: Ellie Harrison





21155

77766

88043

1000

Kitchens

25% Off

# VENDING MACHINE 2009

An installation for which an old vending machine has been reprogrammed to release free snacks only when search terms relating to the economy, the recession and the 'cuts' make the headlines on the BBC News feed.

Whilst seemingly an act of generosity - gifting free food at moments when further doom-and-gloom is reported - the Vending Machine also hints towards a time in the future when our access to food may literally be determined by wider political or environmental events. We may not be able to access what we want, when we want, at the touch of a button.

Vending Machine was one of the outcomes of Ellie Harrison's period of residency at Plymouth College of Art in 2009. It was programmed by Ben Dembroski in PureData and Python with production assistance by Jason Mills.

From 2009 - 2012 Vending Machine has toured extensively across the UK (see full list of venues below). It completed a 'feedback loop' by appearing on BBC Two's 'The Bubble' TV show, the BBC Four series 'The Beauty of Diagrams', on BBC News North West and BBC Radio Scotland.

## **Exhibition History:**

23 April - 30 May 2009, Plymouth College of Art  
9 October - 15 November 2009, Space Station Sixty-Five, London  
15 March - 10 April 2010, Abandon Normal Devices, Lancaster  
15 April - 27 June 2010, Glasgow Film Theatre  
12 March - 2 May 2011, Watermans, London  
12 August - 23 October 2011, QUAD, Derby  
3 December 2011 - 11 March 2012, Oriel Mostyn, Llandudno

**ELLIEHARRISON.COM/VENDINGMACHINE**







# THE HISTORY OF FINANCIAL CRISES 2009

An installation in which the turbulent history of capitalism over the last century is re-enacted each day by a row of popcorn making machines.

Each machine represents one of the eleven major financial crises of the last century, beginning with the infamous Wall Street Crash of 1929. As the day goes on, the popcorn machines are activated one-by-one at times corresponding to their dates within the century.

For a matter of minutes an air of chaos envelops the space as popcorn explodes frantically onto the floor. Then all goes quiet again... until the next crisis occurs.

Originally commissioned by Mejan Labs, Stockholm for the two-person show 'Transfers & Actions' with Casey Reas (pictured left).

Photo: Ellie Harrison

## **Exhibition History:**

16 April - 7 June 2009, Mejan Labs, Stockholm  
7 - 28 August 2010, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin  
7 - 28 November 2010, Market Gallery, Glasgow  
30 April - 1 May 2011, Trajector Art Fair, Brussels  
1 November - 17 December 2011, Vane, Newcastle

**ELLIEHARRISON.COM/FINANCIALCRISES**



# TRANSACTIONS 2009

A performance / installation developed to accompany 'The History of Financial Crises' installation in order to make visible the individual's day-to-day complicity in the system of capital.

For the duration of exhibition, Ellie sent an SMS message to the phone installed in the gallery every time she made an economic transaction. The Coke can dances with joy every time a message is received.

Photo: Ellie Harrison

## **Exhibition History:**

16 April - 7 June 2009, Mejan Labs, Stockholm  
12 May - 31 July 2009, Catalyst Arts, Belfast  
7 - 28 August 2010, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin  
7 - 28 November 2010, Market Gallery, Glasgow  
30 April - 1 May 2011, Trajector Art Fair, Brussels  
1 November - 17 December 2011, Vane, Newcastle

**ELLIEHARRISON.COM/TRANSACTIONS**





# TOYTOWN 2009

The sister installation to 'Vending Machine', this piece features a dilapidated 1980s kid's car ride which has been reprogrammed to start up and offer free rides when search terms relating to the economy, the recession and the 'cuts' make the headlines on the BBC News RSS feed.

Photo: Ellie Harrison

## **Exhibition History:**

16 May - 23 May 2009, Newbery Gallery, Glasgow School of Art

12 March - 9 October 2011, Watermans, London

1 November 2011 - 30 April 2012, Star & Shadow, Newcastle





# **'THE FINISHED ARTICLE'**

**BY MOIRA JEFFREY,  
PUBLISHED IN SCOTLAND ON SUNDAY  
6 JUNE 2010**

An interview / feature published in Scotland on Sunday as one of the outcomes of Ellie Harrison's 'Press Release' project.

For her Master of Fine Art Degree Show at Glasgow School of Art, Ellie Harrison made the conscious decision not to make any new 'work', in favour of instead transforming her studio into a 'press office' and attempting to directly solicit the media coverage which she would then use as her exhibit.

**[ELLIEHARRISON.COM/PRESSRELEASE](http://ELLIEHARRISON.COM/PRESSRELEASE)**

# THE FINISHED ARTICLE

Ellie Harrison plans to present this page as a work of art in a gallery. Is she breaking boundaries, or is it a gimmick too far? *Moirra Jeffrey* reports

**I**N Ellie Harrison's studio in Glasgow School of Art, a pristine office with a pin-board that might belong to a corporate drone. Pinned up alongside complex graphs and motivational phrases – including injunctions to “read, think and experiment” – is a print-out of her monthly diary.

Harrison is a young artist, just finishing her Masters of Fine Art course at Glasgow School of Art and the diary is full of ominous-sounding words like “final assessment” and “degree show installation”. The problem is that although her room is a testament to her hard work – there are ranks of posters of recent exhibitions, two books she has published, and shelves of volumes on moral philosophy – she hasn't completed a central aspect of her degree show and she wants me to do it for her.

The deal is this: at Glasgow's CCA, Harrison would like to present her work on a pristine white plinth, but it's not a sculpture. It's a newspaper article about her and her work.

“I've been working on disparate projects and wondered how to bring them together,” she says. “I'm interested in ethics and motivation, the different pushes and pulls of being an artist. I thought my individual projects weren't capable of talking about this wider issue and that this would be a way of concluding this two-year period.”

She argues that many artists regard degree shows as a chance for their work to be exposed to the media and buyers – a means to an end, in other words, rather than art for art's sake. Her idea is to turn that process into the artwork itself. Now she must convince me the project is worth it. Is it a critique of the careerist structure of the art system or merely a symptom of it? I'm deeply cynical: is this simply a last-minute cop-out for a promising artist in her early thirties who has already established a reputation outside formal education?

Her work about the credit crunch – a vending machine that spits out free packets of crisps every time the BBC news feed uses a recessionary cliché and her live election night webcast General Election Drinking Game – were one-liners that made it into the broadsheets. But at the same time they were brilliant parables for our disaffection from politics: the clichés, the time-wasting, the inability to take urgent action.

Harrison, who studied at Nottingham Trent University and then at London's Goldsmith's, has spent the past two years analysing her personal motivation, torn between the selfishness of her era and the necessity for altruistic action that issues like climate change demand.

She defines herself as Thatcher's child, born in 1979; her work seems driven in part by guilt about the aspirational world that Thatcherism ushered in. She was brought up in Ealing by lifelong lefties but says she found the hate figure on the TV curiously inspirational.

I look again at the graph on the pin-board; she explains that it shows the career trajectories of two of the world's most prominent women. The long blue line shows the life and career of Thatcher, the yellow one is Angela Merkel. The short green line is Harrison. Can she measure up?

She is torn, she says. “It's a continual sort of battle; perhaps I'll never be able to resolve this conflict.” That's why she spends a day a week on her internet campaign to bring back British Rail, a kind of symbolic resistance



to the rolling privatisation that has been a permanent backdrop to her adult life, “a beacon for my altruistic side”, and reaction to hours spent on the train with three different operators between Glasgow and Nottingham.

Aspects of Harrison's work are narcissistic. Her obsessive self-documentation, for example, has seen her photograph every meal she ate for a whole year for her project Eat 22. At the same time, such projects evoke the seismic shifts in recent culture: the information overload, the endless CCTV and internet monitoring. Finally I realise what the studio, with its colour-coded Post-It notes really reminds me of. It might be an office in Wernham Hogg, the workplace of one David Brent.

Harrison is driven, obsessive about detail and she's serious. Eat 22 might have been a rather silly Facebook page; instead it's now on display in the headquarters of the scientific research body the Wellcome Trust. She is clearly self-aware. Every time I bring up a criticism of her strategies, a nagging suspicion, she pulls out a paragraph of her dissertation that touches on the issue. She has got there before me on each one of them.

So here it is, Ellie, your degree show. You've won me over. I'm not sure if you're going to like it, but I really hope that your examiners do. ♦

The Glasgow School of Art MFA degree show is at CCA and The Glue Factory, Glasgow, from Saturday until 26 June  
[www.ellieharrison.com](http://www.ellieharrison.com)



Ellie Harrison makes a statement against privatisation. Left, her vending machine artwork

**'I'm interested in ethics and motivation, the different pushes and pulls of being an artist'**

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# **‘ARTISTS IN A BID FOR SUCCESS WITH DIFFERENT TYPE OF DRAW’**

**BY PHIL MILLER,  
PUBLISHED IN THE HERALD  
29 MAY 2010**

An ‘exclusive’ news story about the Artists’ Lottery Syndicate published in Scotland’s The Herald newspaper as the first outcome of Ellie Harrison’s ‘Press Release’ project for her Master of Fine Art Degree Show at Glasgow School of Art.

**ARTISTSLOTTERYSYNDICATE.CO.UK  
ELLIEHARRISON.COM/PRESSRELEASE**





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## Artists in a bid for success with different type of draw

Syndicate hopes a secret formula will help them raise funds with lottery jackpot wins

### EXCLUSIVE

PHIL MILLER  
ARTS CORRESPONDENT

IT may be the first national artistic movement inspired entirely by cold, hard cash.

With government cuts, standstill budgets, the financial crisis and the ongoing recession, many young and established visual artists are facing a bleak financial future unless they get a lucky break.

But a new collective of UK contemporary artists - led by Glasgow-based Ellie Harrison, pictured - have decided to engineer their own luck, with a scheme which maximises their chances of winning large amounts of money on the various National Lottery draws.

To be launched nationally in July, the Syndicate, as they call themselves, will "strategically" play the lottery games using a mathematical system they believe increases the odds for the 40 players to win large amounts of money, which will then be shared equally.

The group of artists - including Harrison, who graduates from Glasgow School of Art's esteemed MFA course this summer, John Beagles, S Mark Gubb, who is representing Wales at the Venice Biennale, and the Becks Futures-nominated Hayley Newman - will purchase 44 lines on each of the two weekly UK Lotto draws, at £1 a ticket, and 36 lines on the weekly Euro-Millions which is £2 a ticket.

Each artist joining the Syndicate is therefore required to pay £4 a week for the duration of the year, or a total of £208 a year for each artist.

Each of the 44 lines they choose will use the same five Artists' Lottery Syndicate numbers, which are secret, with the sixth number on each line being unique to that ticket.

The numbers on a lotto ticket range from 1 to 49, so the remaining 44 numbers available will be entered on the lotto lines filled in by the artists.

This system, the Syndicate said, hugely increases the chances of winning the Lotto or Euro-Millions jackpots.

Harrison said the system means they will try to utilise the idea of luck, which has always played an

important part in artistic careers, as well as a new way to access Lottery cash which has, since its start in 1994, been a boon for the cultural sphere.

She added: "I had the idea for the Artists' Lottery Syndicate when it appeared that the glory days of arts funding which we witnessed under New Labour were drawing to a close.

"It seemed clear that artists would have to find new ways of funding their work and surviving in what was being referred to as a new 'age of austerity' for the arts.

"The Artists' Lottery Syndicate aims to be a speculative new way of acquiring funds for artists. I thought it could be a fun collective activity, which would act as a gentle critique of artist's relationships to the economy, as well as a potential money maker.

"It is a group of artists who are still aspirational, despite this time of economic doom and gloom, and who are coming together to support each other in their attempts to hit the jackpot. We're using a specially calculated combination of numbers to maximise our odds of winning prizes. At the end

### NUMBERS GAME:

Artist Ellie Harrison.  
Picture: Colin

of the year, each of the artists will receive a cheque for one-fortieth of the money we accumulate."

The Syndicate is being run by Harrison and its other members include MFA students and artists from Birmingham, Cardiff, Fife, Glasgow, Lancaster, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Nottingham, Plymouth, Preston, Stoke-on-Trent, Suffolk and Worcestershire.

It will initially run from July 1 this year to July 2011, but may be continued if it proves to be successful.

The GSA Master course has produced artists such as the Turner Prize-winning Richard Wright, Douglas Gordon and Simon Starling.

This year its graduation show is being held at the Glue Factory and the CCA in Glasgow, and runs from June 11.

### The big winners

• The odds of winning the jackpot with a single ticket are nearly 14 million to one, but for a group running 30 tickets the chances are better, at 466,666 to one. The individual prize each person takes will fall in proportion to this, however.

• Around a quarter of all jackpot wins are by syndicates, according to the National Lottery, but organisers warn would-be syndicate managers that they should sign contracts beforehand to avoid disputes.

• Issues such as whether or not to go public in the event of a win can be divisive, and even close friends are advised to set out ground rules in advance.

• Seven IT workers from Merseyside shared a £45m lottery jackpot in November last year, taking home more than £6m each, just two months after another group of nine friends, based at the Doon Inn in Blantyre, shared £4.5m.

• Five years ago a syndicate of six women at the Morrison Bowmore's bottling plant in Glasgow each won a £2.5m share of the total £15m jackpot.



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