

## PRESS RELEASE: 18 May 2010 The Artist with Many 'Hats'



General Election Drinking Game, Ellie Harrison, 6 May 2010

**Ellie Harrison** is not your conventional artist. For the last two years she has used the safety of her MFA studio at Glasgow School of Art as a headquarters from which to launch a number of hare-brained schemes, straddling the roles of artist, office worker and activist. Now, finally, she is about to graduate with a new work devised specifically for the context of the curious end-of-year art school tradition that is the degree show.

“For the final three weeks of term I’m transforming my studio into a press office”, said Harrison of the project **Press Release** for which she is attempting to directly solicit coverage from national newspapers. “I’m interested in exploring the perception of the degree show as a ‘showcase’, in which artworks are instrumentalised as the means of attracting further attention for their makers”. Her aim is to invert this process by displaying any articles that are published as a result of her efforts as her contribution to the MFA Degree Show at the CCA Glasgow from 12 – 26 June.

Harrison believes it should be the artist’s role to react to the context in which she finds herself – to raise questions about and challenge different aspects of our current social, political and economic order. “The secret to success”, she claims, “lies in the artist’s ability to switch between different ‘hats’” – to move between direct political action and more frivolous art world spectacle, in order to find the most suitable means of doing this. Whilst still a student at the art school she decided to make a stand against the continual privatisation of public services by launching the **Bring Back British Rail** campaign, which calls for “an end to private interest in public transport” and for “an improved, integrated national train network”. Over the last year she has appeared on national radio debates and in numerous interviews as the campaign’s spokesperson.

On 6 May, to coincide with the UK general election, she quite literally put on her 'drinking hat'. "After four months of being teetotal, I began to see the possibilities of using drunkenness as a way of commenting on life in 'Control Society' and so I devised and decided to take part in **General Election Drinking Game**" – an 'endurance performance' staged at the Star and Shadow in Newcastle. The game, which featured four 'players' representing the main political parties and attempting to drink one shot of lager for every seat in parliament they won, descended into a mess which seemed to befit the actual outcome in Westminster. Live coverage of the whole debacle was webcast throughout the night, providing an alternative commentary on the results.

As an immediate reaction to our new government's cuts on arts funding, this summer Harrison launches the **Artists' Lottery Syndicate** – a group of forty UK-based artists who are joining forces to play The National Lottery over the course of a year. As "a speculative new way of acquiring funds for artists", Harrison, in her new role as 'syndicate secretary', hopes they will be able to "utilise that element of luck which can play such an important role in an artist's career" in order to win the jackpot. People are invited to follow the fate of the syndicate via Twitter and Facebook.

This summer, residents of Glasgow may also strike it lucky (if on a somewhat smaller scale) by visiting the foyer of the Glasgow Film Theatre, as the cinema plays host to Harrison's installation **Vending Machine**. Rugged up to a specially designed piece of software, an old vending machine has been reprogrammed to spurt out free packets of crisps every time news relating to the recession makes the headlines on the BBC News RSS feed. As the new Chancellor prepares to wield the axe, visitors can soften the blow by grabbing themselves a free snack.

The end of the MFA course does not mark the end of Ellie Harrison's mission, as she continues to campaign hard and dream up new projects. But, by staging her new **Fireworks Display** – "a one-woman attempt to re-enact a chronology of the history of 'revolution' via the medium of pyrotechnics" – as the climax of the MFA Closing Party on 26 June at the Glue Factory in Maryhill, she certainly hopes to 'go out with a bang'.

#### Notes to Editors:

- Ellie Harrison is an artist based in Glasgow.
- She was born in the London Borough of Ealing in 1979.
- In 2010 she became the first individual artist to openly publicise an **Environmental Policy** on her website.
- Her new work **Press Release** forms part of the MFA Degree Show at the CCA Glasgow from 12 – 26 June 2010.
- The full archive of the **General Election Drinking Game** webcast will be screened each day as part of the MFA Degree Show at the Glue Factory.
- **Fireworks Display** will be staged at the MFA Closing Party at the Glue Factory on 26 June 2010 from 8pm – midnight.
- **Vending Machine** can be found in the foyer of the Glasgow Film Theatre until 27 June 2010.
- The official launch of the **Artists' Lottery Syndicate** will be held on 2 July 2010 at Arts Admin, Toynbee Studios, London from 8pm – midnight.
- For more information please visit: [www.ellieharrison.com](http://www.ellieharrison.com)