

PRESS RELEASE

A13

A multi-disciplinary exhibition on an urban archetype

Presented by the Architecture Foundation and The Wapping Project

4 June– 25 July 2004

Private view, 3 June at 7pm

Location:

Wapping Hydraulic Power Station, Wapping Wall, E1

Opening Mon-Sat noon – 10.30pm. Sundays noon – 6pm

An exhibition inspired by the A13 will be presented by the Architecture Foundation at The Wapping Project from 4 June 4 to 25 July. The exhibition will feature a range of multi-disciplinary artworks, films, and buildings.

The A13 runs from the Aldgate Pump in the City of London to Southend-on-Sea, by way of Limehouse, Dagenham and suburban Essex. At first sight the most dismal of thoroughfares, it exerts a powerful pull on the contemporary creative imagination. It is an inspiration for the writings of Iain Sinclair, the art of Jock McFadyen, Antony Gormley and Helena Ben-Zenou, the architecture of the rising Irish star Tom de Paor, the filmmaking of Chris Petit, the music of Susie Honeyman and Giles Perring. To these artists it is what Giverny was to Monet or Flatford Mill to Constable.

Now the A13 has acquired new significance as the central thoroughfare of the Thames Gateway, the immense area where the government and the Mayor of London propose to build a 'new city'. Here are focussed the government's hopes for sustainable urban regeneration. This is the most ambitious urban project in Britain, for at least a generation, and the A13 is to be its Champs Elysees, Via Appia or Route 66.

It is an archetype of road space: the in-between territory of habitation and movement that can be found in every modern city, from Tokyo to Lagos to Los Angeles. At the same time, it is unique. It brings together an ancient history of Romans, Saxons and Normans, with a contemporary landscape of displaced gangland, massive industrial interventions, and what Iain Sinclair calls 'aspirant Americana'.

The exhibition will present the A13 as the singular archetype of a universal condition, of something so familiar that we no longer notice it, yet secretly extraordinary. It will be an eloquent commentary on the contemporary city and a timely intervention in Britain's biggest planning debate.

The exhibition will do this through the words, artworks, films and buildings by the several artists lured by the attraction of the A13. It will combine existing work with new commissions in film and photography.

Participants to include:

Iain Sinclair, writer

Jock McFayden, artist

Helena Ben-Zenou, artist

Chris Petit, filmmaker

Antony Gormley, artist
Tom de Paor, architect
Susie Honeyman & Giles Perring, musicians

And work by:
Peter and Alison Smithson, architects
Erno Goldfinger, architect
Nicholas Hawksmoor, architect

The A13, everyone knows, is the future; the highway on which the sacred cities of the Thames Gateway will depend. With the blessing of government and mayor, the one thing on which they agree, brownfield swamps will witness the beginning of the process whereby London is turned inside-out.

Iain Sinclair, *Dining on Stones*

Events series to accompany A13

All events to take place at The Wapping Project. £5 on the door.

Thursday 10 June, 7.45pm

Tom de Paor speaks about the A13 – ‘Arterial (danger over Dagenham)’

Thursday 17 June, 7.45pm

Jock McFadyen, Helena Ben-Zenou, Rowan Moore & Iain Sinclair in conversation about the A13 and its hidden secrets.

Thursday 24 June, 7.45pm

Iain Sinclair reads from ‘Dining on Stones’

Thursday 1 July, 7.45pm

Live performance by Susie Honeyman & Giles Perring of ‘Marsh Music’, based on the St Clement’s recordings with tape loops of the A13 and live instruments.

Thursday 8 July, 7.45pm

A discussion on the Thames Gateway project, with Terry Farrell & Will Alsop, chaired by Rowan Moore.

Saturday 17 July, 3pm

Dowsing at Wapping! The art of searching for underground artefacts and entities using hand held tools. A public demonstration and talk by expert dowser, Alan Hayday, who features in Iain Sinclair’s book ‘Dining on Stones’

NOTES TO EDITORS

The Architecture Foundation

The Architecture Foundation is a catalyst for architecture. It runs a rich programme comprising exhibitions, talks, events, design initiatives, action research, policy work, demonstration projects, competitions, education and workshops.

The Wapping Project

The Women's Playhouse Trust (WPT) developed The Wapping Project. WPT is an arts and education charity and also has 501 (c) 3 status in the USA. Since its first production at the Royal Court in 1984, WPT has launched major careers for many writers, poets, visual artists, choreographers, composers, visual artists, filmmakers and photographers. From 1992, WPT began to commission and mount site-specific work in some of the great, disused warehouses in the East End of London and it was during this period that the Wapping Hydraulic Power Station was identified as a potential home.

From 1993, WPT balanced a parallel existence, working at the Southbank, with the BBC, and in major theatres, while mounting large scale dance pieces (Lea Anderson's DIRT, 1993), music works (Nitin Sawhney ANSWERS FROM THE OCEAN, 1995) and visual art's pieces (Anya Gallaccio's stunning INTENSITIES AND SURFACES, 1996) at the Wapping Hydraulic Power Station. In March 1998 the freehold was secured. A two-year refurbishment programme (phase 1) followed, transforming a derelict site into the building as it now stands.

Since its opening in October 2000, a series of acclaimed works (visual arts, photography, dance and music) have been commissioned by WPT and mounted here, mostly in response to the site and usually on a vast scale. Jane Prophet's CONDUCTOR (2000), TEN COMMANDMENTS by Keith Haring (2001) (currently in Rotterdam), SPRING by Elina Brotherus (2001) (short-listed Citibank Photography Prize), JERWOOD: STAIRWORKS (2001), JERWOOD: SOLO WITH LIGHT (2001/2002) (three 90 minute programmes, BBC Radio 3), NYC: MAGNUM PHOTOS AT THE WAPPING PROJECT (2002) (recently showing in Essen, Germany) and Richard Wilson's breathtaking BUTTERFLY (2003) (currently showing in Aachen, Germany) represent some of the benchmarks. This work has toured abroad, been recorded for radio and television and been recognised with a series of awards, while The Wapping Project's building conversion has become a model for developments in Australia, America and the UK. It remains the only arts' project in the UK which stays open until 10.30pm, five nights a week, and the only one which houses its own highly regarded restaurant, recognising that pleasure is complex, involving all of our senses, a feel for space and a need to be challenged.

Above all else, the WPT/The Wapping Project has an un-challenged twenty-year record of commissioning emergent artists who have become major players in the UK's cultural landscape. Anya Gallaccio, for example, was short-listed for The Turner Prize, 2003. The company takes immense pride in this track record.