

# THE STRAIGHT OR CROOKED WAY

Royal College of Art Galleries 15 March—6 April 2003

11AM—6PM daily, admission free

an exhibition curated by graduating students on the  
Curating Contemporary Art MA at the Royal College of Art, London



Welcome to THE STRAIGHT OR CROOKED WAY. This exhibition has been conceived as an immersive environment, an enclosed world that invites the viewer to take the lead role in an unfolding scenario. There are no signposts along the way, but this guide is designed as a means of identifying various moments in the journey and as a brief introduction to each artist's work. The exhibition might be thought of as overlapping experiences or stages where one can lose oneself, where decisions must be taken, surprise encounters negotiated, and unfamiliar lore observed.

The layout of THE STRAIGHT OR CROOKED WAY is shaped by the artworks, functioning with the existing architecture of the college galleries. The gallery space usually employed for the annual CCA exhibition has been deliberately reduced, so that the works are condensed together and may infiltrate one another. THE STRAIGHT OR CROOKED WAY thus contains no 'neutral space' that might act as a buffer or threshold between works. Instead the works may touch or corrupt each other, functioning as parts of a whole.

Offering moments of rest or escape, and sometimes misleading in order to surprise, the galleries take on a theatrical quality. There is no prescribed way to walk around the exhibition. What this guide offers are suggestions of how to locate oneself within it.

## A Olafur Eliasson

Born 1967 in Denmark, lives and works in Berlin

*Room for one colour*, 1998  
light, control panel,  
dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist and  
neugerriemschneider, Berlin.

Eliasson is fascinated by the ways in which our relation to colour is related to our cultural habituation. His interest in colour is not only focused on how we perceive things in the world, but on how perception operates in physical terms. Adapted for the Royal College of Art galleries, *Room for one colour* bathes the viewer in a pure yellow light. As the eyes submit to this monochrome field, all colours are perceived as shades from yellow to black.

## B Peter Fischli and David Weiss

Peter Fischli born 1952 in Switzerland, David Weiss born 1946 in Switzerland. The artists live and work in Zurich

*Der rechte Weg (The Right Way)*, 1983  
16 mm film transferred to DVD, 52 min.  
Courtesy the artists and  
Matthew Marks Gallery,  
New York.

THE RIGHT WAY WILL  
START ON THE HOUR,  
EVERY HOUR

Peter Fischli and David Weiss celebrate the wonders of everyday life. The artists have been collaborating since 1979, and their work often invites the viewer to join them as they delight in the utterly unremarkable. In *Der rechte Weg (The Right Way)*, a bear and a rat – the artists in costume – explore dark forests, treacherous ravines and snow-swept glaciers in a folk tale of their own devising. Both wickedly humorous and disarmingly profound, the film revels in wandering with no real aim in mind.

## C Jeppe Hein

Born 1974 in Denmark, lives and works in Berlin

*Smoking Bench*, 2003  
acrylic mirror  
(c. 220 x 400 cm), bench, dry ice,  
technical installation.  
Courtesy the artist and Johann  
König Gallery, Berlin, support  
for the production of the work  
provided by the Royal Danish  
Embassy.

Jeppe Hein's works address us directly, whether we ask them to or not. Playing with our expectations of objects, he conjures up scenarios in which, in response to our presence, seemingly sentient behaviour is coaxed from inanimate things. *Smoking Bench* sends up a cloud of dry ice to engulf the individual sitting upon it, slowly obscuring their reflection in a large mirror.

## D Carsten Höller

Born 1961 in Belgium, lives and works in Stockholm

*Umkehrbrille (Upside-Down Glasses)*, 2001  
mixed media,  
c. 11 x 21 x 41 cm.  
Courtesy the artist and  
Schipper & Krome, Berlin.

Carsten Höller's scientific background informs a practice comprised of a series of experiments. Yet his artistic investigations are not dedicated to proving hypotheses, but instead are tools for exploring individual interactions with the world. Höller's *Umkehrbrille (Upside-Down Glasses)*, available for use in *The Straight or Crooked Way*, employ mirror trickery to turn the world on its head and offer the wearer a dizzying inversion of their surroundings. These spectacles are inspired by experiments conducted by English physiologist George Stratton at the end of the nineteenth century. After eight days of continually wearing a similar optical device, Stratton was able to perceive the world 'upright', his brain having adjusted to the inversion of his visual field.

*After J.M. Gandy's 'Architectural visions of early fancy, in the gay morning of youth, and dreams in the evening of life'*, 2003

wooden plinths, maquettes,  
models, paintings, dioramas,  
c. 16m<sup>2</sup>.  
Courtesy the artist,  
commissioned for  
*The Straight or Crooked Way*

Often hosting the work of other artists within her own elaborate installations, Goshka Macuga questions the roles of the curator, the artist and the collector. Her work for *The Straight or Crooked Way* incorporates paintings, maquettes and models by artists and architects to recreate the soaring landscape depicted in a J.M. Gandy watercolour housed in Sir John Soane's Museum, London. In a homage to this depiction of Soane's unrealised designs, Macuga considers the nature of ambition, design and realisation.

## E Henrik Plenge Jakobsen

Born 1967 in Denmark, lives and works in Copenhagen

*Nuit Blanche 2*, 1998/2003  
wood, FlexiFlash, controller,  
acrylic mirror,  
c. 122 x 122 x 700 cm.  
Courtesy the artist and Gallery  
Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen,  
support for the production  
of the work provided by the  
Royal Danish Embassy.

WARNING: THIS WORK  
CONTAINS STROBE  
LIGHTING AND MAY BE  
HAZARDOUS TO PEOPLE  
WITH EPILEPSY OR  
OTHER CONDITIONS

Henrik Plenge Jakobsen's work can be seen as a type of body art, in which the visitor – rather than the artist – is subjected to a corporeal experience. *Nuit Blanche 2* is a reworking of his installation of the same name shown in 1998 at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Recalling rave culture with its powerful stroboscopic lights and mirrors, the work disorients the viewer in a way that disturbs a sense of boundary between body and environment.

## F Goshka Macuga

Born 1967 in Poland, lives and works in London

## G ROR (Revolutions on Request)

Formed 1998, live and work in Helsinki, Finland  
Jiri Geller born 1970;  
Klaus Nyqvist born 1976;  
Panu Puolakkala born 1972;  
Karoliina Taipale born 1973

*ror: piece by piece*, 2003  
installation, c. 90m<sup>2</sup>.  
Courtesy the artists, Jan Wauwte and Helsinki City Art Museum, support for ROR's participation provided by the Embassy of Finland, FRAME (Finnish Fund for Art Exchange), MOMART and John Nurminen.

Incorporating practices as diverse as embroidery, interior design, painting and heavy metal, ROR's installations immerse the viewer in their paradoxical nihilist-utopian conception of the world. The collective merges a hippy-like nostalgia for the handmade with an acute technological awareness. For *ror: piece by piece*, the four members have customised a section of the gallery into an environment that invites participation and utopic reverie.

## H Sancho Silva

Born 1973 in Portugal, lives and works in New York

*Wall Intervention*, 2003  
wood  
c. 400 x 725 x 90 cm.  
Courtesy the artist, commissioned for *The Straight or Crooked Way*, support for the production of the work provided by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Sancho Silva's work is perhaps as closely related to mathematics and philosophy as it is to sculpture and architecture, and elements of all of these fields occur in his practice. *Wall* functions as both a separation and a connection between Eliasson's *Room for one colour* and the

rest of the exhibition. A doorway through what appears to be an ordinary gallery wall opens onto an enclosed system of stairs which in turn lead into an open gallery. Double doors in the centre of the wall bypass this internal structure completely.

## I Ana Maria Tavares

Born 1958 in Brazil, lives and works in São Paulo

*Kensington Maze*, 2003  
scaffolding platforms,  
walkways, steps, acrylic mirror  
wall, 230m<sup>2</sup>.  
Courtesy the artist and Galeria Brito Cimino, São Paulo, commissioned for *The Straight or Crooked Way*, support for the production of the work provided by the American Center Foundation.

Inspired by the architectural grammar of the modern city, Ana Maria Tavares often employs materials such as steel, glass and mirrors to make structures that resemble street furniture or fittings. Such motifs are recontextualised in her installations and come to form puzzles or mazes for the visitor to explore. *Kensington Maze* comprises a system of walkways, steps and platforms that cut through the gallery spaces. Involving extended discussions with and support from building management, external contractors and safety officers, Tavares's design presents radically new possibilities for circulation through and navigation of the exhibition.

## UPPER GALLERIES

## LOWER GALLERIES

## J Cerith Wyn Evans

Born 1958 in Wales, lives and works in London

*Dreamachine*, 1998  
mixed media,  
dimensions variable.  
Courtesy the artist and  
White Cube, London

WARNING: THIS WORK  
MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO  
PEOPLE WITH EPILEPSY OR  
OTHER CONDITIONS

The original 'dreamachines' were designed in 1960 by Ian Sommerville together with the poet and artist Brion Gysin, a contemporary and friend of William S. Burroughs. These devices stimulate the optic nerve and the visual cortex through their use of flickering light. Cerith Wyn Evans's installation for *The Straight or Crooked Way* incorporates a functioning dreamachine in a setting with Japanese *tatami* mats and potted palms. The viewer is encouraged to 'look' at the flickering lights with closed eyes. Everyone has a different response to this stimulus: some see faces, animals, spinning galaxies and dazzling colours, others experience states of altered consciousness.

THE STRAIGHT OR CROOKED WAY was curated by graduating students on the Royal College of Art's MA Curating Contemporary Art:

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