

Press Release

Black Eyes and Lemonade: Curating Popular Art

9 March – 1 September 2013

Pat Matthews Gallery (Gallery 4)

The Whitechapel Gallery presents a new archive display revisiting the Gallery's 1951 exhibition *Black Eyes and Lemonade*. Coinciding with the Festival of Britain, the exhibition challenged established ideas about the cultural value attached to particular kinds of objects. Celebrating everyday items, from the traditional and the handmade to the mass produced, it included lavishly decorated pub mirrors, an edible model of St Paul's Cathedral and a talking lemon advertising Idris lemon squash.

This presentation at the Whitechapel Gallery includes several of the original exhibits from 1951, including the fireplace in the shape of an Airedale dog, alongside unseen archive material from the University of Brighton Design Archives, the Vogue Archives and the Whitechapel Gallery Archive. Re-examining *Black Eyes and Lemonade* over half a century after it was originally staged, the exhibition looks afresh at the presentation and curation of popular art.

Entitled *Black Eyes and Lemonade*, after the Thomas Moore poem *Intercepted Letters* or *The Two-Penny Post Bag* (1813), the original exhibition explored topics including advertising, toys, festivities and souvenirs and featured ship figureheads, old Valentines, quilts and Salvation Army uniforms. All the exhibits shown were made or manufactured in Britain.

The 1951 exhibition was organised by artist, designer and writer **Barbara Jones**. It was divided into categories such as Home, Birth-Marriage-Death, Man's Own Image and Commerce & Industry, reflecting Jones's ideas on museum culture and questioning the cultural values attached to both handmade and machine made objects. Stating that 'the museum eye must be abandoned', Jones created a provocative spectacle which posed questions about hierarchies of value, making and manufacturing as well as consumption while championing the judgement of makers, collectors and consumers.

Many of the items included in the exhibition came from Jones's own collection and were acquired during travels, from bazaars, second-hand shops, and directly from makers. Further exhibits were sourced during a road trip in June 1951 that Jones made in a converted London taxi with her co-organiser Tom Ingram. This presentation features material from Jones's surviving studio, highlighting her innovative curatorial approach and the connections she was able to draw across images and objects.

The exhibition is part of the Whitechapel Gallery's dedicated programme curating archives of individual artists or institutions. The exhibition is co-curated with director of the Museum of British Folklore, Simon Costin, design historian Catherine Moriarty and Curator, Archive Gallery, Whitechapel Gallery, Nayia Yiakoumaki.

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Notes to Editors

- Barbara Jones (1912-1978) studied mural decoration at the Royal College of Art. She was a designer, book illustrator and artist. During World War II she was associated with the *Recording Britain* project of the Pilgrim Trust. Jones painted murals for the post-war *Britain Can Make It* exhibition of 1947 and the 1951 *Festival of Britain* exhibition. Her mural designs were commissioned to decorate several passenger liner ships as well as hotels and restaurants. The same year she curated the *Black Eyes and Lemonade* show, she published her influential book *The Unsophisticated Arts* (1951). Jones was also involved in designing the sets for television series *The Woodentops*.
- The exhibition is co-curated with museum director, Simon Costin, design historian Catherine Moriarty and Curator, Archive Gallery, Whitechapel Gallery, Nayia Yiakoumaki.
- The exhibition is supported by the University of Brighton and the Museum of British Folklore.
- Simon Costin is the Director of The Museum of British Folklore, an art director and set and exhibition designer. His work has been presented across major institutions including the ICA, London and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
- Dr Catherine Moriarty is Curatorial Director of the University of Brighton Design Archives and Principal Research Fellow in the Faculty of Arts.
- The Whitechapel Gallery archive exhibitions are generously supported by Catherine and Franck Petitgas.

Visitor Information

Opening times: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am – 6pm, Thursdays 11am – 9pm.
Admission free. Whitechapel Gallery, 77 – 82 Whitechapel High Street,
London E1 7QX. Nearest London Underground Station: Aldgate East,
Liverpool Street, Tower Gateway DLR. T + 44 (0) 20 7522 7888
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