

News release

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'Stay'

Great Eastern Hotel, Liverpool Street, London, EC2 - 1 -15 July 2005

Eleven emerging artists will create new site-specific work at the Great Eastern Hotel this summer. Inspired by the hotel's impressive architectural spaces, rich history and the secret life of the hotel guest, 'Stay', promises a provocative mix of work in a variety of media, from painting through video to live performance.

Flock wallpaper in pastel shades commissioned by artist **Lyndall Phelps** softens and feminises the impressive rotunda – a circular set of balconies that cuts through the heart of the hotel. In the atrium, **Chris Wood** uses water filled wine glasses as lenses that capture and project images on to a screen. A guest bedroom becomes a nuclear fall-out shelter (modeled on 'Protect and Survive' guidelines from the 1980's) with the artist, **Richard Dedomenici**, occupying a refuge made from doors and mattresses and surviving on economy baked beans and rationed water. An installation by **Giovanna Maria Casetta** entices visitors to look through a bedroom spy hole, where they will be seduced by a stranger in a baby-doll nightie. A shaggy dog meanders through the hotel looking for food, sex and sleep in an installation by **Tess Glanville**, whilst **Mark Dixon** examines history, futility and power with a golden model train on a circular track in the hotel's hidden Greek Temple. Painters **Emily Cole** and **Simon Carter** document journeys and locations that draw on the hotel's links to the East of England, whilst large abstract canvases by **Susan Gunn** enhance the formality and atmosphere of the hotel's lobby. **Robert Sherratt**, another painter, uses a unique and painstaking technique to represent the chaotic rock 'n' roll cliché of the wrecked hotel bedroom. Illustrator **Leo Hillier** imagines the hotel inhabited by eccentric, colourful fish people in a modern-day fairytale about loneliness, making friends and sowing seeds.

Curated by **Cherry Smyth** in collaboration with Commissions East, 'Stay' is the latest in a series of exhibitions and art interventions at the Great Eastern Hotel. 'Stay' is the hotel's most ambitious project to date, having the greatest number of temporary commissions created specifically for its public spaces and private rooms.

Commissions East

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Events during 'Stay' include the private view on Thursday 30 June, live art performances by Giovanna Maria Casetta and Richard Dedomenici on Saturday 9 July, a critical debate for artists on Tuesday 5 July and a series of guided tours and talks.

'Stay' is part of Escalator Visual Arts – an initiative that supports the finest talent from the East of England, funded by Arts Council England, East and led by Commissions East. 'Stay' is delivered in partnership with the Great Eastern Hotel, London and supported by 'one' - the train operator for London and the East of England. 'Stay' is also being promoted as part of CAN.05, Contemporary Art Norwich – a visual arts festival that creates more opportunities for audiences to experience the rich cultural life of the Eastern region.

A special programme on Saturday 2 July for media, curators and VIPs includes champagne breakfast and the opportunity to see 'Stay' at the Great Eastern Hotel, London followed by a tour of the CAN.05 venues in Norwich. To join the programme and for complimentary train tickets to Norwich (courtesy of 'one' – the train operator for London and the East of England), please contact Charity Green at Commissions East on 01223 356882 or email charity@commissionseast.org.uk

- Ends -

For more information contact:

Charity Green Director of Development
01223 356882 charity@commissionseast.org.uk

Editors notes:

1. **'Stay' opening**

1 – 15 July 2005
Great Eastern Hotel
Liverpool Street
London EC2M 7QN

12.00 noon - 6.00pm Friday, Saturday and Sunday
9.00am - 12.00 noon Monday

All other times strictly by appointment only - contact the enquiry line on 020 76185284

Visit www.stayatgeh.com for details of tour times and special events.
Admission free

2. 'Stay' artists

Simon Carter

Carter is a landscape painter who uses both figurative and abstract language in a dynamic and robust style. His work was selected by Gary Hume for the 'Painting is Dead, Long Live Painting: Contemporary British Painting' Exhibition in 2004. Living on the Essex coast, he often paints the story of where two masses meet and try to communicate – like the land and the sea or the rural and the urban, his gestures exploring aspects of the fluid and the solid. He is interested in responding to aspects of coming and going, leaving and returning that centre around the hotel and its history. Not only did the hotel welcome those from the regions and beyond, it was also placed at the primary gateway that took people to the coast and the continent. He will hang five large paintings in the atrium, linking the Great Eastern Hotel in London to the one in Harwich, connecting the city to the seaside and rural landscape. Expect an emotionally complex abstraction with a readable heart, inspired by painters such as Richard Diebenkorn, Paul Nash and Terry Winters.

Giovanna Maria Casetta

Casetta is an artist, using performance and performative film to explore ideas of glamour, femininity and fragility. Once, inspired by Fellini, and as a tribute to all blondes (natural or otherwise), she bleached her hair and lived as a blonde for six months culminating in a celebration in the fountains at Trafalgar Square re-enacting the famous dance from 'La Dolce Vita'. Reacting to the naughty weekend aspect of the hotel business, her piece, 'Darling, is this how...' will be a short film showing Casetta in a red baby-doll nightie enticing the spectator to come and play with her. It will be spied through the peephole of a bedroom door, echoing the sleazier element of porn-watching in hotel bedrooms. Filmed on 8mm to give a 'found footage' feel, the film will be a naughty, playful and sexy imagining of what happens behind the scenes. Casetta will also give a live performance. She will wear a pink satin Christian Dior-inspired evening dress with a massively long train, and starting at the top of the Aurora staircase in the west wing of the hotel, she will descend, slowly allowing her train to fill the staircase behind her. Casetta's piece is an indulgent fantasy in beauty and decadence, emphasising the elegance of the Victorian architecture.

Emily Cole

Cole paints urban and pastoral landscapes in a quick gestural semi-abstract style that foregrounds a strange beauty where one doesn't expect it and suggests the blur of movement. She researches the image, taking hundreds of photos from buses and trains, and places the window frame in the painting to highlight how most of us experience landscape. She uses flaring fluorescent colours, emphasising the road signs, the railway workers and the neon, investing the tradition with new oomph. Inspired by American photographer Ed Ruscha, Cole invests the banality of the car park with the same beauty as a rolling hill. She will photograph the train journey and hinterland from Norwich to London, one of the former routes of the Great Eastern Railway, and make a series of paintings to be shown in the GE Club. Playing with the idea of 'Stay', these paintings emerge from movement but are ironically still. A snazzy, sharp and fresh approach to painting that has the bathos of the new Belgian school of Luc Tuymans and Koen van der Broek.

Richard Dedomenici

Dedomenici is an anarchist prankster, hooligan and live artist. He will turn one of the hotel's bedrooms into a nuclear fall-out shelter inspired by the Protect and Survive Guidelines created by the government circa 1981, which were due to be broadcast but were never seen. His installation will involve building an inner refuge made from the mattress and wardrobe doors, hoarding Economy Baked Beans, and storing water in a covered bathtub. He plans to stay holed up in the room for fourteen days - just long enough for nuclear fall-out to settle. He will show how, in the time of 'the war on terror' and the polymorphous threat of bioterrorism, there is almost nostalgia for the directness of an eighties-style nuclear attack. As the hotel is situated next to Bishopsgate (the target of an IRA bomb in the 90s) and close to the City (a possible terrorist target today), the piece will have special resonance. In a separate performance piece, he will be a 'human hand dryer' in the gents' toilet on the opening night and during other public events during 'Stay'. Unpredictable and provocative, Dedomenici blows open the categories of art and politics at the raw edge, inspired by artists like Stuart Brisley, Hayley Newman and Willem Defoe.

Mark Dixon

Dixon is multi-media artist who likes working out how things work. How would a goldleaf model train work in the Greek Temple, the sumptuous hidden treasure in the hotel? Would it make connections between the birth of the railways and the money that still keeps the City afloat? How does capital and power go around in the hotel? Does anyone notice the workers sitting on the steps out of sight, polishing glasses? He will project a filmed image of the staff at work on the steps to the Temple and in the staircase leading from the ground floor where the Fishmarket restaurant is situated. The train set in the Temple will suggest the links with Liverpool Street Station and the Great Eastern Railway, which gave the hotel its purpose and name. The train's circular, repetitive motion echoes the repetitive task of glass-polishing. Thoughtful, provocative and layered, Mark Dixon's interventions echo work by British duo Cornford and Cross.

'Golden Train' by Mark Dixon is sponsored by Corgi Classics Ltd.

Tess Glanville

Glanville uses video to explore our relation to time and space. She wanted to capture the disorientating effect of being in a hotel for a few days. You don't need to go outside for food, internet access or entertainment, and you have the added discombobulating factor of getting lost on your way back from the bar. Glanville will project a 10 minute circular route around the hotel, filmed in both front and back of house. The camera peeks through open bedroom doorways, and into this frame, she will drop time-lapse footage of the exterior views, so as to further manipulate the viewer's experience of lost time. She will incorporate footage of a fall from the rotunda, giving the spectator sudden vertigo and the experience of the architecture from a unique perspective. She will also project a video of a shaggy dog's meanderings through the corridors to consider navigation and the motivation for food, sex and sleep from another viewpoint. Artists like Tacita Dean, Gabriel Orozco and Kathy Prendergast inspire this sleek, slick mapping and remapping.

Susan Gunn

Gunn is the most abstract painter in the group. Gunn's paintings demand the viewer's attention with their tactile, material presence. The large impressive canvases are built from layers of pigment and gesso and punctuated by chance occurrences in the surface, as the canvas splits and cracks during drying.

As the heavily worked gesso is waxed and polished, the artist regains a lost sense of control and areas of the surface become reflective, inviting a physical dialogue between voyeur and object. The nearly monochrome, fissured ground suggests resilience and delicacy and the rich pigment brings depth and solemnity to the canvas. Gunn's work is deeply moving in its attempt to arrest time, accommodate change and explore beneath the surface. Her visceral, loaded work has the monochromatic discipline of Robert Ryman and the meticulous abstraction of Callum Innes.

Leo Hillier

Hillier is a recent graduate in illustration. He is the most figurative artist to contribute to 'Stay', but in his world, the humans are gone and the world is inhabited by eccentric, colourful fish. He uses a computer to finish hand-drawn sketches of fishpeople and their foods. His project is an artist's book - a 27 page children's story about George Earnest Hopkins (GEH), a tree seed salesman who stays in the hotel as a treat and ends up planting seeds all over the premises, delighting the guests and selling more than he could ever dream of. The books will be displayed in the main lobby. Playful, ingenious, fun for all ages, Hillier's work is inspired by American illustrators Lane Smith who illustrated 'The Very Persistent Gappers of Frip' and J. Otto Seibold.

Lyndall Phelps

Phelps is an installation artist working in mixed media. She is fascinated by history, by particular materials needed for highly specialised jobs or purposes, which she adapts or subverts for her practice, which is conceptual and practical at once. She has developed a work for the rotunda - the circular set of balconies that cut through the newer part of the hotel. Phelps was struck by the corporate masculinity of the space and decided to respond with highly decorative, feminine flocking. She has commissioned Cole & Son, a wallpaper company, to reproduce flocked wallpaper of the kind that would have been used to decorate the hotel when it was originally built (1884, extended 1901). As the gardener Gertrude Jekyll was in vogue in this period, Phelps chose a floral pattern that reflects the common plants favoured by Jekyll in her designs. The first core of the rotunda will be flocked and the upper spirals will be painted in a ring of different colours to echo an herbaceous border. Visually exciting, unexpected, sensual and intellectually layered, Lyndall Phelps's practice recalls work by Ann Hamilton and Cornelia Parker.

'Drift' by Lyndall Phelps is sponsored by Cole & Son, manufacturers of fine printed wallpapers since 1875.

Robert Sherratt

Sherratt's father was a sign painter and he inherited his extremely fine paintbrushes and facility for intricate details. However, before painting, Sherratt takes his brush, loaded with paint and flicks splashes of paint on to paper. He then photographs and catalogues the splurges and accidents of paint. Working from this archive later, he uses the abstract random shapes to compose recognisable objects of figurative painting - like the sports car, the motorbike, the aeroplane, transferring the dynamics of motion through space to the canvas. He will use this unique collage technique to paint a portrait of a wrecked hotel room, inspired by great rock and roll legends, which will hang in one of the bedrooms, and also make a large painting of the shapes and colours one encounters in the beautiful lobby of Aurora restaurant - a scene of opulence and order.

This intellectual, rewarding, precisely messy work takes Abstract Expressionism and beats it at its own game. The random is caught in structure, control is asserted where it was abandoned, celebrating both the spontaneous elasticity of paint and virtuoso draftsmanship. Sherratt's struggle against and within art history is similar in strategy to the work of Glenn Brown.

Chris Wood

Wood is a glass and light sculptor who responded to the natural light flooding the atrium of the hotel. She uses different types of optical glass and mirror to manipulate and transform light, giving delicate, ephemeral effects that recall moments of moving light and shadow that we glimpse in everyday life. She will install a series of drinking glasses in the glass shelving in the atrium. The water-filled glasses become lenses which capture and project images of the atrium on to glass screens. These images will dim and brighten as the light conditions in the space vary. Lyrical, pleasurable to watch and linked to time passing, this work brings a wistful romanticism to a minimalist aesthetic. Inspired by artists like James Turrell and Dan Flavin, Wood tries to order the accidental and make us reflect on the experience of seeing.

3. 'Stay' partners and funders

Commissions East

Commissions East brings new art to audiences through non-gallery commissions. By supporting commissioners and artists, Commissions East instigates and delivers a wide range of projects that demonstrate the power and importance of art in public spaces. Commissions East also offers a range of services for artists who live or work in the East of England.

The Great Eastern Hotel

Opened in 1884 and extended in 1901, the Great Eastern is one of the grand railway station hotels of the Victorian era. In 1997, it closed for a three-year, £70 million refurbishment, re-opening in March 2000. Since then, the hotel - and its bars, restaurants and event spaces - has brokered new relationships between the City and the East End, particularly in relation to its engagement with contemporary art and artists.

Escalator Visual Arts

Escalator Visual Arts is a pioneering approach to unleashing the potential of the most promising artists based in the East of England. Funded by Arts Council England, East and led by Commissions East it enables selected artists to benefit from financial investment, career development support and opportunities to show their work to new audiences.

CAN.05

'Stay' is part of CAN.05, Contemporary Art Norwich, which launches on 2 July, supported by Arts Council England, East and Norwich City Council. For more information on CAN.05 please contact Theresa Simon Communications on 020 7629 9645 or email lucy@theresasimon.com

Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for the arts. Between 2003-06 it will invest £2billion of public funds in the arts in England, including funding from the National Lottery.

one

Sponsoring 'Stay' is 'one' - the train operator for London and the East of England.