

Artworks re-connect a fragmented city

By: **Michaela Nettell**



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'Katalin Hausel, photograph capturing negative space around Harris Manchester College, Oxford'. Hausel's project explores the history and identity of one of the more free-thinking Oxford colleges.

For one-day only, eleven artists will be attempting to bridge the divide between the public sphere and Oxford's academic institutions. Artist and curator Katalin Hausel explains.

29.06.12 Tomorrow, Oxford will be the momentary site for a programme of artworks exploring the problematic divide between public and private in this most historic of cities.

Curated by Hungarian artist Katalin Hausel, the project invited artists to choose a private Oxford institution and attempt to gain access either physically or virtually to its buildings, its activities or its information. Artworks generated through this process of negotiated trespass will be exhibited across the city in a one-day event, before being shown in a gallery exhibition at Wolfson College this autumn.

Works range from a street intervention that honours Christopher Wren's late-running sundial at Codrington Library, to a series of postcard texts derived from a 19th century correspondence on philology; the postcards will be dropped in a letter box near the site of James Murray's Scriptorium and viewed in transit by Royal Mail staff. Each work is the outcome of a co-operation between an artist and a college, library or museum collection usually closed to outsiders.

As a foreigner coming into the city, Hausel was able to see clearly the disconnect between Oxford's academic and non-academic communities.

"People have little or no access to places outside their own circle," she explains. "I thought that in this strange place, the role of an artist is to find ways to connect the different spheres of life in the city."

The institutions reacted variously to the artists' approaches: "Some were very enthusiastic to open up this musty, ideological exclusivity to allow new ideas in; and some places did nothing, kind of passively resisted anything to happen."

But despite setbacks, most artists found ways to realise their projects. "Artists have a natural curiosity to go where they are not supposed to and are creative enough to come up with ingenious ways to transgress boundaries without outright breaking the rules," says Hausel.

"Rather than a stern political statement, this is a playful, tongue-in-cheek project. Artists can be critical simply by showing alternative ways of operating than the established ones."

'Movement, Anomalies and Distractions: Into The Public Sphere' will take place on 30 June 2012 between 10am and 5pm. Participating artists are: Annabel Ralphs, Magdalen Chua, Mirja Koponen, Katie Herzog, Luke Ralphs, Kate Hammersley, Katalin Hausel, Sonia Boue & Alison Berrett, Stephen Lee and Diane Jones-Parry.

maad.moonfruit.com

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Michaela Nettell is an artist and filmmaker based in London