

## ***Tales of the City***

**Abigail Reynolds, Carey Young, David Cross, Gary Stevens, Matthew Cornford, Nathan Coley, Nils Norman, Ori Gersht, Paul Winstanley, Zineb Sedira**

Supported by Arte Fiera Bologna, British Council, Gonrand, in collaboration with Goldsmiths College, University of London.

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The exhibition featured a selection of contemporary work by artists based in Britain to compliment the British focus of ArteFiera 2004. The exhibition was conceived and organised by the British Council in collaboration with post-graduate students from the Creative Curating programme at Goldsmiths College, London. The city provides the focus for this exhibition. Works included are either located within an urban environment - most recognisably that of London – or use subjects and materials associated with an urban setting, employing the specifics of the locale to address broader issues such as crime, routine and ritual, communication differences, urban planning paradoxes and dysfunctional social services.

Abigail Reynolds, featured in Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2003, created topographical models from crime statistics. These sculptural reliefs of urban terrains in corrugated cardboard raised questions about how information is used and represented. The ritual journey of the office commuter was addressed by Carey Young, shortlisted for the 2003 Becks Futures award. The viewer sees the artist, dressed in a suit, walking backwards and forwards in the commuter crowd, thus extending Richard Long's famous practice of using walking as sculptural material. In *Slow Life* Gary Stevens portrayed domestic scenes, such as the family breakfast ceremony, in slow motion, creating a peculiar relaxed sense of awkwardness and isolation. The fragility of communication within the 21st century city was portrayed in a video triptych of conversations between mothers and daughters by Zenib Sedira. This work is about differences in language, translation and culture. Other exhibits took as their focus aspects of contemporary debate on social issues and urban politics, presented in the form of projects and proposals. Cornford and Cross use the public commission to critique notions of freedom and awareness by subverting everyday experiences of urban planning. New documentation of the duo's 1996 work *Camelot* was shown along with a piece by Nils Norman - last seen in Italy in the 'Utopia Stations' section of the Venice Biennale 2003 - a proposed redevelopment of a small industrial estate in East London combining utopian aspiration with an awareness of its impossibility given the reality of the contemporary metropolis. Ori Gersht's photographs of municipal buildings and Paul Winstanley's paintings of waiting rooms, for example, both portrayed architectural dystopias – schools that no longer function within a national system, and empty rooms used for killing time.

Abstract from "Tales of the City" by Christian Frock