

Acknowledgements

The Cleveland (UK) International Drawing Biennale is organised and sponsored by Cleveland County Council with the support of Northern Arts.

Judges

Sonia Boyce
Richard Cork
Dr Marianne Stockebrand

Invited Artist

Claes Oldenburg/Coosje van Bruggen

Catalogue Essay

Marina Vaizey

Advisory Panel

County Councillor Maureen Taylor (Chairwoman), Alan Alden, Janet Barker, Steve Chettle, Audrey Collins, Judith Croft, Peter Davies, Mike Hill, Ron Jobson, Malcolm Lockey, Robin Simpson, Geoffrey Watson

Catalogue

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Cleveland Gallery and Middlesbrough Art Gallery,
Middlesbrough

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Foreword

At a time when the arts in Britain – and in particular the Visual Arts – are enjoying a higher profile than they have had for many years, the Cleveland International Drawing Biennale offers a typically controversial view of what constitutes good contemporary drawing, and by extension good contemporary fine art. The 100 works on display have been selected from a total of some 2000 (representing 56 different nationalities) by an independent panel of judges, and the exhibition is their assessment of the best works received for this open competition which is unique in Great Britain. The three judges – one of this country's most exciting young artists, whose work has been widely shown on both sides of the Atlantic; a leading London critic; and one of the foremost Gallery Directors from West Germany – spent two long and arduous days viewing the entries (each work was considered at least twice) before making their final selections and awarding the prizes. In the end, they felt unable to single out one work from the many to receive the prize, and instead awarded prizes of £1,500 each to eight artists, whose work now passes into the growing and increasingly important collection of Cleveland County Museum Service.

One of the most exciting aspects of this year's exhibition is the inclusion of Claes Oldenburg, who works with his wife Coosje van Bruggen, as Invited Artist. This celebrates not merely the artist's pre-eminence in the field of public sculpture, but also a more direct relationship with Middlesbrough, Cleveland's principal town, whose Borough Council has commissioned a major sculpture from Oldenburg to be sited in the heart of the County. The display includes some of the artist's preliminary work for 'A Bottle of Notes', which contains references to the travels of the locally-born explorer, James Cook.

Marina Vaizey's essay 'Drawing on Drawing' renews this eminent critic's connection with the event. In 1975, she was one of the judges for the Second Biennale. Her reminder of the pedigree and purposes of the medium form a timely counterpoint to the exhibition which is of contemporary, imaginative work.

The Biennale must move forward at the same time as renewing contact with maintaining the past. For many years, the exhibition was hung in Middlesbrough Art Gallery, but was moved to the Cleveland Gallery in 1987. Now, for the first time, the exhibition will be shown in both venues, permitting a more generous selection of works and a display of greater depth.

The Biennale stands indebted to many people, only some of whom have so far been mentioned. The judges, the Invited Artist, and the essayist are all essential components of the event. Members of the Advisory Panel, at their numerous meetings, have guided another competition to a successful conclusion. I have personal reason to be grateful to the staff of Cleveland County Museum Service and other sections of the Department, who have, as ever, worked tirelessly on what is an immensely complex operation; to the volunteers from Cleveland College of Art and Design for their graphic design work and their assistance at the judging; and to my colleagues from Middlesbrough Art Gallery for their co-operation in displaying the exhibition. Our deepest gratitude, however, must as always be to the artists, successful or otherwise, who entered the competition; for without the artists there would be no International Drawing Biennale.

Mike Hill

Museum Officer: Cleveland County Museum Service