

Michael Wilkinson
'SORRY HAD TO DONE'
The Modern Institute, Osborne Street
12/09—24/10/2015

The Los Angeles property developer John Lydon recently opined that he'd seen what a failure socialism was, because he'd lived in a council flat. This squares with the idea that punk was a sort of counter-cultural equivalent to Thatcherism - a movement for individualism, cruelty and discipline, as against the woolly solidarity and collectivism of the postwar consensus.

- Owen Hatherley, 'Property Development as the new Punk Rock' in *A Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain* (Verso, London, 2010)

Michael Wilkinson's practice draws from a complex negotiation of political, cultural, and personal references. Influenced by art, social history, political radicalism, Marxist theory, popular music, and punk subculture of the 1970s and 1980s, these references are integrated into works that assemble a diverse and unlikely range of materials (beeswax, verdigris, audio and VHS tape, vinyl records, Lego, etched mirrors, found photographs and materials, catalogue pages, and paint on canvas). Through the use of such disparate media, *SORRY HAD TO DONE* further exemplifies Wilkinson's technique of collaging or layering, both conceptually and practically, which reflect his multiple subject references. Wilkinson works almost always suggest an element of upheaval or unrest, either looking back into the past, or as a measure of the present.

In this exhibition, Wilkinson has constructed his most recent series of Lego monoliths, a 3.5m grey tower. This piece stands in visual counterpoint to a field of rubble made from the defunct Bluevale high rise, currently under demolition in the east end of Glasgow. These pieces are flanked by a large canvas which features an image of Ivan Chitchevlov, whose phrase *The hacienda must be built* gave its name to Manchester's most famous club, and a plaster bas relief showing a fragment of graffiti taken from a song by another Manchester legend, Steven Patrick Morrissey of The Smiths.

The show also features an etched mirror piece Wilkinson has produced using his book *1979*, a 'fasces' and an 'indexical non-painting'.

Michael Wilkinson (b. Merseyside, UK in 1965, lives and works in Glasgow) studied at BA (Hons) Environmental Art and MFA at The Glasgow School of Art. Recent solo exhibitions include: *CITADEL: The fortress commanding a city, which it serves both to protect and to dominate*, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York (2014); *En Attendant*, Pearl Lam, Shanghai (2013); *Dresden*, The Modern Institute, Aird's Lane, Glasgow (2012); *No History*, Blum & Poe, LA (2012); and *Never Works, Le Temple*, Paris (2011). Wilkinson's works were presented within *The Curves of the Needle*, BALTIC 39, Newcastle upon Tyne (2015) and *Art under Attack: Histories of British Iconoclasm*, Tate Britain, London (2013-2014); His work has also been exhibited at Gemeentemuseum Den Haag; FRAC des Pays de la Loire, Carquefour; Studio Voltaire, London; New Wight Gallery at University of California, Los Angeles; Dundee Contemporary Arts; Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw; and NAK Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen, among other institutions worldwide.

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Notes compiled by Michael Wilkinson to accompany the exhibition, September 2015

The title of the show is taken from an image of graffiti that appears in *Paintwork: A Portrait of The Fall* by Brian Edge (Omnibus Press, 1989)

The graffiti was written on the wall of Headingley cricket ground during the test match between England and Australia in the summer of 1975. The apology is for the disruption caused to the match by protesters who'd dug up the crease to draw attention to the case of prisoner George Davis.

1. *Graffiti Fragment (You've got Everything Now)*

Plaster, plywood, aluminium
94.5 x 164 x 3.7 cm

Plaster panels produced by Faux Brickwork at Pinewood Studios in London primed with gesso and painted with enamel, emulsion and blackboard paint. *You've got Everything Now* is a Song by The Smiths from 1983 that includes the lines "Who is rich and who is poor? I cannot say."

2. *Lest the Void*

Acrylic on linen, string, aluminium, objects from L-R:
82 x 60.5 x 3.7 cm

- a. The carriage return lever from an Olivetti Studio 45 typewriter c.1968-1973.
- b. An image of Eric Hobsbawm cut from *The London Review of Books* on 9 April 2015. The image was part of the article *The Hobsbawm File* by Frances Stonor Saunders.
- c. The letter E from the above typewriter.
- d. An image of the exterior of the shop Seditious in London in 1978 from *Punk Rockers!* By Alain Dister (Editions Vade Retro, 2006).
- e. A British Union of Fascists pin, date unknown.
- f. CD cover of *Dream A Garden* by Jam City on Night Slugs, 2015
- g. A section of metal grille.

The title of the piece is taken from *Beyond Good and Evil* by Freidrich Nietzsche, 1886:

*"He who fights with monsters should be careful lest he thereby become a monster.
And look not into the void lest the void look into you"*

3. Tower

Lego
360 x 66 x 66 cm

4. No Hacienda

Acrylic, oil, verdigris, beeswax, reflective tape, painted badge and an image of Ivain Chtcheglov cut from Guy Debord's Panegyric on linen
200 x 200 x 5 cm

*You'll never see the hacienda. It doesn't exist.
The hacienda must be built.*

Tony Wilson of Factory Records took the name for the nightclub he opened in Manchester in 1982 from Chtcheglov's text. The Hacienda became one of the most famous clubs in the world in the late 80s and early 90s. It closed in 1997 and the building that housed it was demolished in 2002. A block of luxury flats, the Hacienda Apartments, now occupies the location. Ben Kelly, the designer of The Hacienda's iconic 'industrial' interior, contributed the diagonal strip light to the exterior of *Seditionaries*.

5. 'fasces'

Strip light bulbs, cable ties, acrylic paint
7.5 x 7.5 x 177 cm

The fasces was a symbol of state power during the Roman Empire, a bundle of rods sometimes with an axe head protruding. In 1919 Benito Mussolini adopted the symbol for the Italian Fascists, prior to this fasci were political groups of varying and at times opposing ideologies.

The bourgeoisie even took the word "fascism" from working-class organizations in Italy, which were often called Fasci. It is significant that fascism first defined itself as a form of organization and not as a program. Its only program is to organize everyone, to forcibly make the component parts of society converge.¹

In 1972, Stanley Kubrick, in response to accusations that *A Clockwork Orange* was fascist, wrote the following:

(The film)... far from advocating that fascism be given a second chance, warns against the new psychedelic fascism—the eye-popping, multimedia, quadrasonic, drug-oriented conditioning of human beings by other beings—which many believe will usher in the forfeiture of citizenship and the beginning of zombiedom.

6. After After Pistoletto

Etched mirror, catalogue page
49 x 43 x 2.5 cm

7. Dream A Garden

Concrete from the recently demolished 109 Bluevale Street, a tower block that stood in the east end of Glasgow between 1968 and 2015.