

MAGNUS IRVIN

Welcome To The Fly Club: An Intervention In The Wunderkabinett

May 2017

Magnus Irvin is an artist. He was born, lives & works in London. His work reflects an interest in institutions such as the seaside, music halls, pub culture, street furniture, ectoplasm & the environment.

He works in a wide variety of media including film, printmaking, publications, cardboard, sculpture, live performance & cake. He is interested in self improvement through travelling, fishing, beer & levitation.

IMAGES: CHRISTOS HATJOULLIS



WELCOME TO THE FLY CLUB.

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by Ray McNeill

To enter into the shadowy subterranean world of Magnus Irvin's Fly Club through the Viktor Wynd portal is to step into a place without time, where half glimpsed dreams & erstwhile nightmares rub shoulders with the darkly humorous, the raving mad & the muted chimera of legend. Magnus Irvin's most recent work mines a rich seam whose influences are as Catholic as his predilections; from early surrealist notions proposed by Roland Penrose & made manifest in his re-imagining of the 'Cabinets of curiosity' of yore, where, in his world, miscellany collided to expose the baffling & yet beautiful rather than a catalogue of numbered & labelled 'dead' objects. Breton wrote "the marvellous is always beautiful; everything marvellous is beautiful; nothing but the marvellous is beautiful". Leap 40 years into the future where Michael Bentine & Bruce Lacey are busy creating a parallel universe in Thames TV's 'Potty Time' with its absurdist approach to the notions of proper art rendered with a child-like glee, complete with cardboard models, hand puppets & surreal dialogue. Influenced as much by music as 'art' in his early years of academe at Walthamstow Art College & labouring under the shadow of the imposing Stalinist era edifice that is Walthamstow Town Hall, Irvin has ploughed a furrow following in the footsteps of such geniuses as Viv Stanshall, Ian Dury, William Morris, & Roger Ruskin Spear...

Irvin's enthusiasm for the journey (of creation) & the uncertainty of its end & final outcome (often at odds with 'the plan') allows him to imbue his work with both a sense of wonder & a queasy uneasiness. Witness the 'Bug Bar Noir' where a hapless habitué lies dead in a pool of blood bathed in the sodium glare of a street lamp as the curtains flap in a sinister breeze. What starts out as a simple maquette or sketch often evolves into a thing hitherto unseen. In another work we see the Fly Police display team slowly pirouetting in formation for the delectation of their comrades who are, (quite literally) glued to their seats, mute & in awe. Both performers & audience locked in an eternal embrace from which neither party can escape. Timeless & marvellous.

These tableaux or stage sets also utilise another lineage that harks back to Philip James de Loutherberg, (amongst others) a gifted painter, set designer & creator of miniature mechanical theatre he called 'Eidophusikon' (from the Greek, "image of nature") which were widely admired when he travelled them through Europe in the early 1800's. Irvin has taken this a step or two further utilising his cherished cardboard, dead insects, & a healthy dash of Hancock to create a series of tableaux 'mordant' complete with a nod to such modish pastimes as serial killing & cannibalism where the stage is set for an all you can eat buffet of your nearest & dearest.

Ultimately the Fly Club is not an exclusive, private members organisation but one to which we all belong – the club of life. Irvin's work has always celebrated life's idiosyncrasies & in these small scale scenarios he explores the drama, pathos & joy that are the essence of the universal human experience.

Welcome to life. Welcome to The Fly Club.

4 PIECES FOR THE 4TH PLINTH

Magnus Irvin's reputation as a public artist remains unimpeachable.

For this exhibition he presents four kinetic & interactive projects for the vacant, 4th plinth site in London's Trafalgar Square.

PG 159 – APHRODITE AT THE WATERHOLE

PG 160 – 11 LORDS A'LEAPING

PG 161 – THE JACK HARGREAVES MEMORIAL SCULPTURE

PG 162 – THE DIGITAL RECTAL EXAMINATION



APHRODITE AT THE WATERHOLE.

MR. IRVIN'S CHOICE OF SOAP AS THE MEDIUM FOR THIS SCULPTURE MAKES A CLEVER OBSERVATION ON LIFE, LONGEVITY, PERMANENCE & PERSONAL HYGIENE WHILST ALSO ACKNOWLEDGING THE INFLUENCE OF HANCOCK ON CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURE.



11 LORDS A'LEAPING

COMMISSIONED BY A GIN COMPANY TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS THIS KINETIC & MUSICAL PIECE WOULD BE MOST APPROPRIATE FOR PLACEMENT ON THE 4TH PLINTH. WHILST CELEBRATING THE FINE TRADITION OF SADISM & PERVERSION IN UPPER CLASS, MALE DOMINATED SOCIETY IT ALSO SERVES TO REVIVE INTEREST IN THE PRIVATE LIVES OF THE JUDICIARY. ALWAYS A GOOD LAUGH.



THE JACK HARGREAVES MEMORIAL SCULPTURE

THIS POIGNANT REPRESENTATION OF JACK USING HIS PRIEST TO CLUB A TROUT WILL SERVE TO REMIND US OF THE FRESH AIR, GREEN FIELDS & CLEAR RIVERS THAT LAY OUTSIDE OF THE CITY. A LOUD GONG WILL SOUND EACH TIME JACK STRIKES THE FISH AT RANDOM INTERVALS REMINDING US THAT THE REGIMENTATION OF TIME IS A HUMAN CONSTRUCT.

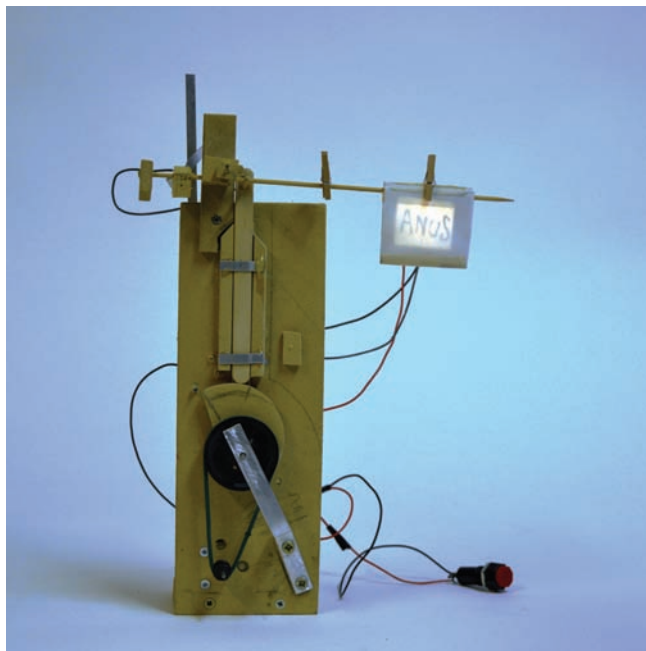


THE DIGITAL RECTAL EXAMINATION

TO PROMOTE PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS MR. IRVIN PRESENTS THIS 1:50 SCALE MODEL. MANY MEN FIND THE PROSPECT OF THE DRE DAUNTING BUT IT IS ACTUALLY THE BEST BIT OF THE OFTEN UNCOMFORTABLE DIAGNOSTIC PROCESS OF PROSTATE CANCER. SHOULD THE SCULPTURE NOT FIND A PLACE IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE IT WOULD BE EQUALLY EFFECTIVE SUSPENDED ABOVE OLD STREET ROUNDABOUT.

EIDOPHUSIKONS

Stage Sets & Interiors



THE GREAT MESSAGE MACHINE.

ANOTHER SUGGESTION FOR A PUBLIC ARTWORK. THE MACHINE WILL RANDOMLY SELECT A WORD WHICH WILL THEN BE BEAMED BY A POWERFUL LIGHT ONTO THE UNDERSIDE OF CLOUDS ABOVE LONDON. A WONDERFUL CONUNDRUM TO THOSE WHO LIKE TO FIND MEANING IN ARTWORKS.



SPIDER SHOWS FLY THE LAMPshade SHE MADE FROM HIS DEAD RELATIVES.

IN A PIECE THAT REFERENCES THE ACTIVITIES OF ED GEIN, DENNIS NILSEN & ILSE KOCH, MR. IRVIN PRESENTS A LIGHT-HEARTED LOOK AT USING CORPSES FOR DECORATION



CLOCK TOWER.

A SURREALIST INSPIRED ATTEMPT TO REINTRODUCE TOWN CENTRE SCULPTURE ON A GRAND SCALE.
A 1:100 SCALE MODEL.



TEACHER TELLS HER PUPILS THAT JELLYFISH ARE REALLY AQUATIC SPIDERS.

IN THIS AGE OF FALSE NEWS & HISTORICAL NEGATIONISM WE SEE A MEMBER OF THE EDUCATIONAL CLASS MANIPULATING THE TRUTH TO DECEIVE HER STUDENTS. USING REVISIONIST TACTICS AS SEEN IN STALIN'S RUSSIA & MAO'S CHINA THE TEACHER BLATANTLY PROMOTES ARACHNOID ETHNO-IMPERIAL RACISM.



A DRAGONFLY DREAMS OF HER DEPARTED CHILDREN.

POIGNANT, WHIMSICAL & SAD.



SHOUTING BOX.

IN AN AGE OF FALSE CELEBRITIES WHO HAVE NOTHING INTERESTING TO SAY THIS ELOQUENT SCULPTURE SPEAKS FOR ALL OF US.



BUG BAR NOIR.

THE WINDOW IS OPEN, THE STREETS ARE EMPTY & THE BAR DESERTED APART FROM A CORPSE LAYING IN A POOL OF ITS OWN BLOOD. SOMEWHERE IN THE SHADOWS A MURDERER IS WAITING.



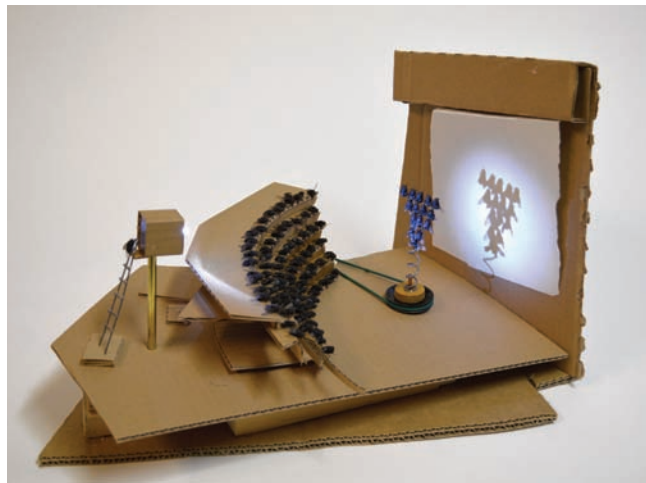
FLY & WASP GO TO SEE THE BEETLES.

IN A SMALL UNDERGROUND CLUB UP NORTH A COUPLE OF FRIENDS ENJOY LISTENING TO LIVE POP MUSIC.



IN THE SECOND ACT OF 'THE MOTH' BY J.P. BEVINS, MRS. LENEHAN MAKES DINNER FOR HER FAMILY.

IN TIMES OF HARDSHIP THE RESOURCEFUL MOTHER HAS TO MAKE DO WITH IMPROVISING HER EVENING MEAL.



THE FLY POLICE DISPLAY TEAM ENTERTAIN THEIR COLLEAGUES WITH SOME SHADOW IMPRESSIONS.

IT'S TEA BREAK IN THE POLICE STATION & THE FLIES ARE HAVING FUN.

CAKES

Dictator Heads

Victoria Sponge & Sugar Icing

Mr. Irvin's edible sculptures of some of our favourite mass murderers were equally enjoyed by his studio mice who tucked in to Idi Amin's face & Hitler's mouth & shirt. Thanks to the wonders of reconstructive cake surgery he has been able to recreate them as wounded veterans. Careful examination will reveal small tooth marks.

The Pamela Anderson & Paul Robeson Unification Cake

Victoria Sponge & Sugar Icing

This cake, made in 2008, spoke of equality, tolerance & the success of an unlikely partnership between two perfect 20th century icons. Time, however has shown that their alliance was not to last. Mirroring our own irreversible ageing process the cake now speaks only of inevitable ruin, destitution & decay.



DICTATOR CAKE: ADOLF HITLER.



DICTATOR CAKE: POL POT.

DICTATOR CAKE: JOSEF STALIN.



DICTATOR CAKE: IDI AMIN.



PAUL ROBESON & PAMELA ANDERSON FLAYED CAKE.



PAUL ROBESON & PAMELA ANDERSON FLAYED CAKE - DETAIL.



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