

## **Reactor (2002) - Press**

### **Don't Miss: Reactor**

**By Maya Palander**

**The Independent - September 2002**

Creation before destruction, in this vast factory building, which is soon to be reduced to rubble. Billed as an interactive experiment, the labyrinth of dynamic installations has developed over time through dialogue between visitors and artists. Opening on Friday night, people of all ages are invited to chat to the artists and mutually "explore and evolve".

### **Reactor**

**By Mark Patterson**

**Nottingham Evening Post - 16 September 2002**

If you go down to the tower block today, you're in for a big ... well, we'll let the artists responsible for a show titled Reactor at 287-9 Ilkeston Rd, Nottingham, explain: "Housed on various levels of an old factory building soon to be demolished, this event offers the chance to interact with a unique labyrinth of dynamic installations, designed to provoke and inspire direct exchanges of operation, destruction, creation and mutation."

Got that? Good. In other words, for ten days, visitors to 287-9 Ilkeston Road (the home of two artists' studios, Graze and Aldaran) will be able to explore and interact with multiple artistic installations across several floors and rooms. This ambitious show, partly funded by East Midlands Arts, opens tomorrow and aims to operate "outside of the established gallery framework – promoting a wider vision of what this activity can be." Reactor is the latest in a series of exhibitions staged at the property in Ilkeston Road ahead of its impending destruction by developers.

### **By Gum!**

**By Simon Atkinson**

**Nottingham Evening Post - 19 September 2002**

This work of art is definitely something to chew over... A group of artists want people to chomp on bubble and chewing gum — and then stick it on the wall to create a picture of Mickey Mouse. "It's like painting by numbers, but with gum instead of paint," explained Tom Miles, from Nottingham.

The unusual project is part of a £4,500 week-long interactive exhibition called Reactor being held in a disused warehouse in Ilkeston Road all this week. Tom, one of eight artists involved in the project, has bought around 600 pieces of chewing and bubble for his creation. He said: "I've been getting some funny looks and people think I must be giving up smoking because I'm buying so much of the stuff."

Visitors arriving at the exhibition will be invited to select a piece of bubble gum or chewing gum from several numbered pots. Then they will be asked to stick their well-chewed gum on a part of the wall corresponding with the number they chose. The end result — in theory — will be a 3ft by 2ft picture of Mickey Mouse "painted" with the used gum. Tom, who says the work is partly influenced by the Andy Warhol exhibition at Nottingham Castle earlier this year, is already anticipating problems. "They don't make gum in many colours any more," he said. "I could only find strawberry, orange, apple and mint so we're limited to red, orange green and white."

Reactor has been organised by the Aldaran and Graze art groups — graduates from Nottingham Trent University's fine arts degree course. One of the artists, Niki Russell, said: "The thing about it is that everything is interactive in some way and it will keep changing as the days go on."

The £4,500 project has been financed by East Midlands Arts and New Deals for Communities. The cash has been used to cover the cost of materials for the exhibition. Some of the money is also helping pay for a minibus to bring school and community groups to the centre. A class of GCSE art students from Big Wood Comprehensive were the first school group to see the exhibition. Dwayne Edwards, from Top Valley, helped create part of the work of art with his bubble gum. He said: "It's a different way of looking at art."

**Critical List: Reactor**  
**By Paul James Marshal**  
**69 Magazine - Summer 2002**

"Reactor is an experimental space into which anyone curious is invited ..." In late September a disused Nottingham factory will be brought to life for a final time before its imminent demolition. For ten days the old factory will house a number of dynamic installations across the many levels inside. These installations are fully interactive and are designed to provoke and inspire direct exchanges of operation, destruction, creation and mutation.

The works within the exhibition will evolve throughout the period they are there, as the visitor's feedback on the displays will influence modification by the creative team who designed them. This is a unique venture as viewers are given the opportunity to step out of their usual passive role, and become participants in the environment surrounding them. The independent team of creative artists will be on hand at the event to question and be questioned throughout the ten days.

The group intends for a wide range of ages to participate in this evolving project, as by operating outside of an established gallery framework, they have given the public direct access to diverse art forms. The project has been produced with the assistance of East Midlands Arts.

**Reactor: Are You Curious Enough?**  
**By Simon Collison**  
**You Are Here Website - 1 August 2002**

Anyone in need of ongoing material for, lets say...a localised art website, has to be happy with the folks over at Graze and Aldaran Studios. I worry that they might not have time to eat, or play football, and they make us at YAH look positively lazy.

The latest project to burst from the studios is Reactor, an experimental space into which anyone curious is invited. Housed on various levels of an old factory building soon to be demolished, this event offers the chance to interact with a unique labyrinth of dynamic installations. This space will be open to the public for ten days of evolving possibilities, waiting to be explored. You can expect ... an army of terracotta warriors, a flock of origami birds, a lifesize puppet ape, a sphere of TV's, a magnetic wall and numerous other things.

The works within this event have formed over an extended period at the site. Emerging from an ongoing dialogue amongst the team, focussed on evolution and interaction – both during their making and throughout the event, as the visitors influence feeds back into the work.

Through hands on investigation the project aims to encourage visitors of all ages to explore their own contribution within this experience. Stepping out of the usually passive role of the viewer into an active investigation of their own relationship to the immediate surroundings. The ten days will exist as a journey through a network of exchanges between everyone involved - with members of the creative team being present at all times to question and be questioned by.

This project has been conceived and produced collaboratively on all levels by an independent group of creative people, with financial assistance from East Midlands Arts. This group have joined forces with a common goal of increasing participation in creative activity, and providing the public with direct access to diverse art forms by operating outside of the established gallery framework – promoting a wider vision of what this activity can be.

'Reactor' will include the next in the series of performances by the Paint Terrorist, and will also include 'Flock' on a more ambitious scale (where audience members are encouraged to make their own origami bird to exchange for one from the 'flock')

From the Graze website : "...the second Apocalypse Soon was an even bigger success than the first, thanks to the hoards of you that came. There wont be one in the first week of September because we're

preparing for Reactor. We will be having an open night party although it will be a low key affair compared to the previous ones (mainly because we don't want any of the work getting wrecked before it's even started). We may well have another big bash on the closing night but that's to be confirmed, so watch this space."

If we know the crazy gang at Graze, Reactor should only enhance their reputation as Art Terrorists with style (and not a small amount of energy and drive). Look forward to a review on the site in late September.

**Review: Reactor**  
**By Mel Kirkham & Richard Hancock**  
**You Are Here Website - 11 October 2002**

Reactor was the meltdown of a series of events staged by Nottingham studio groups Graze and Aldaran. These events took place between August and September at an abandoned factory space on Ilkeston Road, Nottingham. The events, constantly under threat of erasure from developers, earned the moniker Apocalypse Soon.

The diverse nature of the work explored a relationship between viewer and object, which became symbiotic with the production and development of the work over a sustained period of time. The Paint Terrorist continued to challenge notions of process and performativity in painting with his piece Slingshot Painting; inviting the audience to fire sling shots at a chromatically arranged series of plastic bags containing pigment. The proceeding slippage marks its own path across a landscape of action painting; a pictorial document of the duration of the events; both the initial creation of the work and its subsequent overwriting.

Layering of imagery was evident in Niki Russell's Take-Part. A series of repetitious acetate drawings located around the building. The audience were offered the opportunity to take the drawings away from their present context and re-present them. This process of transference perpetuated a slide in reading that forever negated an original model. The slippage was not confined merely within the work, but between works. The transparent, sealable, plastic bags used to envelop Russell's drawings, were later appropriated by the audience to catalogue the dirt and artefacts of Louis Hubert's Wilko Warriors; a series of mass-produced terracotta warriors partially excavated from a false burial site deep within the building. The viewer was forced to negotiate their path with the aid of a flashlight through a darkened space; the figures buried under foot. The spectators were then encouraged to participate in the dig, unearthing the remains; regrouping this Terracotta Army and repositioning it within a mass-produced construct.

The process and confines of production were explored over the ten day period by Dave Bond's piece, Flock; a suspended arrangement of origami birds. The monochrome arrangement was gradually eroded by the intrusion of coloured simulacra, constructed by the audience to the artist's specifications.

Phil Henderson's installation, Wind Bags, formed a corridor of inflated beds on which the audience were invited to lie, creating an exhalation of air through valves and musical instruments. Through this, the audience composed an orchestration of sound, controlled by their own body weight. The generation of sound was perpetuated across Henderson's work Detector; a megaphone suspended above a metal detector, which amplified the ambient noise of the magnetic field. It is this unity of sound and motion which opens up possibilities within the everyday; drawing attention to a set of unstable factors which are omnipresent. Like the scientific revelation of repelling magnetic forces, it is a binary attraction which proves irresistible. As was much of the work shown, the final apocalypse was an alchemy of vibrant contemporary art and community interaction.

**Are you ready to step into the Reactor?**  
**By Ben Whitehead**  
**BBC Nottingham Website - 20 September 2002**

Housed on various levels of an old factory building that'll soon to be demolished, Reactor awaits experimentation from the curious. Reactor exhibits a unique collection of dynamic installations designed to inspire interaction with the audience and is open in Nottingham for just eight days. Sounds pretty

pretentious but those behind the project hope to encourage visitors of all ages to explore not only look but contribute to the displays.

The project has been produced by an independent group of creative people with financial assistance from East Midlands Arts. Their aim is to increase participation in creative activity, outside the conventional gallery framework.

David Bond is one of the directors of the project: "We wanted to get away from passive viewing and create something more involving for people of all ages." He's also the creator of "the Origami birds": "(They're) something I have been working on for a while. The idea is that you make your own bird and then take one of the others away with you."

"There is something for everyone, but many of the of the installations appeal to children. For example there is a giant magnetic wall, a paint catapult and a remote controlled puppet" He says getting the younger generation involved is a key element of the installation: "Getting children to participate is important and will help us to gain the funding for future projects"

Reactor is a newly formed project exclusive to Nottingham and despite the demolition of the condemned property, the creators are hoping it will evolve into future projects in the city.