

## Permit Yourself... Cerith Wyn Evans

### Fractured words floating in a warehouse in Sunderland, Cerith Wyn Evans' temporary public artwork takes Iris Priest on a journey of text and light.

Having taken the metro to Pelaw, the penultimate stop on the outskirts of Sunderland, I then followed a winding, occasionally muddy, path down through a dreary industrial estate to a large, hanger-like warehouse. Upon entering the warehouse I was immediately snagged by the glimpse of a myriad of floating, double-sided mirrors suspended on mobiles in the vaulting rafters. Cut through these mirrors are the disembodied words of a text whose meaning is endlessly obfuscated and reordered as the words gently revolve and spin, alternately reflecting the late morning light, the warehouses' steel balustrades and dusty bricks and the one other, solitary visitor. This is *Permit yourself...* by Cerith Wyn Evans; a major new public sculpture jointly commissioned by Locus+ and Great North Run Culture.

*Permit yourself...* invites a reading which is not only meditative but mutable and highly subjective. As the mirrors slowly turn and reconfigure, and as the light and sounds from the outside world fluctuate (from the hammering rain on the roof, to the faint rumble of industrial vehicles, to the laughs and shuffles of school children) no single experience of the work is the same. The mirrors serve to underline this; occasionally turning to implicate the individual viewer directly within the oscillating arrangement of fragmented

words and partial phrases. The first time this happens you are alarmed to find yourself within the piece, standing beside a stranger or alone, deep in thought. This recognition of yourself as a voyeur and of your place in the inter subjective existence of the work underscores its potential, and the potential of the text, to be infinitely reworked, reimagined and reinterpreted through multiple perspectives.

By elegantly exploding the traditional linearity of reading and the single authorial voice, *Permit yourself...* adds another layer to a dense heritage of Intertextuality; extending from the original text (Stephan Pfohl's essay *We Go Round and Round in the Night and Are Consumed by Fire*) to the post-structuralism it critiqued in Guy Debord's final film, *In Girum Imus Nocte Et Consumimur Igni*, (based on his seminal book *Society and Spectacle*). Having referenced this text in a number of previous works and situations<sup>1</sup> it is almost as though Wyn Evans is departing from the specific locale and meaning of the text itself and—through continual appropriating, dismantling and repositioning—using it merely as a catalyst for the creation of new meaning.

On the return journey to Newcastle I stopped off at Sunderland Metro Station to see *No Jumping on the Bed*—a show by twelve GCSE art students from Thornhill School. Supported and facilitated by Locus+ the students were introduced to *Permit yourself...* through a visit and workshop and then invited to develop their own personal responses to the show. The students worked with the artist Paul Merrick in the exploration of personal memory, symbolism and text, using the professional vocabulary of contemporary art to create a public exhibition in the city centre, thus continuing this ongoing, discursive evolution.

Iris Priest is an artist and writer based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. She is co-editor of CANNED Magazine, an artist run publication published by The New Bridge Project.  
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<sup>1</sup> Including a limited edition screen print with Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh and a Neon Text piece with kunstenaar & deSingel, Antwerp.

Commissioned by Locus+, *Permit yourself...* is one of an extensive catalogue of pioneering, large scale projects they have hosted and enabled both within the region and nationally. Working with artists on the production and presentation of significant, ambitious new projects they extol quality, collaboration and social engagement usually through temporary, sited works (ie primarily not gallery-based). With origins in distinguished artist-led organisations and collectives (including The Basement Group and Projects UK—which were key to the emergence of the Newcastle art scene in the 1980's and 1990's) Locus+ don't work exclusively with the boxoffice hits, however, but are active in supporting artists at earlier stages of their careers as well as maintaining the largest archive of time-based artwork in Europe. Other significant Locus+ commissions include Fiona Banner's *Tornado* (Hillgate Quay, Gateshead and Frith Street Gallery, London 2010) and Richard Grayson's *The Magpie Index* (De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea and BALTIC Contemporary Centre 2010).

Cerith Wyn Evans  
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