

A Brief History of Privatisation



An exhibition by Ellie Harrison

12 March - 2 May 2011
Exhibition Guide

This exhibition is the first solo show at a gallery in London by Glasgow-based artist Ellie Harrison. It features three works: 'A Brief History of Privatisation', 'Vending Machine' and 'Toytown', installed in different locations around the Watermans building.

This free Exhibition Guide will help you to locate the works and provide a bit more information about each.

Ellie Harrison's practice emerges from her continual attempt to strike-a-balance between the roles of 'artist', 'activist' and 'administrator'.

She uses skills and strategies drawn from each of these perspectives to create playful and engaging work, in-and-out of art world contexts, which aims to expose and challenge the systems which control and rule over our lives, be they political, ethical, social, economic, technological or infrastructural.

Her work takes a variety of forms including performance spectacles, interactive installations, collaborative projects, political campaigns, media interventions, lectures, websites and coach trips.

Ellie Harrison was born in Ealing in 1979. She studied Fine Art at Nottingham Trent University, Goldsmiths College and Glasgow School of Art. She is the coordinator of the Bring Back British Rail campaign, secretary of the Artists' Lottery Syndicate and a member of the Scottish Artists Union.

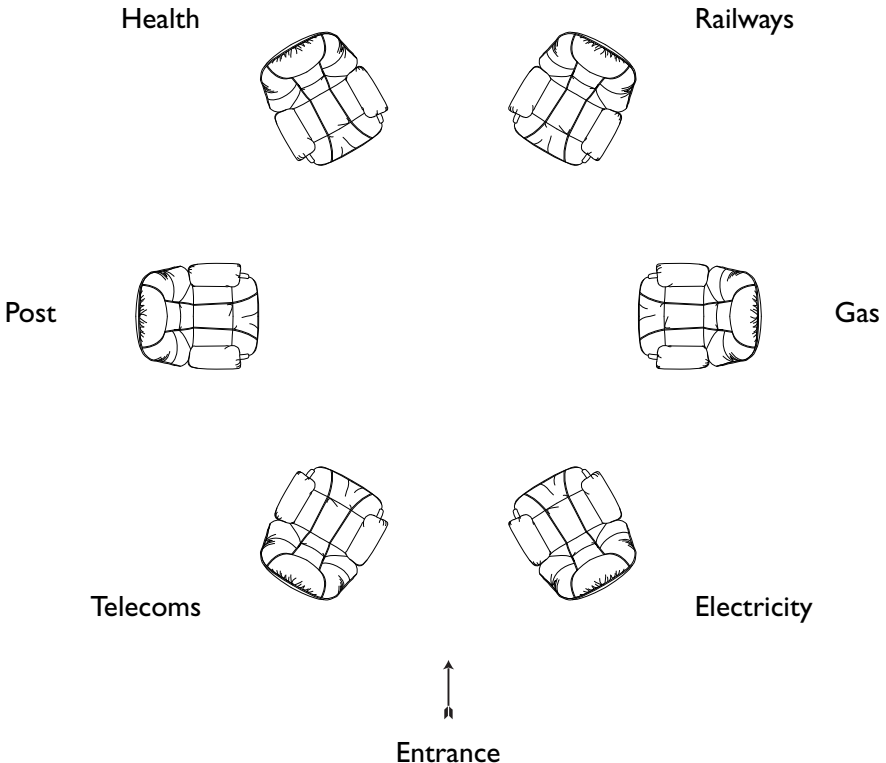
A Brief History of Privatisation (2011)

Installed in the Gallery

This installation uses six electric massage chairs to re-enact changes in UK public service policy over the last century. The chairs are automatically 'switched on' at the dates in which their corresponding service or industry was taken into public ownership and 'switched off' again at the date when / if they were privatised.

The neon-style display illuminating the gallery changes colour to reflect the political party which is in power at that time, flooding the room with a different coloured light and with that, a very different atmosphere...

At a time when the UK's remaining public services - the NHS and Royal Mail alike - are directly threatened by the coalition's new agenda of 'stealth privatisation', this installation aims to uncover the history of public service policy and to track the ongoing oscillations between public and private ownership.



Vending Machine (2009)

Installed opposite the Box Office

This installation was made in 2009 in response to the global financial crisis. It features an old vending machine which has been reprogrammed to release free snacks only when search terms relating to the economy, the recession and the 'cuts' make the headlines on the BBC News RSS feed (see the full list of search terms overleaf).

Whilst seemingly an act of generosity - gifting free food at moments when further doom-and-gloom is reported - the 'Vending Machine' also hints towards a time in the future when our access to food may literally be determined by wider political or environmental events. We may not be able to access what we want, when we want, at the touch of a button.

The 'Vending Machine' project was one of the outcomes of Ellie Harrison's period of residency at Plymouth College of Art in 2009. It was programmed by Ben Dembroski in PureData and Python with production assistance by Jason Mills.

In 2010 it toured to exhibition venues across the UK and completed a 'feedback loop' by featuring on BBC Two's 'The Bubble' TV show, the BBC Four series 'The Beauty of Diagrams', on BBC News North West and BBC Radio Scotland.

Plymouth College of Art

Toytown (2009)

Installed in the Bar

The sister installation to 'Vending Machine', this piece features a dilapidated 1980s kid's car ride which has been reprogrammed to start up and offer free rides when search terms relating to the economy, the recession and the 'cuts' make the headlines on the BBC News RSS feed (see the full list of search terms overleaf).

Search Terms

The search terms used to activate 'Toytown' and 'Vending Machine' are:

'administration', 'administrators', 'bailout', 'bail-out', 'bank', 'bankruptcy', 'banks', 'barclays', 'bill', 'bills', 'bn', 'bonus', 'bonuses', 'boost', 'borrowed', 'borrowing', 'borrows', 'budget', 'budgeting', 'budgets', 'business', 'businesses', 'capital', 'capitalism', 'cash', 'chancellor', 'citigroup', 'city', 'close', 'closes', 'closures', 'contract', 'contracts', 'costs', 'credit', 'crises', 'crisis', 'crunch', 'cut', 'cuts', 'debt', 'debts', 'decline', 'declines', 'deflation', 'dollar', 'dollars', 'dow', 'downturn', 'earn', 'earnings', 'economic', 'economics', 'economies', 'economise', 'economy', 'employed', 'employees', 'employers', 'employment', 'equities', 'equity', 'euro', 'eurozone', 'exchange', 'exchanges', 'exchequer', 'expenses', 'export', 'exports', 'figures', 'finance', 'finances', 'financial', 'firm', 'firms', 'fiscal', 'fiscus', 'forecast', 'forecasts', 'ftse', 'fund', 'funding', 'funds', 'gbp', 'gdp', 'globalisation', 'gloom', 'growth', 'hbos', 'hm treasury', 'house', 'houses', 'housing', 'hsbc', 'hyperinflation', 'hyper-inflation', 'imf', 'import', 'imports', 'income', 'inflation', 'insurers', 'interest', 'investment', 'investments', 'investor', 'investors', 'job', 'job', 'jobless', 'jobs', 'labour', 'lending', 'liquidated', 'liquidation', 'loan', 'loaned', 'loans', 'loss', 'losses', 'managers', 'manufacturer', 'manufacturers', 'manufacturing', 'market', 'markets', 'meltdown', 'money', 'mortgage', 'mortgages', 'nasdaq', 'nationalisation', 'nationalised', 'natwest', 'negative', 'neoliberal', 'neoliberalism', 'osborne', 'output', 'outputs', 'pay', 'payday', 'payment', 'payments', 'pension', 'pensions', 'pinch', 'pound', 'pounds', 'poverty', 'price', 'prices', 'privatisation', 'privatised', 'profit', 'profits', 'properties', 'property', 'rate', 'rates', 'rbs', 'recession', 'recessions', 'recoveries', 'recovery', 'repossessed', 'repossession', 'repossessions', 'retail', 'risk', 'risks', 'sale', 'sales', 'saving', 'savings', 'share', 'shares', 'shoppers', 'shopping', 'slowdown', 'slump', 'slumps', 'spending', 'squeeze', 'sterling', 'stimulate', 'stimuli', 'stimulus', 'stock', 'stocks', 'store', 'stores', 'struggle', 'struggles', 'struggling', 'subsidies', 'subsidy', 'tax', 'taxes', 'trade', 'traded', 'trades', 'trading', 'treasury', 'unemployed', 'unemployment', 'union', 'unions', 'usd', 'wage', 'wages', 'worker', 'workers', 'workforce', 'wto' and 'yen'

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Ellie Harrison

12 March - 2 May 2011
12:00 - 21:00 (daily)

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