

# CITY CLUB

## A SPACE FOR EVERYONE



Welcome to the City Club - a programme of new art, performances, family activities, happenings and talks inspired by the original vision behind Milton Keynes.

For the second issue of our newspaper we take a magical mystery tour, explore the art of protest, and celebrate the summer solstice. On the way, we visit an important public sculpture and discover a new community garden.

City Club was the name given in the 1970s to a mind-boggling leisure complex designed to occupy a whole block of Central Milton Keynes. We've looked back at this un-built scheme, borrowed the name and visualised a space for numerous activities. City Club re-imagined for the 21st century is like a cover version of a classic song, updated with a new sound.

During 2017, MK Gallery is bringing together artists and arts organisations from across Milton Keynes to celebrate the city's 50th anniversary. This takes the form of specially commissioned installations and events that reflect the city's unique environment and its dynamic population across six decades.

MK Gallery is undergoing a major expansion. Once work is completed, City Club will also be a permanent physical space. For now, it's a pop-up space in different parts of the city; a virtual space through its own website; and an imaginative space for the people of Milton Keynes.

To find out more and how to get involved:  
[www.cityclubmk.org](http://www.cityclubmk.org)



Architectural Design magazine, December 1975. David Reddick's exuberant cover illustration depicts life for the pioneer residents of Milton Keynes as a game of snakes and ladders. This special edition looked at the work underway to build a community for the new arrivals.



MK Gallery has recruited a team of twenty-six Associate Artists. Some are from Milton Keynes. For others, the city is a new and exciting playground. Here Helen Parlor, Georgie Manly and Wright & Vandame talk about their perceptions of MK and what they hope to bring to City Club.

# MEET THE ASSOCIATES

## HELEN PARLOR

Driving into Milton Keynes as a child during the 1970s was really exciting, we would play the 'roundabout game' taking it in turns to say either 'left' or 'right' at the roundabouts. There was never a fixed plan but we always found somewhere interesting to explore.

After ten years touring internationally as a dancer and choreographer I came back to Milton Keynes as I could see the opportunity to do something exciting here. MK has such generous and interesting spaces that people tend just to walk past without noticing. I use dance to interrupt the everyday so people look again with fresh eyes.

## GEORGIE MANLY

I explore public spaces using performance, events, games and workshops to create art outside the gallery. I also have a studio in Norwich but physical confinement affects my thinking and I produce more sculptural, material based work there.

I would like to test out new work in Milton Keynes to bring joy to people, using essential elements such as light, colour, warmth and space. For City Club I'm working with artists Townley and Bradby. We wanted a visual identity for the project so started to use yellow flags and wear yellow hats. For me, the yellow flag says 'we are here!'.



Yoga at Wright & Vandame's ArtGym. Below, Georgie Manly flies the flag for City Club.

Photo: Sylvain Deleu



Read more about our Associate Artists at [www.cityclubmk.org](http://www.cityclubmk.org)



Walking in space: dancers respond to Liliane Lijn's *Light Pyramid* for Helen Parlor's MK based MÓTUS project.

# MAGICAL MISTRY TOUR

City Club Associate Artist Priya Mistry, AKA whatsthebigmistry, uses promenades and tours as part of her work. Here she shares her first impressions of Milton Keynes and the experience of working with a group of older residents.

## OUTSIDE IN - THERE'S NOTHING VERY OLD ABOUT IT.

What do I see? Glassy blue-green blocks... everything I expect to see outside is inside, a shopping centre with trees baring fruit, a contradiction to the immense green of greater Milton Keynes. What strikes me is that MK's centre doesn't possess the porous history of a place built over time, no signs of the Edwardian, or Victorian, no old industry or slow evolution of inhabitation.

## MAKE YOUR OWN MK KIT

Purpose built, a fantasy of sorts, economically successfully, logical and easy to travel to. As I cycle through MK I find it far more accommodating, practical and accessible than any other place I've been. Every aspect of its design is numbered. Every bench, lamp post and poster frame, a kind of exemplar place, a catalogue of parts. A 'Make your own MK Kit', that can be ordered, constructed and repeated anywhere. Super-functional, sustainable, uniform but also a blank canvas like no other. This excites me. MK is full of possibility. As an artist and creator I am eager to make my mark - many of them.

**“As an artist I am eager to make my mark – many of them.”**

## PLANS & BREAKING RULES

I'm interested in challenging the way people walk, look, and interact with places so I host an alternative tour through MK's centre. Starting at MK Gallery we journey to the market, the one part that doesn't fit into



Roll up! Roll up! Priya Mistry will show you the way. Below: a detail from an Andrew Mahaddie drawing.

Photo: Graham Shackleton

the MK Kit. An anomaly, it looks and behaves very differently. Housed under a network of underpasses, rows of red and white striped stalls nestle in tightly next to one another, a maze of traders and cultures, foods, spices, hair salons and trinkets.

I ask the group to look more closely, zoom into details and out to places beyond their usual sight line, seek out what is missing, what is forgotten, what traces of the past or hidden gems can be spotted. Finally, to consider what they make of the place MK has become, the journey that led them to be here, why they stayed, what it offers and what may be absent.

## MAKING MY MARK

To my surprise, Andrew Mahaddie's early drawings for Milton Keynes feature a theme park made up of colourful blocks, curves, playful dimensions and utopian environments. I became curious and inspired by the contrast between those initial plans and the place that was actually built.

I wondered what would happen if I were to make new building blocks and features in the city. What if my work formed an experiment, a reaction to MK. What if I were to build new pieces, scatter them through MK to interrupt the built environment? An essence of Mahaddie's plans, my interventions moved in the wind and looked like rogue jigsaw pieces.





# INTO THE FRAY

Free artist collective and architect Sean Griffiths have designed *Citizen Ship*, a travelling 'kiosk', to engage with audiences and communities across Milton Keynes and to stimulate new slogans that reflect the social imaginary of the city. Here they discuss their project with Professor Johnny Golding.



**JOHNNY GOLDING:** I'd like to begin by asking what you mean by 'public', especially in an age when it seems to be disappearing into the netherworlds of internet supra-highways or cordoned off amongst corporate glass structures sliced through by shopping mall enclosures.

**FREEE:** We take the idea of the public from public sphere theory which foregrounds publishing, opinion formation and exchange. We depart from thinking about the public as a mass of bodies or a space, rather we think about the public as a collection of individuals and a process by which we all make and share opinions.

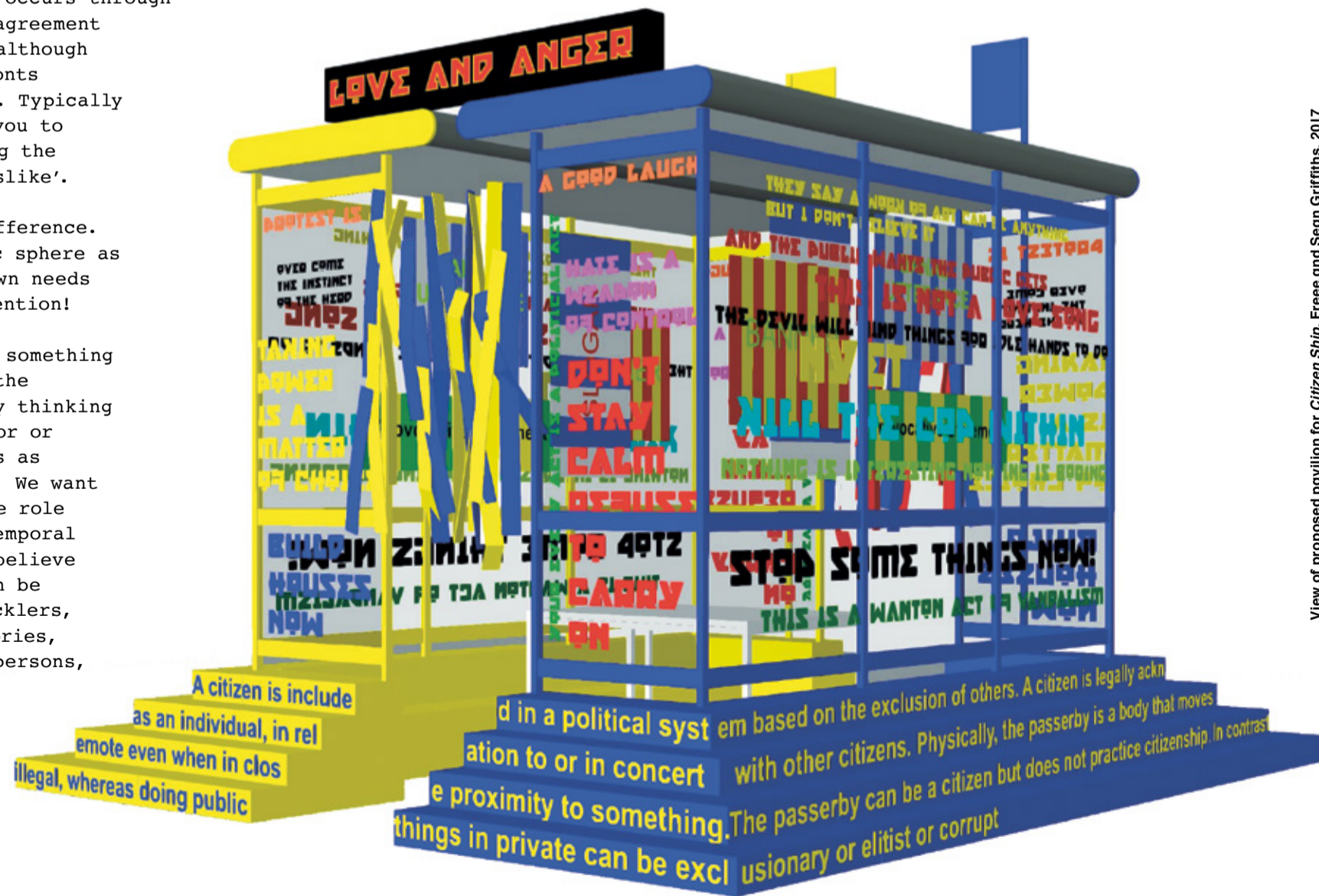
Opinion formation occurs through a combination of agreement and disagreement although liberalism forefronts harmony and union. Typically Facebook invites you to 'like', overlooking the importance of 'dislike'. This results in a concealment of difference. The digital public sphere as it has become known needs some critical attention!

We think there is something to be gained for the function of art by thinking about the spectator or viewer of artworks as potential publics. We want to think about the role of viewers in a temporal sense in that we believe that passersby can be simultaneously Hecklers, Witnesses, Signatories, Advocates, Spokespersons, Publishers, Badge-wearers, Distributors, Marchers,

Recruits, Promise-makers, Co-conspirators, Accomplices; we all go from one mode of being public to another. In this way we all have the potential to act on the world and we imagine the utilization of our individual agency working towards collective dreams - like making a better world to live in.

Our recent works have seen us looking at the potential of kiosks as a place in which we can exchange opinions. We have been considering how kiosks can operate as temporary meeting points in the public realm in which the passerby can develop their political ideas. *Citizen Ship* is the biggest and most ambitious

structure we have built to date and it has been designed to accommodate a number of people. During June and July we will place *Citizen Ship* in four sites across Milton Keynes. Passersby will be able to visit and take part in workshop sessions on 'how to write a slogan' in which they are invited to make and publish new slogans that will be added to the structure. We are planning to include a LED display where slogans will also be shown. We invited Sean Griffiths to work with us on the design of *Citizen Ship* as we were fans of the art and architecture group FAT of which he was a founding member.



View of proposed pavilion for Citizen Ship, Freee and Sean Griffiths, 2017



Protest is Beautiful (Tottenham), silk flowers, photograph, 2013. Photograph by Ben Fitton

**SEAN GRIFFITHS:** My association with the Freee collective goes back to the early days of FAT in the 1990s, when long before we got any architectural commissions, we did a lot of street based art projects involving the use of bus shelters, for sale signs, business cards and shopping bags. Dave Beech (Freee) was involved in a lot of those projects and they were very much concerned with the idea of the public sphere and art's relationship to it. So, for example, the bus shelter project involved using the in-built advertising sites of the shelters to display works of art - 200 in all.

That project also made me think a lot about bus shelters as public spaces. They are enclosures which are open on one side and hence they have ambiguous boundaries. They are used for other purposes, for example suburban kids hang out in them and they have been the locations of countless first kisses. In that respect they are important places which potentially allow for a kind of publicness in form of debate - whether about football, sex, fashion or politics - that is increasingly excluded from the kind of increasingly privatised "public" space to which you allude in your question. With the advent of the internet and smart phones, they also become potential sites for the collective

production and consumption of that information.

So the idea of doing a pavilion based on bus shelters seemed a good way forward in trying to create a public space which had a degree of familiarity, albeit one that is defamiliarised in a number of ways, perhaps most importantly by being progressively covered by multiple texts which will be the outputs of Freee's project.

**“We believe that passersby can be simultaneously Hecklers, Witnesses, Publishers...”**

**FREEE:** Bus shelters are like kiosks which have three functional components: a vertical element which typically doubles as a wall and a sign; a counter - the horizontal space shared by the kiosk operator and the 'customer'; and

a barrier which prevents the 'customer' from occupying the space of the kiosk operator. Often these functions are performed by the same physical component. Bus shelters can have narrow horizontal elements, seats, but not counters or barriers. This is why they feel more open and less hierarchical than conventional kiosks. This means that the occupants of a bus shelter are all on the same side of a barrier that is not signalled by the bus shelter itself. When the bus arrives and the door of the bus opens, with the bus driver cut off from the passengers, the kiosk is finally completed. The acts of payment and the counter-barrier that brings the 'customers' in contact with and separates them from the driver-kiosk-operator.

Our kiosks attempt to create consumers and producers of ideas and opinions without a commercial exchange.

*Freee is artists Dave Beech, Andy Hewitt and Mel Jordan. Johnny Golding is an artist, writer, thinker and Professor of Philosophy and Fine Art at the Royal College of Art.*

*During June and July Citizen Ship will tour to: CityFest 2017, Centre:MK; Art in the Park, Campbell Park; Milton Keynes Arts Centre, Great Linford; and Margaret Powell Square, MK Gallery.*



While busy building a city, the Milton Keynes Development Corporation was also acting as a patron of culture on an industrial scale, adding the latest developments in art, design and architecture like a layer across the countryside. City Club draws shamelessly on this story as a way to remodel the public space of Central Milton Keynes with contemporary art. Here, lead artist Gareth Jones talks about the work of Bernard Schottlander and outlines plans for a new garden beside MK Gallery, designed with Nils Norman.

# SCULPTURE IN THE LANDSCAPE

By the 1970s, there was always a sculpture in the landscape. It was something artists dreamed of, a Romantic impulse to connect with nature through the language of modern life. Bernard Schottlander brought the trend to Milton Keynes and the city never looked back. Today, it has one of the largest collections of outdoor sculpture in the country.

*2MS Series No.1*, pictured on these pages, is a striking example of Schottlander's work from this period. It plays games with our vision. From one angle, it has the solidity of an ancient ziggurat; from another, it appears worryingly fragile, as if about to blow away. The work announces itself as pure form, but also seems to channel the optimism of the moon landings and early computers. And if that red looks familiar, it may be helpful to know that Schottlander obtained a job lot of paint from the Post Office.

While people in Milton Keynes may be familiar with Schottlander's work, the man remains something of a mystery. He died in 1999, so I went to meet his partner Sara Hicks to learn more. She told me about Bernard's cultured Jewish childhood in pre-war Germany, surrounded by avant-garde paintings and the atmosphere of the Bauhaus. She described how this world was torn apart by the rise of fascism, and the moment that Bernard was sent by his family to the UK on the eve of World War II, aged 15. An early feeling of exile may have helped to define his subsequent career. Schottlander occupied his own position on the British art scene; never wholly inside, but never fully outside.

His route into art was unusual. Trained in metalwork, Schottlander began by designing elegant furniture and lamps during the Festival of Britain era, a number of which remain in production today. He turned to sculpture later

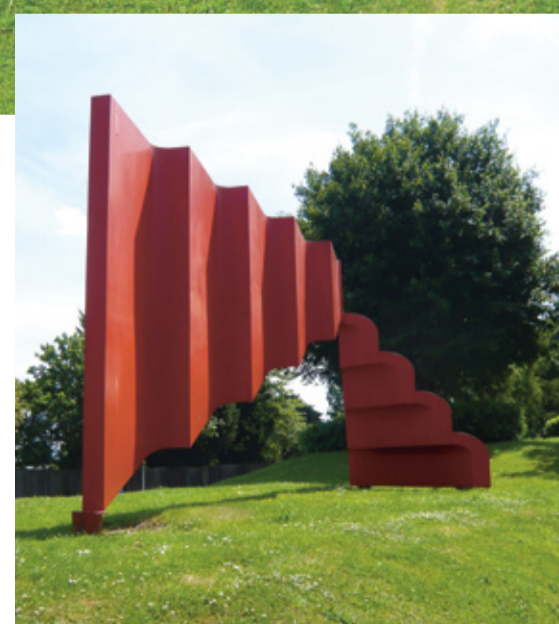
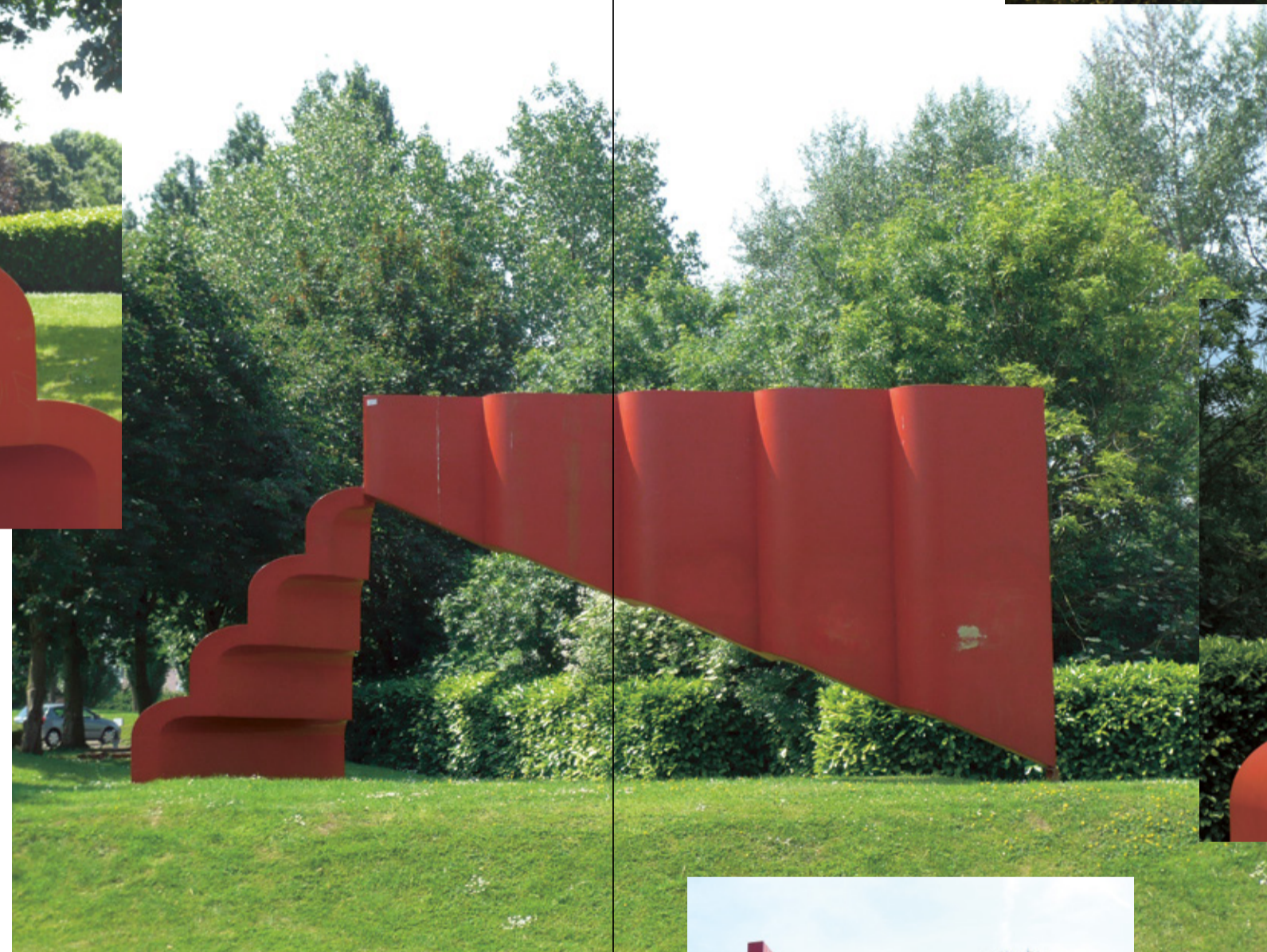
**“If City Club had a rallying cry it would be *Voices not monuments!*”**

on but continued to work across architecture and design, and was perhaps more comfortable in the company of people who create for the public realm. An early supporter was Theo Crosby, co-founder of design group Pentagram, who memorably described his work of the mid-1960s as “heraldry for the machine age”. Asked later on for his own description, Schottlander said he created “really large permanent things made of metal”. It is not unusual for an artist to want their work to do the talking for them.

During the late 1960s, Schottlander reached a creative peak, producing

large-scale outdoor sculpture that today reads like a lightning rod for the zeitgeist. In 1972, he staged a dauntingly ambitious exhibition of seven of these works in a meadow opposite Park Royal Underground Station, on the fringes of London. Motorists driving along the Western Avenue would have been greeted by an extraordinary sight.

The exhibition came to the attention of the MKDC (Milton Keynes Development Corporation), who acquired four works for the new city that were in sync with their own modernist vision. In the archive of Brian Milne, designer



Pure form: Bernard Schottlander's *2MS Series No.1*, 1970. Photomontage Gareth Jones



trees. They spoke loudly to my ten-year old self. Over in Bletchley, *2MS Series No.1* was carefully sited on a raised mound in front of Sherwood House, a radical office building in the emergent high-tech style. It remained there for a number of years, functioning like a logo for the new, but was later moved to make way for a car park.

Outside the newly expanded MK Gallery, adjacent to the future café, Nils Norman and I are planning a garden without walls. At its centre, we are proposing to re-site *2MS Series No.1*, so it can once again sit in a dynamic relationship to new architecture, and sign the City Club as the cultural heart of Milton Keynes. We would like to restore the work and re-connect it to the utopian vision behind the design of the city, exemplified by the unique street plan of Midsummer Boulevard. A planting scheme based on MKDC ideas will circle the garden.

If City Club had a rallying cry it would be *Voices not monuments!* Today, sculpture in the landscape has many different meanings, and our approach as artists to designing the garden is to step back and facilitate the creativity of others, allowing for the development of art that we can't yet know. Further down the garden, exploiting the slope of the site, will be a soft amphitheatre, a place for outdoor performances and events programmed by the Gallery. Perhaps it is time for Bernard Schottlander to step into the spotlight.

*More works by Bernard Schottlander can be seen in Fred Roche Gardens, Central Milton Keynes, and at the Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre.*

of the early play equipment for Milton Keynes, I found a faded photo of children clambering across a work by Schottlander at the Park Royal exhibition, a confusion between art and play that is also key to City Club. Sara Hicks tells me that Schottlander was happy for his work to be explored in this way.

I remember being driven through the compound of the MKDC at Wavendon Tower, the most important place in the whole universe, and catching glimpses of Schottlander's futuristic forms, growing out of the grass like very peculiar



# DIGGING

Artist Sarah Wright lives in Conniburrow and has been instrumental in the creation of a new community orchard. Anna Townley met up with Sarah to talk art and gardening.

## THE COMMUNITY

**ANNA TOWNLEY:** Can you describe your practice for me?

**SARAH WRIGHT:** My speciality is drawing. I teach drawing so I feel very confident about that. It reinforces my own plans and ways of doing things. Drawing is all about looking and as a child I spent a lot of time sitting gazing out of my window. I would be fascinated by everything I looked at. I think I see things differently to other people.

**AT:** Can you give an example?

**SW:** As a child my father showed me how to look and to take notice, constantly pointing out the differences in architecture, and in nature. I spent hours enjoying spot-the-difference challenges in comics. As an adult, I notice when something is out of place, for instance if a painting has been hung so it's just slightly out. Someone pointed me towards the book *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* which helped reassure me that how I was seeing things, and the way I was drawing, was right, rather than trying to do things how I was told at school and just tripping over myself because I was trying to work within certain boundaries that I didn't understand.

**AT:** Tell us a bit about the Community Orchard that has been laid out and planted this year in Conniburrow.

**“As they're germinating, I'm germinating”**

**SW:** The Orchard has recently – in March of this year – been handed over to the community. Big Local Conniburrow have asked me to lead the Friends group to bring local people together in preparation for the official opening of the Orchard in September. In the original plans for this area, drawn up in the late 60s, they envisaged an orchard, and an indoor/outdoor garden with greenhouses. So this Orchard could be seen as fulfilling some of those original plans.



**AT:** How does your art practice overlap with your work at the Orchard?

**SW:** I was thinking about this question – ‘Is this art?’ Then I thought, why don't I sow the question? So I sowed ‘Is this art?’ in clover seeds. It's difficult for me to find what it is exactly I'm doing, so by asking the question ‘Is this art?’ and just doing, hopefully through the process, something will come out of it.

As I'm pondering on that question I'm checking my seeds and looking for the growth and the cracks in the seeds. As they're germinating, I'm germinating. I'm thinking of calling it *The Seed Project* as a working title.

The text that accompanies my drawings of the *Millennium Diamond* [shown in the recent exhibition *MK Calling*] is about following the five basic principles of drawing. If I get stuck I generally default to that; so that's line and edge, shape and space, darks and lights, relationships, and then all of those together to create the whole, also known as the *Gestalt*.

In terms of relationships, I'm thinking about the street names in Conniburrow and the seeds of those street names. I've been looking up what they look like and trying to identify them. What I'd like to do is find some of these plants and draw people's attention to those names: Yarrow Place, Speedwell Place, Ramsons Avenue.

**AT:** What's your connection with Milton Keynes and with Conniburrow?

**SW:** I grew up here. We moved here as a family, to the new town, when I was nine. I've been inspired not only by the innovative education at Stantonbury Campus but also by the general philosophy of the new town of Milton Keynes.

**AT:** How can people get involved with the Orchard?

**SW:** I'm here at regular times every week: Mondays from 2pm, Wednesdays from 10.30am and Thursdays from 7pm. I'm currently preparing for an event called *Flower Power* on the 24th June for MK50 so I'm planting flowers to connect with 1967 and flower power.

Sarah Wright sets to work at the Conniburrow Community Orchard. Photography: Jane Russell





# CITYLAB IN ORBIT

Citylab is the engine of City Club, a programme of talks, screenings, and events that are taking place while MK Gallery undergoes a major expansion. This summer, Citylab explores the counter-cultural thinking that informed Milton Keynes. You can celebrate the solstice with an evening of artists' film, learn more about the making of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and experience Deep Listening.



There's wheat in the field: Judith Noble's *Mysteries* (1982) screens on 24 June. Image courtesy Cinenova

## GOOD MORNING STARSHINE

The hippy movement left its mark in Milton Keynes. Midsummer Boulevard, the main thoroughfare of the city centre, is cosmically aligned with sunrise on the summer solstice. Street names such as Avebury Boulevard evoke sites of ancient ritual.

This referencing of the Neolithic has been a source of inspiration to artists. In 2007, Cornford and Cross staged *Trance Nation*, a happening on the eve of the summer solstice. A helicopter made a logarithmic spiral around the city, ending its journey above the stone circle near Willen

Lake, shining its spotlight on a gathering of Druids. More recently, Sam Jacob placed *MK Menhir* - a scale replica of a standing stone finished in iridescent paint - on top of a porte cochère.

Returning to this rich seam of inspiration, curators Laura Guy and Charlotte Proctor are presenting *Stone Bodies, Red Sea*, an evening of artists' film, readings and music at MK Gallery on 24 June. The event orbits four rarely seen works by Judith Noble from the 1980s, alongside two new films by Charlotte Prodger and Frances Young.

## A SPLENDID TIME IS GUARANTEED FOR ALL



Getty Images

On 7 July we screen Alan G. Parker's recent documentary about a defining moment in popular culture, *It Was 50 Years Ago Today! The Beatles: Sgt Pepper & Beyond*. The film mixes rare archival footage and interviews with close associates of The Beatles to explore the tumultuous period surrounding the recording of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Following the screening there will be a Q+A with the director.

## LISTEN AS IF YOU WERE AN ANCIENT STONE

To mark World Listening Day, on 18 July MK Gallery will host a day-long event dedicated to sound, including a workshop on Deep Listening led by Dr. Ines Amado and Ron Herrema. Through sonic meditations, body energetics, and dream awareness, participants will explore the teachings of American avant-garde composer Pauline Oliveros, the founder of Deep Listening. In the evening, there will be a talk by Professor George Revill of The Open University on his research into sound and landscape.

**TURN ON,  
TUNE IN,  
AND TYPE:  
CITYCLUBMK.ORG**

# 2017...

In April, *MK Calling* showcased artists working in and around Milton Keynes. Below, visitors to the preview watch John Strutton's *Disco Bunnies* in the former workshop of MK Gallery. Ashleigh Griffith gathered the hair cuttings of roughly 1,000 residents to make *It's Been a Long Long Way to Here*.



MK Gallery trustee Sunita Yeomans gives a speech at the opening of *MK Calling*.



Gareth Horner celebrated Milton Keynes' 50th birthday with a homage to Robert Indiana's famous *Summer of Love* print.

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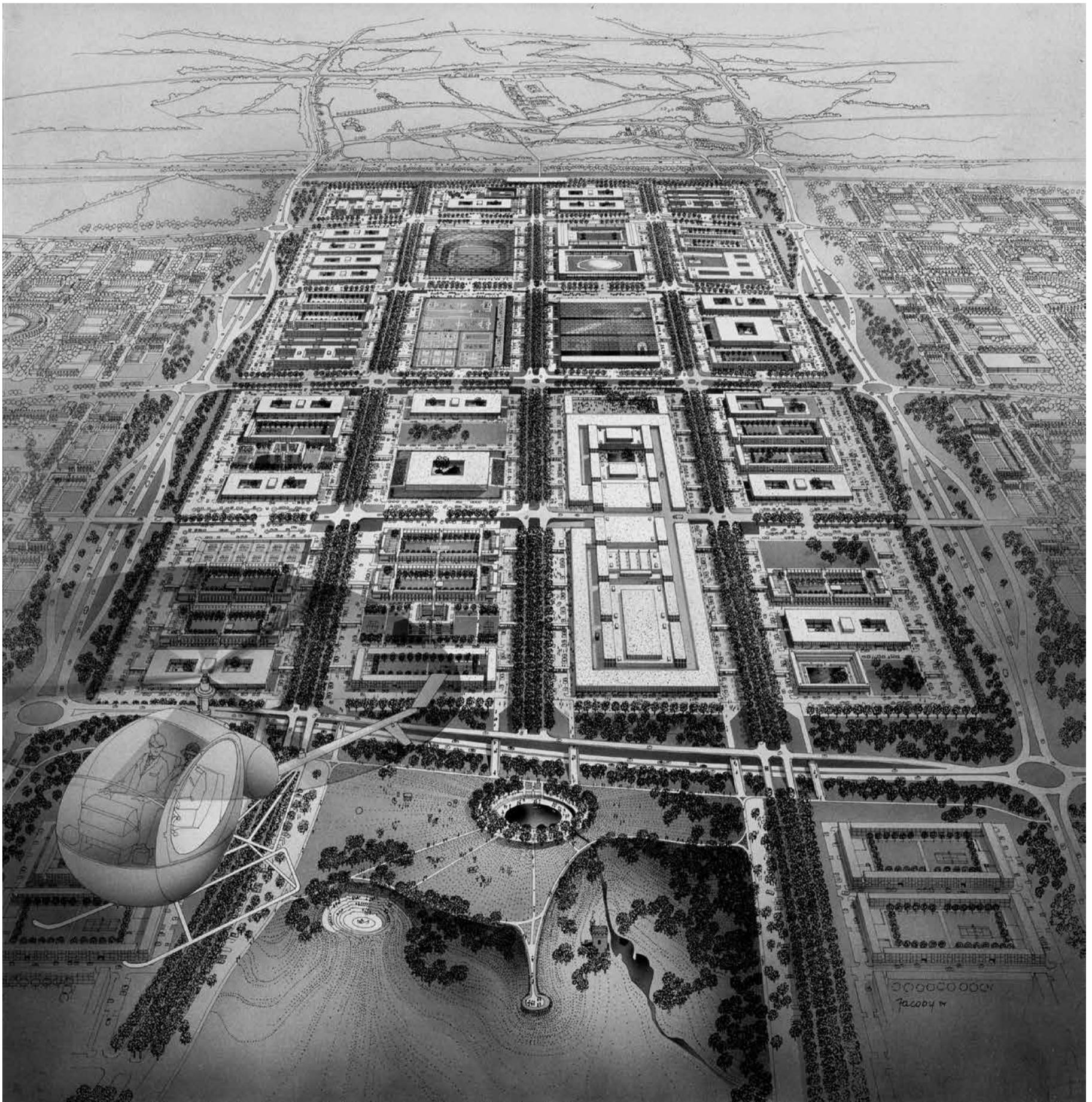
by MK Council as part of the MK50 anniversary celebrations, the Ernest Cook Trust, The Open University, and the University of Northampton.

City Club Steering Group:  
Cllr Liz Gifford (Chair), Lucy Bedford, Niki Braithwaite, Julie Dawes, Shane Downer, Cllr Derek Eastman, Monica Ferguson, Cllr David Hopkins, Louise Izod, Anouar Kassim, Francesca Skelton, Anthony Spira, Iain Standen, Emma-Jayne Taylor, Sunita Yeomans.





# IT WAS 50 YEARS AGO TODAY



Helmut Jacoby, *Central Milton Keynes in 1990, 1974*

Milton Keynes was born from the social revolutions of the post-war era: imagine Clement Attlee's welfare state taking a ride in a *Yellow Submarine*. It was designated a new town in 1967, but its maverick founding figures quickly decided to call it a city. They made it a byword for the latest developments in architecture, town planning, landscaping, social development, education, design and art.

During his time as Chief Architect and Planner, Derek Walker (1929–2015) frequently commissioned legendary architectural renderer Helmut Jacoby to depict the un-built city – a gift for its future citizens. This hand-drawn image has since become emblematic of the extraordinary vision behind Milton Keynes. We're reproducing it here as a tribute to Derek and the talented team of architects, designers and beautiful freaks that he assembled to design the city.  
— Gareth Jones