

Free

mima
gallery guides

Bonnie Camplin

Railway Mania

16 July–14 November 2010



***Railway Mania* is the result of research carried out by Bonnie Camplin into the industrial development of Middlesbrough with particular reference to its railways, steelworks, and shipbuilding. This is coupled with Camplin's continued interest in campaigns for women's rights and historical movements in feminism. This is the first comprehensive solo exhibition of Camplin's work and continues her ongoing investigation into the deeper meaning of science, technology and rational thought. The exhibition incorporates aesthetic and historical material relating to the industrial revolution and in particular the birth of the railways.**

Bonnie Camplin (b.1970, London) is known for her films *Hallo Hero* (2003), *Good Health* (2003) and *Special Afflications by Roy Harryhozen* (2006). These films have brought her national and international critical acclaim.

mima's group of 14–21 year olds TMT (*The Modern Times*) were keen to meet Bonnie to find out more about her practice, due to her interests in politics, publicity and fame. This has resulted in a film that is showing in mima's atrium, and a series of questions that she answers in this guide.

John Louis Higgins, TMT, age 21

'Choosing not to rely solely on her accomplished drawing skills, Bonnie Camplin's diverse creative practice including sculpture and video installation, reflects a desire to challenge, question and fully explore her themes. After meeting Bonnie she is clearly passionate about life and personal freedom. Her work is educational and insightful, and I think deliberately tries to encourage greater understanding of her thoughtfully chosen subjects. Illuminating unseen worlds and human interactions, she shows her interest in cultural anthropology and demonstrates the power of art as a communicative medium.'

Kayleigh: Why is art important?

BC: It is not only important; it is an absolutely necessary response to any situation.

Charlotte: How important is the relationship between your art and the audience?

BC: The relationship between my art and the audience is beyond my knowledge. My work is between me and the universe. After it's made, the artwork has a life independent of myself. The audience is an incidental witness to a by-product of a necessary material engagement between the universe and myself.

Beccy: How do you select specific situations or objects to use in your work? The woman biting her nails for example, something seen as a 'bad habit'.

BC: The drawing you mention is an HB pencil study of a photographic image of a teenage girl. She is having psychological troubles. It's from a book called *The Enigma of the Mind*. I can identify with her nervousness and nail biting and the component part to that state, which is boredom. But to answer your question more generally, I'm willfully subjective. This means I trust my subjectivity as a perfect agency for making an objective record of events.

Charlotte: How do you title your pieces?

BC: I set up an electrical charge between the image and the words. I don't know how else to describe it.

John Louis: What would you like to see happen but doubt ever will?

BC: I would like to see an end to optimism. Just kidding! If I would like to see it happen, then it will happen eventually. I would like to see the ideas of Buckminster Fuller properly, fully realised on 'Spaceship Earth'¹. I doubt I will see it in my lifetime. Then again you never know!

Blossom: Is there such a thing as bad publicity?

BC: Publicity is only more or less useful. If you can survive or thrive without it then you definitely should.

Craig: If you could live with just one artwork what would it be?

BC: Anything by my little cousin, Grace.

John Louis: You have been chosen to redesign the Union Jack, what would your new flag look like?

BC: A black star made of black petals in the night.

Blossom: What is your definition of fame?

BC: Fame is a currency, which is only useful if you're invisible. Otherwise it is quite useless. It's a false economy.

John Louis: What advice do you have for the young?

BC: Understand your political reality. Understand the nature of work. Understand energy. Understand physics, biology and chemistry and the meaning of these things. Be close to nature. Enjoy a fully creative participation in this fully creative universe. Get rid of your television, don't read mainstream newspapers, magazines or advertising posters. Follow your interests, know what is necessary and do what is necessary. Live in the present. Live in the moment. Stay free, stay curious and stay generous. Remember you're alive.

1 'Spaceship Earth'; a world view term that relates Earth to a spaceship flying through the galaxy. Richard Buckminster Fuller published a short book entitled *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* in 1969. In it, he suggests that Earth is a mechanical vehicle with a limited amount of resources. Without maintenance and careful appreciation, it will cease to function.

Bonnie Camplin is currently visiting Professor at Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Her recent exhibitions include *When the Wind Blows Up You*, Chisenhale Gallery, London (2009) *SAS*, Michael Benevento, Los Angeles (2009) *Lightbox*, Tate Britain (2008) *To the End of the Night*, Galerie Cinzia Friedlaender, Berlin (2008). She frequently collaborates with Polish artist Paulina Olowska and recent projects include *Usher We (Down There)*, Tate Modern (2008) the 2nd Turin Triennial (2008) and *Salty Water/What Of Salty Water*, Portikus, Frankfurt am Main, Germany (2007).

mima's event space on the third floor will screen a special collection of films, YouTube streams and television clips selected by Bonnie. This varied group of works demonstrates her multi-faceted approach to exhibition making.

RELATED TALKS & EVENTS

A CLOSER LOOK AT... PHOTOGRAPHY

Thurs 5 August, 2.00 – 4.00pm

A CLOSER LOOK AT... FASHION

Thurs 19 August, 2.00 – 4.00pm

A CLOSER LOOK AT... DRAWING

Thurs 26 August, 2.00 – 4.00pm

£3, booking essential

Are you aged 13+ and looking for a different way to spend an afternoon? Then join mima's group of young people, TMT, for some sessions created by them, for you.

BRIDGE BUILDING!

Sat 28 August, 1.00 – 4.00pm

Free, just turn up

An afternoon of bridge building in mima garden with the British Steel Archive Project.

A CLOSER LOOK AT BONNIE CAMPLIN

Thurs 16 September 5.45pm

A tour of *Railway Mania* with mima's young people, TMT (*The Modern Times*).

IN CONVERSATION...

October (please check visitmima.com for confirmation of the date)
Bonnie Camplin talks to writer and performer Paul Clinton.

THE BRITISH STEEL ARCHIVES

Wed 13 October 12.30pm

A talk about the British Steel Archive Project with Dr. Joan Heggie, Research Fellow, Teesside University.

VIVA TALBOT: HER LIFE, ART AND TIES TO TEESSIDE'S INDUSTRY

Wed 27 October 12.30pm

Dr. Joan Heggie explores the life and works of Viva Talbot.

SHOOTING TIME, FILM & TALK

Thurs 28 October, 5.30pm

Ian Macdonald, photographer, discusses his processes and working methods in relation to his focus on Teesside over the last 35 years.

CIVILIZING MOBILITY: THE RAILWAYS GENDERED CONSTRUCTION OF BRITAIN'S PASSANGER TRAINS C.1920-39

Wed 3 November 12.30pm

A talk by Colin Divall, Head of the Institute of Railway Studies & Transport History, University of York.

For a detailed programme of related events, please visit mima's website www.visitmima.com

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