

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release: 07 January 2010



Trip the light fantastic

21 January - 18 March 2010 everyday 5-10pm

London N19: Junction Road, Holloway Road, Archway Mall, Highgate Hill and Archway Close

Tube: Archway

Buses: 4, 17, 43, 134, 143, 210, 263, 271, 390, C11, W5

Trip the light fantastic is an extraordinary new temporary work by artist Jane Watt illuminating the windows and streets of Archway. Glowing images fill previously empty windows. Dark corners are bathed in a deep pink light. Dancing is brought to the pavements and skyline of the much-maligned Archway.

Jane Watt's research into the demolished Gresham Ballroom led her to discover an unexpected enthusiasm for dancing by Archway residents, workers and students. The artist has photographed over two hundred local people dancing in their offices, shops, living rooms and dance classes. She has gathered this unique source material for her two month long photographic installation and series of participatory dance events that take place in the shadow of Archway Tower. The work celebrates the uplifting effects of light, dance and social gathering and involves young and old: from once-in-a-blue-moon dancers to committed dance enthusiasts, from street dancers to jivers, ballroom dancers to belly dancers.

Forty huge translucent photographs of Archway dancers are being installed in office and shop windows around the Archway Mall, Junction Road, Holloway Road and Archway Road. At night the images glow from ambient light emanating from within the buildings, animating the buildings with colour and movement. Alongside these photographs, three simple pink beams of light will light up dark and neglected corners by the Post Office, under the tower and beside the old Gresham site. Local dancers, groups and passersby have been invited to dance in these magical spotlights in six public events that include tango lessons, street dance performances, and an Archway street disco. The lights will then remain on each winter evening inviting spontaneous performances from passers by.

'I love dancing and have been doing it all my life. It keeps me young.' Local resident

AIR (Archway Investigations and Responses)
Byam Shaw School of Art at Central Saint Martins
University of the Arts London

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On the surface the site looks like nothing out of the ordinary, but the more time I spent walking around, speaking to local people who live and work in Archway, the more I began to uncover an intriguing vibrancy that I wished to portray. I have been astounded by the number and range of dance enthusiasts. I thought I might find a few dozen local dancers, but instead I've found that behind so many doors there are tapping feet, swirling arms and faces that light up at the sound of their favourite dance tune". Jane Watt

Archway can be a difficult place to live and work - negotiating the wind, traffic and murky concrete architecture can dominate the experience of this north London neighbourhood. The lack of contemporary arts in Archway is also widely acknowledged, with a void in provision between Camden Arts Centre and the Barbican. Although a major transport hub with 2,000 daily buses bringing 15 million passengers a year and 6.9 million annual tube visits, Archway can feel isolated and neglected.

Alight is a long-term programme of temporary artworks that reveal and animate Archway during long winter nights. It is a partnership between AIR and Islington Council, with funding from Transport for London. *Trip the light fantastic* is the second Alight commission. Hilary Powell's *Light Years Away* brought roller skaters from across London to skate under the foreboding Archway Tower last winter. Next winter will see a magnificent fountain of light by David Batchelor.

Jane's important and thoughtful study of Archway reveals the joyful, and the timeless, in our everyday. 'Trip the Light Fantastic' is an optimistic and poignant beginning to the new decade. Anna Hart, AIR, Byam Shaw School of Art

Cllr Lucy Watt, LBI Executive Member for Communities, Business and Skills said *Archway has a lot to offer residents and visitors but we know there's also a real demand for contemporary art and creative opportunities for local people. I encourage people across London to come to see the installation and to take part themselves."*

Notes to editors:

Jane Watt is intrigued by how light can be used to create enchanting and extraordinary installations and happenings. She has made temporary and permanent site-specific work in the public realm since 1994. Her work ranges from giving out ice-cream and pretend sunrises on Helsinki's dark winter streets for the Forces of Light Festival, to finding out how to make a straight rainbow on the Pentland Hills in Lothian, to her present long-term project of gathering 6000 words from the people of Cambridge for a giant word search that will cover a new large glass wall in the centre of the town. She has undertaken a number of public commissions including permanent work for the Edinburgh Dental Institute and the Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital (which won the Saltire Society Art for Architecture award in 2005). She has shown in Britain and abroad including exhibitions at Aspex Gallery, Harris Museum, Crafts Council, Varberg Museum in Sweden and Buzzer Thirty in New York. www.janewattprojects.com

AIR (Archway Investigations and Responses) is a project studio at Byam Shaw School of Art (Central Saint Martins). AIR introduces artists to Archway—into the conversations, situations and institutions of an ordinary place—and encourages them to explore and test ideas without a definite outcome in mind. The studio investigates and responds to the visible and invisible qualities and predicaments of Archway, engaging with its disparate communities of residents, workers, passing commuters and incidental tourists, through temporary artworks, events, exhibitions and publications. AIR fosters deliberate and consequential collaborations between artists and others, supporting the realisation of extraordinary new work and the shifting expectations of Archway. www.archwayinvestigationsandresponses.org

Contact

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Images (Hi Res available)
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