

Media Information: Thursday 16 October 2008

BALTIC

MATT STOKES

The Gainsborough Packet

Wednesday 4 March – Sunday 10 May 2009

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art is delighted to announce a solo exhibition by Becks Futures Prize winner and locally based artist **Matt Stokes**. **The Gainsborough Packet** is a co-commission with London based gallery 176 and NewcastleGateshead's **BALTIC**.

Stokes's research-based practice is frequently concerned with musical subcultures. He proceeds by acquainting himself with particular groups, their histories and values, then producing films, installations and event-based works related to his findings. Collaboration and shared authorship are central to his practice, as is an enthusiasm for DIY approaches.

The Gainsborough Packet is the culmination of a year's research and development, which began with Stokes's discovery in the **Tyne & Wear Archives** of a letter written in **1828** by an ordinary man named **John Burdikin** living in Newcastle upon-Tyne. Tracing the adventures of Burdikin's life, the letter was the inspiration for lyrics, music and a 16mm film created by Stokes and his collaborators on the project. For **The Gainsborough Packet**, Stokes has collaborated with musician **Jon Boden** from acclaimed folk-big-band **Bellowhead**, composer **Alistair Anderson**, who is one of the UK's leading exponents of the folk tradition and co-founder of The Sage Gateshead's **Folkworks**, and **Tim Kerr**, an iconic figure of the US punk and early hardcore scene.

The Gainsborough Packet engages with folk traditions, contemporary music videos and popular culture, and is being produced with a particular sensitivity to the shared legacy of folk music in Camden, London and NewcastleGateshead, where Stokes lives. Since the rapid growth of these areas during the latter half of the 19th century, folk music and traditions have played an important role in the social and cultural fabric of each area, and this relevance is highlighted by **The Gainsborough Packet**.

Alessandro Vincentelli Head of Programme adds: “The Gainsborough Packet is a thrilling collaboration between two cities brought together despite their geography. It offers a fascinating insight into the world of urban communities in the 19th Century and an enthralling look at the social and folk histories of both places. Through this exhibition BALTIC continues to support work created by regionally based artists and extends our partnership with 176, the London gallery founded by Newcastle born collector Anita Zabłudowicz. It will also bring alive the mesmerising life story of a remarkable local man which, in John Burdikin’s own words was ‘deserving, distressing and incredibly interesting’.”

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Matt Stokes originates from Cornwall and now lives and works in NewcastleGateshead, England. In 2006, he won the Becks Futures Prize and recent solo exhibitions include Real Arcadia (LuttgenMeijer, Berlin), Now is Early (VOID Gallery, Derry), Long After Tonight (Kavi Gupta Gallery, Chicago and ZieherSmith, New York), [un]promised land (Attitudes espace d'arts contemporains, Geneva), Lost in the Rhythm (Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin), and Pills to Purge Melancholy (Collective, Edinburgh). Forthcoming shows (both Solo and Group) will take place at, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art (Gateshead), Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci (Prato), Deptford X (London). Stokes is currently producing new commissions for Arthouse (Austin) and VIVID (Birmingham).

His first monograph, *Lost in the Rhythm*, was published in 2007 by Collective and Art Editions North, in association with Temple Bar Gallery. The book documents and explores Stokes’s ‘performance based’ investigations into alternative and underground music cultures such as the Northern Soul scene and the Rave phenomenon, with essays by Rob Tufnell, Matthew Collin and Momus.

***The Gainsborough Packet* collaborators:**

Jon Boden: Lyrics

Jon Boden is a folk singer and musician who performs both as a soloist and in groups, including the duo Spiers & Boden and eleven-piece group Bellowhead. With a concentration on interpretations of traditional English folk song, Jon’s lively performances and recordings with each of these entities have attracted increasing critical acclaim. In 2003, Spiers & Boden won the BBC2 folk award for Best Duo, and in 2007 Bellowhead won the folk award for Best Group and Best Live Act (also 2008).

Alistair Anderson: Music

Alistair Anderson has been at the forefront of the performance of traditional music for over three decades. Internationally acknowledged as the leading performer on the English Concertina, he has taken the music of Northumberland to new audiences around the world, touring extensively throughout Europe and America. As well as championing the traditional music and musicians of the area, Anderson has a growing reputation as a composer of new music rooted in the local traditions.

Tim Kerr: Music production

Tim Kerr is an artist, musician and skate-boarder who lives and works in Austin, Texas. His musical influences span soul, funk, British folk, old-time, free jazz, punk, hardcore and acoustic music. In 1978, along with two skate friends, Kerr formed the Big Boys, one of the most influential bands of the Texas punk and early hardcore scene. He has also played in numerous other bands including the Court Reporters, Poison 13, Bad Mutha Goose, Monkeywrench, Lord High Fixers, and Total Sound Group Direct Action Committee.

Sam Lee: John Burdikin

One of the most accomplished interpreters of traditional English song, Lee founded the barn dance band Cut a Shine, and also organises the Magpie's Nest folk club in Islington, which promotes 'Old Folk, New Folk, No Folk'. He works for the English Folk Dance and Song Society, which is based at Cecil Sharp House in Camden.

176 is located at 176 Prince of Wales Road, London NW5. Its exhibition programme includes one artist-in-residence and one curator-in-residence each year. **176** are delighted to present Matt Stokes's work from his residency. Former residents include artist Gerry Fox and curator Vincent Honoré for 2007-2008. The curator-in-residence for 2008-2009 is Berlin-based independent curator Anna-Catharina Gebbers. Her project includes the invitation to E-flux video rental to set up shop at **176** for the duration of Matt Stokes's exhibition.

The Gainsborough Packet is co-commissioned by **176** and BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and supported by Arts Council England, and will be shown at **176** from 26 February – 3 May 2009 as part of an exhibition resulting from Stokes's year-long residency with **176**.

