

EXHIBITION GUIDE

The Promise

A dialogue between the city and its people

19 July – 9 November 2014



ARNOLFINI

For over 50 years Arnolfini has provided an innovative cultural resource for the people of Bristol and beyond. A leading centre for the contemporary arts, Arnolfini presents an ambitious programme in the visual art, performance, music, film, and offers a wide range of engaging family events. An educational charity, Arnolfini provides a diverse and exciting interactive learning programme for all ages. Arnolfini is also home to a much-loved shop, with an exceptional range of books and gift ideas, and a Café Bar offering locally sourced and home baked food in a historic harbourside setting.

The exhibition is generously supported by



INTRODUCTION

The Promise is about the relationship between a city and its residents. If we understand the city as more than a place, and more than a shared infrastructure, how do a city's inhabitants live together? How does the city's design – its architecture, urban planning and landscape, impact on the lives of residents?

"A poem compresses much in a small space and adds music, thus heightening its meaning. The city is like poetry: it compresses all life, all races and breeds, into a small island and adds music and the accompaniment of internal engines." (E.B. White, *Here is New York*, 1949)

The Promise looks at the role of design and art in the city – how future cities might function, and how we see and create a story for a city. The project focuses on significant points in the history and changing agendas of social planning, such as post war construction, the redevelopment of the harbourside and more recently, the increasing importance of green issues as Bristol takes on the title of European Green Capital in 2015.

Besides the exhibition in the galleries at Arnolfini, the project engages with the city directly. International artists have been invited to develop new works for significant places in Bristol. A series of events and an engagement programme for all ages accompanies the project, taking place both at Arnolfini and across Bristol.

The exhibition includes works by Marcel Breuer, Abraham Cruzvillegas, Conway and Young, Luke Fowler, Isa Genzken, Judith Hopf, John Miller, Charlotte Moth, muf: architecture/art, Studio Manuel Raeder, Josef Strau, Sophie Warren and Jonathan Mosley, Stephen Willats, and a Mapping Project: *Doing Things Separately Together*. Offsite commissions include works by Jeremiah Day, Assemble, Gabriel Lester, Kate Newby, Oscar Tuazon, and Lost Property. The exhibition is accompanied by a new text by Jennifer Kabat.

FOYER

For the Foyer, Studio Manuel Raeder has designed a large scale photographic collage. Images from Bristol and other places, such as the SESC Pompéia in São Paulo by Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi, transform the Foyer into a window to other worlds. The images focus on the delicate concrete surfaces of buildings, with derelict overgrown places highlighting the way spaces change.

GALLERY 1

The display in Gallery 1 focuses on the way we imagine the space we live in, presenting a number of architectural models and archive material relating to urban planning in Bristol. These materials are selected to give an overview of the diverse ways in which the city has been considered and, in many cases, not realised.

Architectural models allow us to visualise and interpret the place we inhabit. Acting as a tool for discovery, models can serve as a reminder of past landscapes and enable us to view locations or structures from an outside perspective, making a space for conversations about our relationship with the built (and unbuilt) environment. Models are also used as an instrument for negotiation by municipal powers. For the exhibition, two lost models for urban designs have been reconstructed to re-investigate their failed utopias. Further archival material gives glimpses of these key moments of Bristol's urban development over the past 60 years, such as post-war reconstruction, council housing and traffic plans that proposed to solve the city's problem of access and mobility – the long-term effects of which can be witnessed today.

Jeremiah Day responds to the results of traffic plans directly with his work, *Awake and You're in Motion (Response to Brief from Bristol Radical Historian)*, commissioned for *The Promise* and presented at an underpass of the M32 and at Arnolfini. Investigating the history of top-down traffic planning from a critical perspective, Day explores the impact of the M32 on the surrounding communities and the people who lost their homes during its construction. A series of lithographs juxtapose the standing stones of Stanton Drew as another monumental artifact defining the landscape.

The legacy of Modernism plays a crucial role for contemporary artists. Many re-connect to social utopias, but often with a focus on the neglected diverse relationships between people and their environment. Abraham Cruzvillegas' sculptures, in this sense, reference *autoconstrucción*, a process of self-building

in Mexico using found and recycled materials. In Judith Hopf's playful film work, *Some End of Things: The Conception of Youth* (2011), an egg attempts to navigate a Modernist building, eventually becoming wedged in a doorway. Gleeefully absurd, the work allows Hopf to pose questions about the excluding nature of the social environment. A series of photo collages by Isa Genzken are dedicated to her interest in formalism and an infatuation with its scale and formal elegance.

GALLERY 2

The display in Gallery 2 presents *Doing Things Separately Together* an Atlas of Bristol: a series of maps which have been collaboratively produced with local groups and experts. Through discussion with a number of formal and informal groups, information was gathered on 30 different subjects relating to the use of the city; ranging from the locations of CCTV and surveillance, the geological landscape underpinning city life, to sites of social and political unrest. The resulting maps are both anecdotal and revealing, often created from memory and particular to the groups invited.

Each map contains several layers, some with more subjective information and others with statistical data, representing how different social groups simultaneously occupy the space of the city. Topics include unbuilt transport schemes, Bristol's banking history, carnivals, surveillance cameras, how football divides the city, and places of leisure.

The project is conceived and delivered by Sophie Warren, Jonathan Mosley, Anthony Elliot, Libita Clayton and Axel Wieder, graphics by Jake Gunn and William Richardson.

As an intervention in the display, Sophie Warren and Jonathan Mosley have produced a new work that imagines a motorcycle leaving a tyre burn circle in the gallery space – a map of a movement in the scale of 1:1.

Activity in Gallery 2

In the window spaces of Gallery 2, you are invited to create your own maps inspired by views of Bristol, or play the Map Game to test your navigation skills – directing friends to a secret location. The window steps can be used to look outside at the city – what might the area have looked like in the past? How it might look in the future? Family guides are also available to invite discussion and investigate the themes in the exhibition as you explore the galleries.

GALLERY 3 & 4

Central to Gallery 3 is Stephen Willats' seminal work, *Brentford Towers* (1985). Since the early 1960s Willats' pioneering art practice has sought to extend the realm of art beyond the gallery, seeking an exchange of ideas with participants and viewers.

"While, like so many others, I was excited by the symbolism of modern building, by the outface of its mass and presence in the city, I was also becoming aware of another aspect to these buildings, a dark side, as reflected in the hidden, segmented structure of their interiors." (Stephen Willats, *Beyond the Plan: The Transformation of Personal Space in Housing*, London: Wiley-Academy, 2001)

Brentford Towers was made in collaboration with residents of Harvey House in West London. Residents selected objects of personal significance from their living rooms, alongside things seen from their apartment windows that also held some special meaning for them. Forming relationships and connections between these objects and interior and exterior life, Willats created a series of photo display boards which were installed every two days on different stairwells of Harvey House. Made for the residents and installed in this specific context, *Brentford Towers* has only been shown once since 1985, at the local library in Chiswick. The work is presented in the exhibition alongside a number of archival materials. The display in the gallery connects Willats' work with other attempts of artist-driven architectural or urban regeneration projects and also the function of private space in urban development. A current local example is a collaborative project between muf architecture/art and a group of residents from Kingsmarsh House and Banyton House, two neighbouring tower blocks in Lawrence Hill, Bristol. The group is currently developing a new outdoor area for a communal green space, with designs inspired by residents' favourite chairs.

Furniture — and interior design in the wider sense — plays a crucial role in how we inhabit space. Modernist architects were often also object designers, which helped them to develop a total vision for a new lifestyle that was intended to emancipate people from the constraints of the past. For Bristol, the Gane Pavilion is a rare but legendary example of a Modernist masterpiece. Built in 1936 for the furniture company P.E. Gane, by the Bauhaus-affiliated architect Marcel Breuer, the building was both a presentation space for Breuer's designs and a promotion tool for a new way of living. The exhibition presents a selection of extraordinary objects by Breuer, loaned from the Ken Stradling Collection, the Design Study Centre, and the Gane Trust.

Further documentation looks at past aspects of housing that had a direct impact on Bristol, such as the Garden City movement. Documents are shown

alongside art works that reflect on these topics. Josef Strau's series of posters and sculptures comment on his own upbringing in a reform housing area, and Charlotte Moth's photographic tables re-imagine past architectures as if part of a new everyday narrative.

In Gallery 4, Luke Fowler's film essay, *The Poor Stockinger, the Luddite Cropper and the Deluded Followers of Joanna Southcott*, (2012), focuses on the radical socialist Edward Palmer-Thompson, whose activities were rooted in northern working class communities. Observations of a suburban landscape are presented alongside an optimistic voice-over, exploring the issues at stake for progressive politics in the post war period. Presented in a contemporary context, the films are a requiem for the expectations of post war social agendas, in which the buildings function as protagonists.

GALLERY 5

In Gallery 5, families are invited to contribute to the exhibition by creating imagined cities and add to a collaborative artwork. Over the course of the exhibition the work in this gallery space will shift and change, reflecting what happens in the city around us.

During a four week residency in October, graphic designers from the University of the West of England BA programme, in a project by Conway and Young, will work collaboratively in response to the themes of *The Promise*. Exploring design's critical potential to both create and maintain official narratives for buildings and places, as well as to address contemporary issues and possible futures, the students will design alternative narratives and uses for a series of architectural sites in Bristol.

Work in progress will be displayed in the exhibition spaces, followed by an official launch of the projects outcomes on Wednesday 5 November.

With support from the Graphic Design BA at the University of the West of England.

OFFSITE

Oscar Tuazon

Live Steam Shift Whistle, 2014

Location: Ladies Mile, The Downs

Formed of a 20 foot steel and concrete fire pit, and doubling as a barbeque grill, Tuazon's striking sculpture playfully questions the relationship between Bristol's residents and one of its most iconic public spaces. The dual function of his work harks back to an ancient tradition of communal sharing, eating and shelter by firelight. Throughout the summer, the sculpture will play host to a programme of Sunday afternoon Summer Barbeques, catered by top Bristol restaurants, inviting visitors to picnic.

Jeremiah Day

Awake and You're in Motion (Response to Brief from Bristol Radical Historian), 2014

Location: M32 roundabout Eastville and Arnolfini galleries

Awake and You're in Motion (Response to Brief from Bristol Radical Historian)

investigates historical memory and urban transformation. Day explores the development of the M32 and its impact on local communities, presenting a series of lithographs pasted to the pillars that support the M32. An additional set of posters is displayed in the galleries at Arnolfini, along with documentation of a performance made at the roundabout.

Jennifer Kabat

The Place of the Bridge, 2014

The exhibition is accompanied by a new publication by Jennifer Kabat. *The Place of the Bridge* (2014) is a semi-fictional narrative set Bristol that connects urban myths with theory and historical research. Taking us on a journey across the city through time and space and drawing on the legacy of Modernism, *The Place of the Bridge* questions how history is constructed and the ways past events are held in the fabric of a place. The text is printed as a newspaper for visitors to take away from the galleries.

Kate Newby

Mr and Mrs Hands, 2014

Locations: One Redcliffe Street, corner of Redcliffe Way and Welshback, Brunel Way underpass, Control Room, Redcliffe Way Bridge

New Zealand born artist Kate Newby embraces the unnoticed, inviting us to look again at our surroundings. Installed on four sites across the city in overlooked or surprising spaces, *Mr and Mrs Hands* is a series of temporary interventions - gestures and objects that explore the role that architecture plays in shaping thought and perception.

Assemble

Spirit of Play, 2014

Location: Leigh Woods

Assemble are a collective of architects, designers and artists who strive to rethink how we live in our cities, creating opportunities to make public spaces more open and joyful. Part provocation and part experiment, Assemble will occupy a site in Leigh Woods with a series of three hands-on, collaborative workshops. The workshops will result in a Spirit of Play 'Tool kit'.

A joint project by Trust New Art Bristol, National Trust and Arnolfini.

Gabriel Lester

Vayu-Vata, 2013

Location: The Harbourside

Often focusing on sound, light or smell, Gabriel Lester is interested in the possibilities of ephemeral experiences in architecture and the environment. *Vayu-Vata* consists of two Aeolian harps, the work will create an harmonic atmosphere and soundtrack for the city. Popular in the Medieval period, "Aeolian" or wind harps are musical instruments that are activated and played by the wind.

Lost Property

Date and location TBC

Lost Property is a collective based in Amsterdam-Zuid in the Netherlands. They run a bar situated in the suburb of Kolenkit in Amsterdam, which also serves as a space for events and discussions, in parts financed by the sales of their own, home-brewed beer. For *The Promise*, Lost Property will organise a weekend of events in late August.

EVENTS

Exhibition Tours

Every Saturday, 2pm, free

Free tours of our galleries are led by a member of staff or invited guest. Learn more about the work on show, and ask any questions you may have about the exhibition

Performance: Jeremiah Day

Awake and You're in Motion (Response to Brief from Bristol Radical Historian)

Saturday 19 July, 12 noon, M32 roundabout at Junction 2, Easton Way

Jeremiah Day's new commission, located at Junction 2 of the M32, is inspired by the urban redevelopment of Bristol and the experiences of those who lost their homes to make way for progress. To open the work, Day will perform a new performance piece, alongside his installation.

Assemble

Leigh Woods, access via North Road and follow the signs

Part provocation and part experiment, Assemble will occupy Leigh Woods with a series of four hands-on, collaborative workshop weekends.

Introductory talk and rope swing workshop: *Saturday 19 July, 3pm*

Follow-your-nose Play: *Wednesday 6 and Thursday 7 August, 10am–5pm*

Tree Play: *Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 September, 10am–5pm*

Mud Play - get messy!: *Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 October, 10am–4pm*

Barbeque events

The Downs, off Ladies Mile

Sunday 20 July, Sunday 3 August, Sunday 17 August and Sunday 21 September

Throughout the summer, Oscar Tuazon's sculpture will play host to a programme of Sunday afternoon Summer Barbeques, catered by top Bristol restaurants.

Bristol Bike Rides

Saturday 26 July, Saturday 2 August, Sunday 21 September, free but booking essential

A series of bike rides led by Sustrans that take in various locations in Bristol, as well as some of the offsite artworks presented as part of The Promise.

We Are Family: The Promise

Saturdays 26 July, 30 August, 27 September, 25 October, 1pm–5pm, free

Get creative and join in with engaging, fun, practical activities such as gigantic drawings, 3D collages and workshops with amazing artists. Drop into our Light Studio and see what fantastic creations you can make! Most suitable for ages 5+ but all ages are welcome to have a go.

Talk: Design and social context

Thursday 2 October, 6.30pm, £6/£4

Including presentations by Alan Powers and Kieran Long, this discussion event will look at the impact of design on people's lives and the social and political contexts that define our relationship to our environment.

Family Foraging Walk

Sunday 12 October, 11am, £5/£3, free for under 16s

Discussion: Bridges, Underpasses and Roundabouts Promise and disjuncture in the city

Wednesday 15 October, 2pm, free

Using the M32 as a case study, this discussion event looks at the relationship between design and people's experience of the city. This afternoon session will bring together local groups and commentators to discuss projects planned and happening on sites around the M32 motorway, with the aim of articulating shared visions from emerging ideas.

Screening: Radio On

Friday 17 October, 8pm, £6/£4

A rare example of a British road movie, featuring music from a number of new wave bands from the time, as well as established artists. The film shows scenes from the area around Temple Meads station, including a now defunct petrol station, the former Grosvenor Hotel, and the infamous single-lane Victoria Street flyover which was removed in 1998.

Chris Petit, UK, 1979, 104 minutes

Buggy Tour: The Promise

Tuesday 21 October, 11.30am

An opportunity for parents to bring their babies (under 1 year old only) to the gallery for a special tour with Arnolfini's Curator.

Andy Field: Here, Today

Saturday 25 October & Sunday 26 October, 1pm–5pm, free

Join artist Andy Field and children from local primary schools as they take you on a journey into the future of Bristol. See the city through a child's eyes, their imaginings, wild interventions, hopes, fears and impressions of the city that we leave for them.

Artist Talk: Gabriel Lester

Wednesday 29 October, 6.30pm, £6/£4

Join artist Gabriel Lester as part of the UWE Fine Art / Art in the City series of lectures.

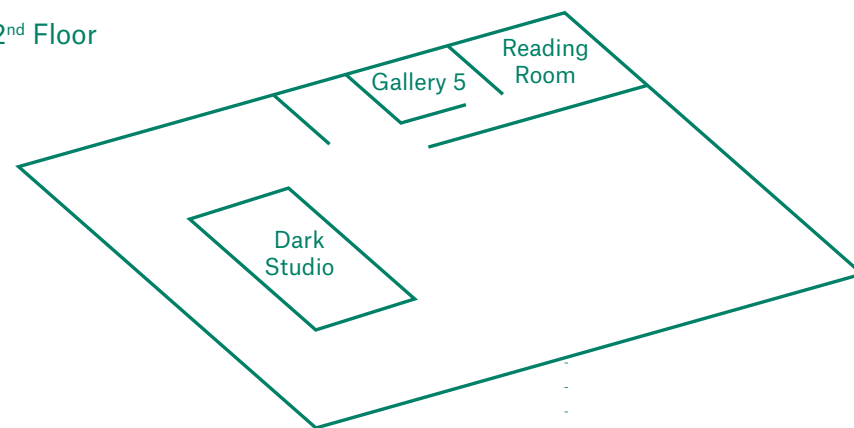
The Promise: Designing a New Reality

Wednesday 5 November, 6pm, free

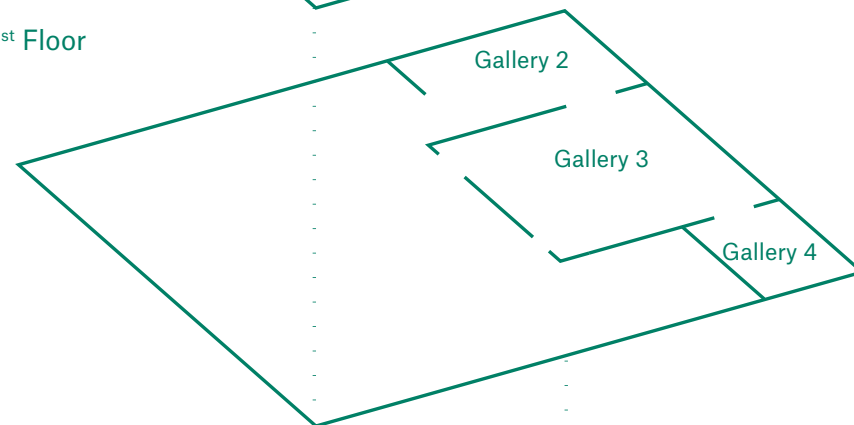
Launch event following of a four week residency by graphic designers from the University of the West of England BA programme, working collaboratively with Conway and Young in response to the themes of *The Promise*.

GALLERY PLAN

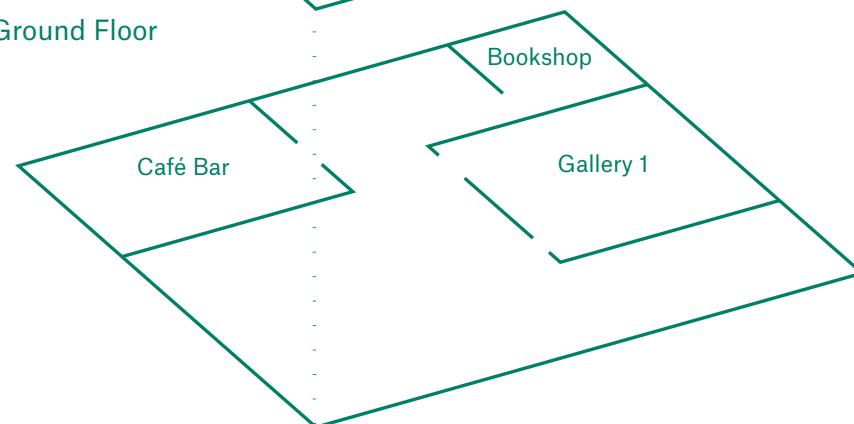
2nd Floor



1st Floor

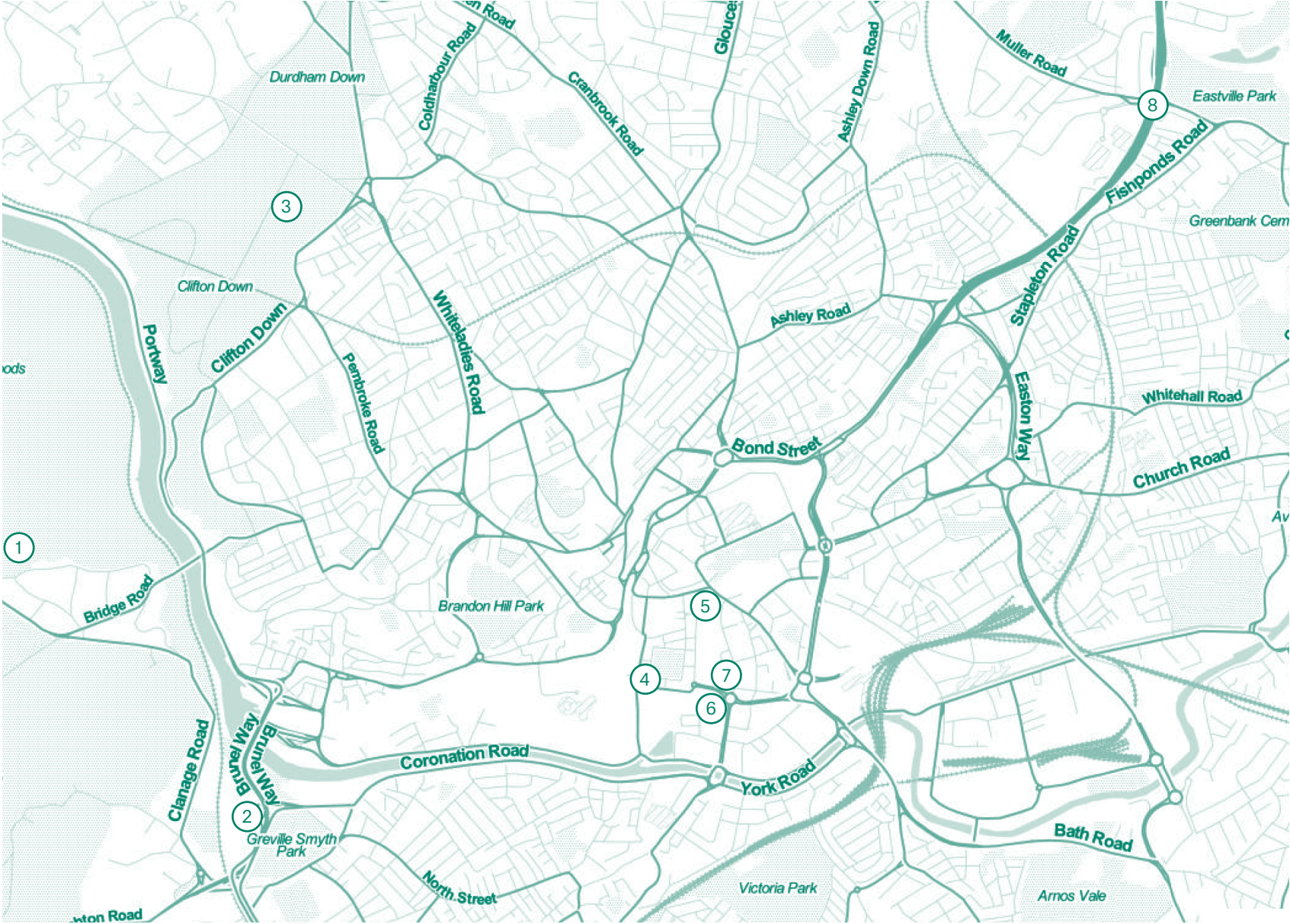


Ground Floor



MAP

- ① Assemble
- ② Kate Newby
- ③ Oscar Tuazon
- ④ Gabriel Lester
- ⑤ Kate Newby
- ⑥ Kate Newby
- ⑦ Kate Newby
- ⑧ Jeremiah Day



Photography Policy

Please feel free to take photographs of the exhibition for your own private use.

Reproduction is not permitted. Please share your impressions of the exhibition via Facebook, Instagram or Twitter: #PromiseBristol @arnolfiniarts



Reading Room

If you would like to learn more about the exhibition, there are further resources and exhibition guides available in the Reading Room on the 2nd floor.

Shop

In the shop you can find a selection of publications for sale that relate to the current exhibitions.

Access

We aim to make all visitors welcome. There are parking spaces for people with disabilities outside our main entrance, access via Farr's Lane. Our galleries are wheelchair accessible.

Stay in Touch

To join our free mailing list send us an email to boxoffice@arnolfini.org.uk or visit arnolfini.org.uk. You can also follow Arnolfini on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter: @arnolfiniarts.

Portable seating and transcripts of video works are available on request

Large print versions of this guide are available at Box Office

Exhibition spaces open: Tuesday to Sunday and Bank Holidays, 11am – 6pm
Admission to exhibition spaces is free.

Arnolfini, 16 Narrow Quay,
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arnolfini.org.uk / [@arnolfiniarts](https://www.instagram.com/arnolfiniarts)

Supported by



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

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Cover image: George Scane

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