

# Exhibition Guide

## Yael Bartana

*And Europe Will Be Stunned*

12 September – 4 November 2012

First Floor Galleries

## Arefin & Arefin

*The graphic design of Tony Arefin*

12 September – 4 November 2012

Second Floor Galleries

## Ann Veronica Janssens

*Oscar*

12 September – 4 November 2012

Tower Room

**Yael Bartana**  
***And Europe Will Be Stunned***  
**12 September – 4 November 2012**  
**First Floor Galleries**

The trilogy *And Europe Will Be Stunned* by Israeli artist Yael Bartana uses propaganda-film aesthetics to consider the troubled history of Europe and the Middle East, within the context of Poland.

Bartana's films have an uncertain status, combining fiction with reality and actors with historic locations. There are references to politics, occupation and immigration, and the conflicting hopes, desires and fears of communities in their efforts to establish a homeland and national identity.

The spectre of anti-Semitism, the racial politics of Zionism and the controversial 'right-to return' in Palestine all feature as under-currents in these films. They suggest an imagined future as a way to deal with the trauma of European history\*.

The trilogy begins with *Mary Koszmary (Nightmares)*, 2007. Inside a derelict stadium, built by the former communist regime, a young leader makes an impassioned call for the return of 3.3 million Jews to Poland. There are visual references to Nazi propaganda films, whereas the actor, Sławomir Sierakowski, is a left-wing political activist in his own right. In this film he represents a fictional political party, the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP), inaugurated by Bartana. His appeal argues for a more racially mixed Europe- "With one colour, we cannot see. With one culture, we cannot feel..."

The second film, *Mur i Wieża (Wall and Tower)*, 2009, shows the JRMiP manifesto spreading and providing the inspiration to a group of idealistic young party members to build what resembles a kibbutz (a socialist collective based on Zionist ideals). The site is that of a planned Museum of the History of Polish Jews in a former Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw. The flag and symbol of the Movement combines the opposing ideologies of Soviet communism and Israeli Zionism- the Polish Eagle and the Star of David, on a red background. The film is in the style of early Soviet cinema and a simple wooden wall and tower structure not only echoes those constructed in 1930s and 1940s Palestine, but also Stalinist labour camps and Nazi concentration camps. The addition of barbed wire raises questions and problematic issues emerge: who is being protected from whom?

The final film in the trilogy, *Zamach (Assassination)*, 2011, imagines the assassinated leader of the JRMiP lying in state in the Stalinist Palace of Culture in Warsaw. Bartana shows the JRMiP now as a mass movement with huge crowds attending the commemorative ceremony. Ghosts from Europe's violent past are present and several speakers give eulogies for the fallen hero. Some of these speakers, including a Holocaust survivor and a Jewish émigré, wrote and delivered their own speeches. Others, such as the leader's widow, are played by actors. The cult of the dead leader is reminiscent of communist ideology, but by

contrast, in death, the leader of the JMRiP may have achieved what he set out to do: a new utopian vision of collective unity that acknowledges difference and competing voices.

Bartana's film trilogy could be interpreted as a dream, a hallucination or a nightmare, as idealistic or sceptical. Is it an exploration of the power of film in promoting ideology, a genuine political project, or a vision of hope for a more tolerant future?

In making *And Europe Will be Stunned*, Bartana described her biggest challenge as "*finding the right line between the real and the fictional.*"

*"I am interested in creating a myth able to cause the masses to take out to the streets."*

Yael Bartana was born in Jezreel Valley in Israel in 1970. She currently lives and works between Berlin and Tel Aviv. She represented Poland at the 2011 Venice Biennale, the first time a non-Pole had been invited to represent the country. *And Europe Will Be Stunned* has subsequently been shown in Poland, Denmark, the Netherlands and London.

*And Europe Will Be Stunned* is commissioned by Artangel; Ikon, Birmingham; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek; Netherland Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture; Outset Contemporary Art Fund; Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw and supported by Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam; Sommer Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv; Australia Centre for Contemporary Art; Artis, New York; Polish Institute, Tel Aviv. Produced by My-i Productions in association with Artangel, 2011. The presentation at Ikon is supported by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute and the Mondriaan Fund. *Zamach (Assassination)* (2011) is supported by The Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture Fonds BKVB.

A full colour catalogue, with essays by Jacqueline Rose, Boris Groys, Joanna Mytkowska, Adi Ophir and Ariella Azoulay, accompanies the exhibition, priced £29.95.

Visit Ikon's online shop at [www.ikon-gallery.co.uk/shop](http://www.ikon-gallery.co.uk/shop) for the full range of Ikon's catalogues and limited editions.

*\*For more information on the historical context for Bartana's films, please visit the Resource Room on the Second Floor.*

## **Associated Events**

### **Yael Bartana In Conversation**

**Wednesday 17 October 2012, 6.30–7.30pm – FREE**

Join artist Yael Bartana, curator Aneta Szylak and Director Jonathan Watkins as they discuss the themes and issues explored in the exhibition *And Europe Will Be*

*Stunned*. Places are free but should be reserved by calling Ikon on 0121 248 0708.

## **Play Poland Film Festival**

**Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 September, 12-5.30pm – FREE**

Ikon hosts two days of short film screenings as part of the Play Poland Film Festival. The selected films were produced by the widely acclaimed Andrzej Wajda School, Munek's Studio and Kino Polska TV. These short films show different aspects of Poland's contemporary reality.

Organised in collaboration with the Birmingham Polish Expats Association. All films are in Polish with English subtitles. Please visit Ikon's website for programme details: [www.ikon-gallery.co.uk](http://www.ikon-gallery.co.uk)

## **Arefin & Arefin**

***The graphic design of Tony Arefin***  
**12 September – 4 November 2012**  
**Second Floor Galleries**

Tony Arefin (1962–2000), emerged as a graphic designer during the late 1980s and became one of the most important figures in the British art world. With his numerous catalogues for institutions such as Chisenhale Gallery, Serpentine Gallery, the ICA and Ikon itself, Arefin had achieved such art world dominance by the early 1990s that design critic Rick Poynor described him as 'single-handedly processing the print needs of the entire British art scene'. Comprising early publications from the YBA movement to seminal advertising campaigns for corporate clients such as IBM and Nike, the exhibition reveals the intuitive genius of Arefin's work.

Born in Karachi, Pakistan, Abed Mohammed Arefin (later nicknamed Tony by his mother) moved with his family to Bangladesh and then, in 1974, to London as a result of political upheavals in Dhaka. Arefin worked as a picture editor and design assistant for several London magazines, before a brief period as a curator at The Photographers' Gallery. There he organised an important exhibition of Neville Brody's influential graphic design for *The Face* magazine, and began designing his own catalogues soon after. He often referred to himself then as 'Arefin & Arefin', at once jokily assuming a corporate brand (chiming with Saatchi & Saatchi) and implying multiple identities.

Naturally gravitating towards the art world, Arefin produced work for a variety of institutions and seminal YBA exhibitions such as *Freeze* (1988) and *Modern Medicine* (1990), both organised by Damien Hirst. He later designed catalogues for

artists such as Douglas Gordon, Graham Gussin, Cornelia Parker, Jasper Morrison and Adrian Piper.

*"As a designer you're never credited but always complicit in adding value to works of art, in forming market value and history."*

Tony Arefin, *Eye* no. 22, Autumn 1996

Taking full advantage of the possibilities presented by the Apple Macintosh computer and the advent of desktop publishing, Arefin established his reputation as an independent designer. He created a bold visual language, combining acerbic colours, irreverent use of photography and striking typography. Borrowing from contemporary trends in magazine design his work brought a refreshing directness, in stark contrast to the surprisingly conservative applications of graphic design in much art publishing.

*"In an underground you don't have the notion of success or failure. You just have the notion of making something. And that's what saves you. It's not how professional it looks, it's because you are doing what you are doing because you believe in it."*

Tony Arefin, *Emigre* no. 24, 1992

In 1993 Arefin left London for New York, becoming creative director of *I.D.* magazine. In an intensive four year period he immersed himself in magazine culture, art directing three other titles simultaneously: the artists' magazine *Bomb*, photography quarterly *Blind Spot* and *Art + Auction*. As an art director he was able to express fully his expansive vision of graphic design. Exploiting his intimate knowledge of the art world, he collaborated freely with photographers, illustrators and typeface designers to produce some of his most striking and dynamic work.

His prolific output attracted the interest of the advertising industry, and in 1997 Arefin accepted an offer to move to Portland, Oregon as an art director at the agency Wieden & Kennedy. He returned to New York the following year as partner at Ogilvy & Mather where he produced award-winning work such as IBM's *Magic Box* campaign. In these corporate settings, Arefin's energy and generosity were a revelation.

Curated by designer James Langdon, this exhibition rediscovers the contribution of an important but overlooked creative figure. Material has been generously loaned by Tony Arefin's family, many friends, clients and collaborators.

*Arefin & Arefin: The graphic design of Tony Arefin* is supported by Ogilvy & Mather.

A full colour catalogue, including text by writer and curator Emily King and interviews with design critic Rick Poynor and Ikon Director Jonathan Watkins accompanies the exhibition, priced £18, special exhibition price £16.

Visit [www.ikon-gallery.co.uk/shop](http://www.ikon-gallery.co.uk/shop) for the full range of Ikon's catalogues and limited editions.

## **Associated Events**

### **Tony Arefin Round Table Discussion**

**Wednesday 3 October, 6.30–8pm – FREE**

Join James Langdon, curator of the *Arefin & Arefin* exhibition, writer and curator Emily King, designer Rory McGrath and design critic Rick Poyner as they discuss the exhibition and the legacy of Tony Arefin's work. Places are free but should be reserved by calling Ikon on 0121 248 0708.

### **On Design**

**Saturday 3 November**

### **Curator's Talk, 12–1pm – FREE**

Join curator James Langdon for a personal tour of the exhibition *Arefin & Arefin*. Places are free but should be reserved by calling Ikon on 0121 248 0708.

### **Symposium**

**Independents – design in a fine art context**

**Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, Birmingham City University, Margaret Street, Birmingham B3 3BX**

**2–5pm – £5 (£4 students)**

Presentations and discussions with leading figures from the design world. This symposium looks at the rise of the independent designer and their relationship with the fine art world. Visit [www.ikon-gallery.co.uk](http://www.ikon-gallery.co.uk) for a full list of speakers. To book online visit [www.bookwhen.com/ikongallery](http://www.bookwhen.com/ikongallery)

## **Ann Veronica Janssens**

### ***Oscar***

**12 September – 4 November 2012**

**Tower Room**

Ann Veronica Janssens' solo exhibition at Ikon in 2002 conveyed the artist's characteristic fascination with natural phenomena and everyday experience, through coloured light projection and installation work.

Returning now, ten years later, she presents a video portrait of the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer at the age of 102. Filmed in real time while he takes a break, we see him smoking, at once statuesque and nothing if not flesh and blood. In spite of its being absolutely uncontrived, it could not be more affecting, drawing us into speculation of what this man – a personification of modernism, whose buildings have shaped countless lives – could possibly be thinking.

Please note the Tower Room is only accessible via a number of steps.

**For more information about these artists and our off-site programme please visit the Resource Room where you can find a selection of books, audio and film.**

**If you have any questions about the exhibition please ask the Visitor Assistants in the gallery.**

**Stay in touch**

Receive regular updates and exclusive offers direct to your inbox. Subscribe to our e-bulletin at [www.ikon-gallery.co.uk](http://www.ikon-gallery.co.uk)

**Connect with us**

[www.twitter.com/ikongallery](http://www.twitter.com/ikongallery)

[www.facebook.com/ikongallery](http://www.facebook.com/ikongallery)

Ikon Gallery, 1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS

Open Tuesday–Sunday, 11am–6pm, free entry

0121 248 0708 / [www.ikon-gallery.co.uk](http://www.ikon-gallery.co.uk)

Ikon Gallery Limited trading as Ikon. Registered charity no. 528892.