

Nottingham Castle

Museum and Art

Gallery announces Conrad Atkinson

contemporary art acquisition permanent

collection

By [WBWire](#) -March 12, 2017 4:42 pm



Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery is delighted to be acquiring a group of works by international artist and activist Conrad Atkinson for its collection, thanks to grants from Art Fund, the V&A Purchase Grant Fund and local donations.

The works comprise: Wordsworth's Suit and Socks (2003), three Ceramic Landmines (1996) and a photo collage Sellafeld Happens...no danger to the public (1990) and they will further strengthen the contemporary art collections at Nottingham City Museums and Galleries.

Conrad Atkinson (b. 1940) is one of the most important international artists of his generation, noted for his unflinching and often provocative approach to social and political themes. He has a reputation as an activist, and this has always informed his work, making it a good fit for Nottingham Castle, which has its own history of protest and rebellion.

His works will have many applications within temporary displays both at Nottingham Castle and at

sister site Newstead Abbey, home to another radical thinker, the great Romantic poet George

Gordon, the 6th Lord Byron (1788-1824).

For each piece of work, Atkinson selects the materials best suited to express his ideas at a particular time and so the works acquired by the Castle include ceramics, photography, collage and textiles. This will provide an overview of his artistic practice over several decades, and will in particular demonstrate his thoughts and ideas about nature and landscape.



Atkinson was born in Cleator Moor, a small mining village on the west coast of Cumbria, which was a centre for the mining of coal and iron ore. This was, to Atkinson, a world away from the Lake District of popular imagination, known for its connection with **the ‘Romantic’ poets** and landscape artists of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Since the late 1960s Atkinson’s art has been concerned, **therefore**, with the problems and hardships experienced by the people of Cleator Moor, thwarted by unemployment, depopulation and illnesses arising from working in local industries such as the iron ore mines.

Councillor Dave Trimble, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture said: “We are very grateful to Art Fund, along with the Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund and to the generous donations from visitors to the Castle which have made it possible for us to purchase these important works of art. These acquisitions will enhance our collections and allow us to explore contemporary rebellious **acts and activities that have taken place.**”

ASBESTO

Arte, Ciencia y Políticas

CONFERENCISTAS INVITADOS

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Paolo de Cazan - Italia
Arthur Frank - Estados Unidos
Fernando Giannini - Brasil
Daniela Marsili - Italia
Tania Muñoz - Chile
Lucas Ospina - Colombia
Juan Pablo Ramos - Colombia
Eduardo Rodríguez - Argentina
Guillermo Villanueva - Colombia

MODERADORES

Carlos Agudelo - Colombia
Jaime Ernesto Lina - Colombia
Guillermo Vaneque - Colombia

EXPOSICIÓN PATOLOGÍAS CONTEMPORÁNEAS

MARZO/2015

Conrad Atkinson (UK)
Bill Ravanese (USA)
Bureau D'Études (FRANCE)
Dj Lu (COLOMBIA)

Pasaje
Michonik
Cra. 2 No. 11-52
Candelaria Antigua

CONFERENCIAS

1er día.
Miércoles 5 de
Noviembre/2014
(3:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.)

ARTE POLÍTICO Y ACTIVISMO SOCIAL

2do día.
Jueves 5 de
Noviembre/2014
(3:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.)

CONSECUENCIAS LEGALES Y EVIDENCIA CIENTÍFICA DEL USO INDUSTRIAL DEL ASBESTO: UNA PERSPECTIVA INTERNACIONAL

3er día.
Viernes 7 de
Noviembre/2014 (3:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.)
**MINERÍA, INDUSTRIALIZACIÓN
Y USOS DEL ASBESTO EN
COLOMBIA ¿CONTROL O
PROHIBICIÓN?**

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JUAN N. CORPAS



Universidad de
los Andes

reemplazo



MINAS QUIEBRAPATAS

Imagen religiosa y Lady Di sobre mina quebrapatas en cerámica. De la serie: mirando la cultura. 1990.



Llevando la política a las bellas artes. El espectador. Febrero 13 de 1997.

Otro asunto que ha trabajado Conrad Atkinson a lo largo de su carrera es el tema de las minas quebrapatas, un grave problema que en nuestro país empieza a debatirse desde una perspectiva que busca su erradicación definitiva como arma de guerra. En 1997 el artista fue invitado para que fuera el representante oficial de los EE.UU. en la campaña adelantada por los veteranos de la guerra de Vietnam. Las minas quebrapatas de Conrad aparecen cubiertas de imágenes extraídas de la cultura popular (como la fallecida Princesa Diana quién lideró campañas para erradicarlas) y patrones decorativos, históricos e incluso religiosos, con

referencias a la película "Lo que el viento se llevó" cuya trama se desarrolló en Atlanta (Georgia), sede de uno de los grandes fabricantes de estos artefactos. Al utilizar este tipo de recubrimientos inspirados en factores "Kitch" aplicados a estos horribles objetos, permite llamar la atención sobre la facilidad con que se fabrican, se distribuyen y se integran al paisaje rural donde siguen pululando por doquier para romper la vida y las piernas de miles de personas alrededor del mundo.



De la serie: Mirando la cultura. Impresión sobre cerámica. 1990.



Portada de la revista "El espectador" con la imagen de Conrad Atkinson. Gueborra No. 131. Septiembre de 2000.

Dice Conrad: Las minas quebrapatas no son solo unas muy funcionales armas de destrucción que cuestan tres dólares fabricarlas y trescientos dólares desactivarlas, sino que seguirán matando a niños, mujeres y hombres al azar por los próximos mil años según la tasa de limpieza actual. También son objetos de una gran importancia política, económica y cultural que sirven como metáforas para una variedad de temas e ideologías contemporáneas.

Estas minas representan la globalización de la cultura y los arcos dorados de McDonald's. Algunos aman estas bombas porque defienden sus estilos de vida que pregonan. Al llamar la atención sobre estos valores simbólicos de la barbarie, busco ofrecer una perspectiva diferente y más productiva sobre nuestra propensión como seres humanos, a destruirnos creativamente entre nosotros.

ASBESTO: LOS PULMONES DEL CAPITALISMO



Wojanowicz y la mano. Casa Moore, Ginebra, 1968. Ahora en el ICA.



ASBESTOS. Un pulmón del capitalismo. ICA, Londres, 1978.

En 1978, el curador Richard Cork invitó a Conrad Atkinson para que hiciera parte de una exposición colectiva que sería titulada "¿Arte para quién?". En esa ocasión el artista presentó la obra "Asbestos: los pulmones del capitalismo" donde planteó algo novedoso para ese momento: Aproximarse a la realidad como un modelo de práctica artística. Henry Vaughan había trabajado para una fábrica de asbestos en el Reino Unido durante un periodo de seis semanas en 1936. Eso fue suficiente para que en la década de 1970 desarrollara un mesotelioma pleural, un cáncer en la membrana que rodea los pulmones y que es provocado exclusivamente por el asbestos. Cuando Henry regresaba a casa, saludaba a su esposa Mary Vaughan con un beso en su boca, pasando desapercibido el pequeño detalle de que en su bigote había trazas de asbestos que posteriormente le provocaron a ella también, una enfermedad relacionada con este mineral: asbestosis.

La ropa de trabajo de Henry era lavada en casa, otro efecto laboral tan simple que terminó siendo mortal para Mary. El espacio laboral había invadido el hogar de los Vaughn, lo que le permitió a Conrad Atkinson reflexionar sobre la división social del trabajo y el papel de la mujer en la industria. Mary Vaughan murió tratando de reivindicar sus derechos ante este tipo de compañías.



Henry Vaughan. Su rostro fue incluido en la obra ASBESTOS, 1978. Fotografía reproducida en 1972 y transformada, ahora en ICA.

Henry Vaughan, inventario de materiales que formaba parte de una obra para la exposición "¿Arte para quién?" en la Tate Gallery, Londres, 1978.



Conrad Atkinson con Henry Vaughan y Robert Rauschenberg en la obra ASBESTOS en el marco de la exposición "¿Arte para quién?" en la Tate Gallery, Londres, 1978.



En ese momento - 1978 - Conrad Atkinson descubrió algo que la ciencia médica ya había resuelto con certeza desde mucho antes: todos los tipos de asbestos causan cáncer, incluido el asbestos blanco (Crisolite) y que no existen periodos mínimos de exposición que eviten los riesgos para la salud a los que está asociado este peligroso mineral. Cerca de cuarenta años después de que esta exposición se llevara a cabo, en Colombia enfrentamos los mismos problemas y la industria sigue utilizando los mismos falsos argumentos, acortando sus ganancias a expensas de la salud de miles de colombianos. Solo hasta 1999 el Reino Unido prohibió el uso del asbestos bajo cualquier forma doméstica o industrial.



Corcoran, Heather. "Rebel Yell: The Lifelong Activism of Two British Artists." *Artsy*, January 20, 2015. <https://www.artsy.net/post/editorial-rebel-yell-the-lifelong-activism-of-two>

FEATURED BY ARTSY

Rebel Yell: The Lifelong Activism of Two British Artists

January 20, 2015

When Margaret Harrison's first solo show in London was closed by police for indecency in 1971, it became a pivotal moment for the artist that incited a career filled with activism. It might come as no surprise, then, that her partner, Conrad Atkinson, has also faced difficulty with censorship, including having a piece on Northern Ireland's Troubles rejected by Belfast's Ulster Museum in 1978. For decades the pair, who work independently of one another, have used their art as a tool for rabble-rousing, highlighting social issues through a blend of conceptual art and controversial subject matter. Their current side-by-side shows at New York's Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, "Conrad Atkinson: All That Glisters" and "Margaret Harrison: On Reflection," look back at a lifetime of provocation through a selection of drawings, paintings, and installations dating from the 1980s to the present day.

Among Atkinson's contributions to the exhibition are his newspaper paintings, sketched or altered papers—including a partially obscured front page from the *New York Times* dated September 11, 2001—that serve to highlight the way that the media shapes (or manipulates depending on whom you ask) the truth. A similar approach is given to the artist's own U.S. naturalization papers, which he transforms into a statement on immigration with the childlike insouciance of a student doodling on his homework.

Ever since that first London show, Harrison's activism has been more focused on feminism, including pinup-inspired sketches that placed male figures like Captain America in poses and outfits typically reserved for consumption by the male gaze. At Ronald Feldman, Harrison's installation *The Last Gaze* injects Tennyson's "Lady of Shalott" (1832) and the painting of the same name by John William Waterhouse with the added tension of the awareness of viewing and being viewed, with the addition of car rear-view mirrors. Other works include delicately rendered paintings that treat potentially dangerous objects in the style of high-end jewelry advertisements and department store scenes that update Édouard Manet's *A Bar of the Folies Bergère* (1881-82) with modern examples of working women on display.

Harrison has noted that in the decades since their debut, the controversial images from her first show have come to represent more the broadened options for self-expression available today than the radical statements on gender they once were. Likewise, the works by both artists in this exhibition serve to show how activism can move things forward, in art and beyond.

—Heather Corcoran

“Conrad Atkinson: All That Glisters” and “Margaret Harrison: On Reflection” are on view at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York, Jan. 10–Feb. 7, 2015.



Margaret Harrison
Beautiful Ugly Violence (Gun), 2003
Ronald Feldman Fine Arts



Conrad Atkinson
Allen Ginsberg's Shopping Trolley, 2014
 Ronald Feldman Fine Arts



Conrad Atkinson
The All Tree Journal, 1991
 Ronald Feldman Fine Arts



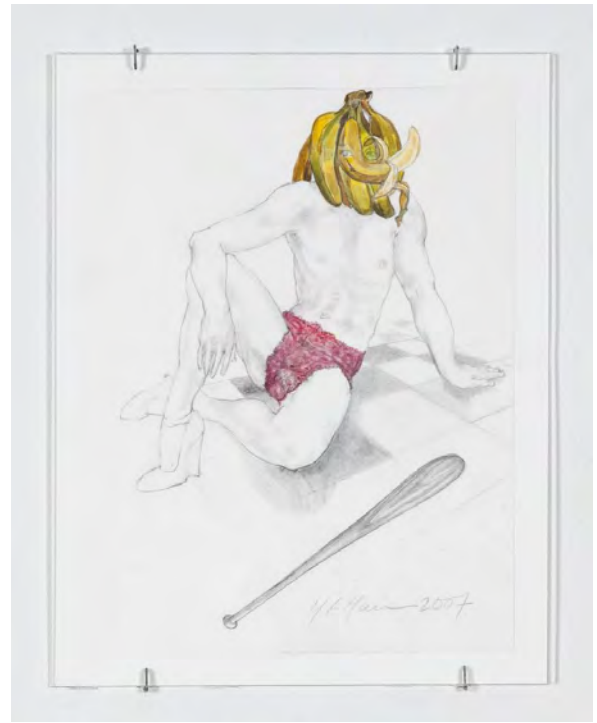
Conrad Atkinson
Sun, 1987
 Ronald Feldman Fine Arts



Conrad Atkinson
Conrad Atkinson's Naturalization Form, 2010
 Ronald Feldman Fine Arts



Margaret Harrison
He's Only a Bunny Boy But He's Quite Nice Really, 2011
 Ronald Feldman Fine Arts



Margaret Harrison
Certified Organic, 2007
 Ronald Feldman Fine Arts



Margaret Harrison
I. Magnin, San Francisco (1), 1993
 Ronald Feldman Fine Arts



Margaret Harrison
Fenwicks, London (1), 1993
 Ronald Feldman Fine Arts



Margaret Harrison
Good Enough to Eat, 1971
Ronald Feldman Fine Arts



Margaret Harrison
Beautiful Ugly Violence (Hammer), 2003
Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

National Portrait Gallery brings us face to face with Gerry Adams

The London gallery, by purchasing Conrad Atkinson's painting of the Sinn Féin leader, has made an interesting move at a tricky time for Northern Irish reconciliation



Troubles ahead? ... Gerry Adams by Conrad Atkinson has been bought by the National Portrait Gallery. Click for the full image. Photograph: Conrad Atkinson

Gerry Adams was once a hate figure on the British mainland. The leader of Sinn Féin was in his day as reviled as Abu Qatada is today. In 1988 Margaret Thatcher, then prime minister, banned his voice from being broadcast, to "starve the terrorist and the hijacker of the oxygen of publicity on which they depend"; yet nearly a quarter of a century on, this former bogeyman is to receive a striking artistic accolade from the British establishment.

A portrait of Gerry Adams by Conrad Atkinson has been bought by the National Portrait Gallery. Is anyone shocked that such a controversial politician is to be honoured in its central London galleries alongside such national heroes as Churchill and Nelson?

The Daily Mail is, a little bit. Mail Online reports pointedly that public money has been used to buy the portrait and is particularly troubled that Atkinson includes quotations from the writings of IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands within his painting. Gerry Adams forcefully denies that he was ever in the IRA. But Atkinson's painting gets the terrorist organisation into the National Portrait Gallery nevertheless, by preserving the words of Bobby Sands.

So what? The National Portrait Gallery is a hall of fame, but it's one of infamy too. It exhibits the conflicts as well as triumphs of British history. In its 17th-century galleries you can see both Charles I and Oliver Cromwell, enemies in the civil war. They can't both have been right. Cromwell may be a hero to some on the British left, but not if you're an Irish Catholic.

However, I think the Mail is right to make something of this. Historical amnesia has its limits. There's something a bit pointless and glib about the NPG buying a portrait of Gerry Adams if no one bats an eyelid. I suspect the artist himself would like his painting to stir debate.

The case for Gerry Adams to be in the National Portrait Gallery is clearly that he has been pivotal in the peace process in Northern Ireland. It is surely impossible to conceive of that peace without him. On those grounds he is a modern hero – like it or not. But the NPG purchase comes at a time when some say the history books need setting straight, the crimes of the Troubles need clearing up, and Northern Ireland needs truth as well as reconciliation.

This is live and dangerous, raw stuff. Last month the Guardian reported that the Police Service of Northern Ireland is demanding that the Sunday Telegraph and CBS hand over interview material from a report on "an IRA bomber's claim that Gerry Adams ordered one of the most notorious murders of the Troubles". As the article continues:

"The Guardian has learned that the PSNI is seeking to obtain notes and video footage from the paper and the New York-based television station in relation to Dolours Price's allegation that the Sinn Féin president was in charge of a specialist IRA unit that 'disappeared' and killed mother of 10 Jean McConville."

The article in question in the Telegraph, published in September, also says that Dolours Price claims Adams was her commander in the bombing of the Old Bailey in London in 1972. It quotes a total denial by a Sinn Féin spokesman of all the claims attributed to Price:

"The allegations purportedly made by Dolours Price are not new and have been vehemently denied by Mr Adams before. Mr Adams entirely rejects these unsubstantiated allegations."

This report is connected to an ongoing attempt by the PSNI to force Boston College in the US to hand over testimony it recorded by Dolours Price as part of a history project on the Troubles.

All this is in play, contested, the outcome unknown. The National Portrait Gallery has picked an interesting moment to bring us face to face with Gerry Adams.