

Upper Gallery

1. *Divided Self (Speakers’ Corner)*, 1974–2011
- ‘There was a certain kind of freedom that women working in the ephemeral areas of art, like performance and installation, have had, which has given them the ability to move around a lot more, a) because they aren’t automatically part of the history, and b) because I think quite often women have a great deal of doubt that they carry around with them. Doubt becomes the thread of strength. It seems less important to leave something for posterity, like the pressure to achieve immortality that is on men.’
– Rose Finn-Kelcey

2. *Bureau de Change*, 1987
- ‘At the time of the van Gogh *Sunflowers*’ auction, the fact that the painting was sold for \$25 million when most artists are unable to make a living out of their work struck me as ironic. In what I can only describe as a flash of inspiration I realised that here was the imagery that would allow me to bring together both the material and the conceptual.’
– Rose Finn-Kelcey

3. *Pakistan, 2/5/11, 2012; Libya 20th October 2011 (A dictator’s hole, No. 2), 2012; PEEK-A-BOO, Iraq (A dictator’s hole, No.1), 2009*
- ‘I suppose often that my work has a playful, ironic side, but there’s always something slightly sinister about my work, too. It’s playful, but critical at the same time.’ – Rose Finn-Kelcey

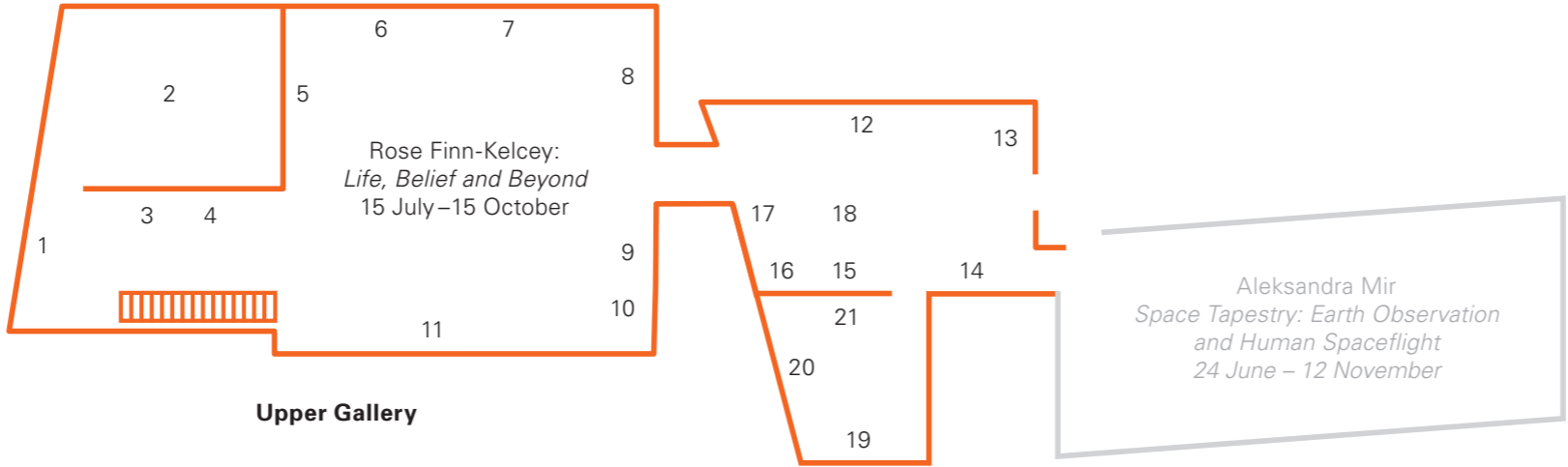
4. *House Rules*, 2001 and *It Rules*, 2002
- ‘The world of “no” is contested but unstoppable. *House Rules* can be left running while you get on with your life. I worked on this project with engineer Nigel Walker to create the smallest moving message sign.’

It Rules is ‘an antidote to *House Rules*: a continuous scrolling list of “do its”, although whatever “it” is, is never named.’ – Rose Finn-Kelcey

5. *Glory*, 1983
- ‘This performance was made following the incredulity I felt in response to the Falklands War and the jingoistic media reporting.’ – Rose Finn-Kelcey

Art critic Jeni Walwin proposed in 1985 that the artist, ‘Rose, the red-gloved controller, represents the powers that be.’ She asks: ‘... who is manipulating whom, is it the performer, an unseen instructor, or the cut-outs themselves?’

6. *One for Sorrow, Two for Joy*, 1976; *One For Sorrow, Two For Joy – Photographic documentation of performance*, 1976; *Song Sheet*, 1977; *The Magpie’s Box*, 1977
- ‘I take objects/food and introduce or offer them to the birds
The birds respond, claiming or rejecting (analogous to the artist’s fear of rejection)
I bring a repertoire of movements with me and a notion of time. This is subject to the birds’ response and modulated by them
Their behaviour affecting mine
My behaviour affecting theirs
I carry out a series of movements, a “choreography” (crawling, trying to get closer) directed at the birds or a particular bird, the timing and mood regulated by them.’ – Rose Finn-Kelcey



Upper Gallery

Middle Galleries

Piper Gallery

7. *Power for the People*, 1972–2011; *Power for the People. Documentation photograph #1*, 1972; *Power for the People. Artist’s notes*, 1972; *Fog*, 1971–2011; *Variable Light to Moderate*, 1971–2011;
8. *Raw Flags* (documentary footage), no date
- ‘Words are the commonest form of communication. Weather is a universally shared experience. A flag (as a forecast carrier) moves continuously in response to the weather and the message it bears is augmented or diminished, true or false.’
– Rose Finn-Kelcey
9. *The Restless Image: a discrepancy between the seen position and the felt position*, 1975 and *Preparatory research images for ‘The Restless Image...’*, c. 1975
- ‘Silver skirt (to be displayed in window as well as worn) – A conversation piece to do with fashion, style, taste – choice and attitude towards clothing – criteria by which clothing is selected; resulting in either a confirmation of self-image or choice of self-image... measuring up to an ideal.’ – Rose Finn-Kelcey, archive notes for *The Restless Image*

10. *It Pays to Pray*, 1999 (adapted for indoors, 2017)
- ‘The work plays on the accepted orthodoxy that chocolate is associated with happiness through a chemical change/charge and that people use vending machines for a quick “fix”. Many of the brand names reflect the customers’ desire to be uplifted or transported elsewhere. I aim to make the text mischievous, challenging, plausible, ironic, with a level of truth.’
– Rose Finn-Kelcey, undated proposal text, ‘The Prayers’
11. *Visual Questionnaire*, 1996
- ‘I was brought up in a family that was quite religious, I was sent to a religious school, so it was quite a big part of my life, and it was something I felt ambivalent about but also at the same very conscious of. So I wanted to explore that: the spiritual located in the ordinary.’ – Rose Finn-Kelcey

- Middle I Gallery
12. *Untitled: Bullfighter*, 1986; *Bull’s Eye*, 1985
13. *Untitled cover images bullfighter #1, #2, #3 and #4*, 1986
- ‘*Bull’s Eye* was an experiment in embodying, literally, the values of another culture. The minutiae of the bullfighting ritual engenders a sense of perfection and control over life at the moment at which one risks it.’
– Guy Brett
14. *Untitled: Boxing glove and bubble #1, #2, #3 and #4*, c. 1970s
15. *Untitled drawing. The Artist’s Eyes #1 and #2*, c. early 1970s
Untitled: Self portrait (double exposure), c. 1970
16. *Untitled bench drawing #1 and #2*, c. early 1970s
The Boilermaker’s Assistant; documentation, 1978

- ‘On the day of the performance I went to Foyles bookshop and asked for the most incomprehensible technical manual they could find.’ – Rose Finn-Kelcey
- Notes on the performance, January 1978, Shaftesbury Avenue:
‘Visitors found themselves in the shadowy decaying grandeur of a panelled boardroom. She sat on a park bench at the far end, neatly dressed and brightly lit. The bench – ‘The Seat of the Five Senses’ – had five indentations for bottoms and was lettered with gleaming silver studs. From the bench, a motionless Magpie stared into the vacancy with an attentive eye. [...] she sat and whispered instructions from “The Boilermaker’s Assistant”.’
– Harry Walton
17. *Preparatory works #1, #2, #4 and #7*, c. 2013
18. *God’s Bog*, 2001–present (unfinished work)
- ‘This work asks the question: Can waste be recycled to infinity?’ – Harry Walton

- Middle II Gallery
19. *Untitled drawing: Memory fades more in some parts of the picture than in others*, c.1970
20. *Book and Pillow*, 1978
- ‘The spectator is invited to put their head against the pillow to examine the book. Touching the pillow arrests the incessant buzzing of a fly which has been relayed around the room. Only when the head is lifted does the irritant return.’ – Rose Finn-Kelcey
21. *Ego / Non-Ego*, 1994
- ‘My initial intention was to contact Yves Klein through a medium and report my findings, but on arriving for the appointment I was told the medium had lost his voice and almost instantaneously a voice in my head said “let sleeping dogs lie”, so I went below ground instead.’
– Rose Finn-Kelcey

- Yard
22. *God Kennel – A Tabernacle*, 1992 / 2017 exhibition copy

‘I had planned to cut a negative of the shape into the concrete floor below as if – in a cartoon – the object had shot up to the ceiling like a plug from a plughole, but due to the underfloor heating this part of the work was never realised.’
– Rose Finn-Kelcey
Originally commissioned for Documenta IX, Kassel, Germany, 1992

Please ask our Visitor Assistants if you have any questions.



EXHIBITION NOTES

MODERN ART OXFORD



Rose Finn-Kelcey: Life, Belief and Beyond

For Finn-Kelcey, the final medium of each work was determined by the specific idea or hypothesis she wished to investigate. She often realised her concepts using recent technological means. As the art critic Guy Brett wrote in 1998: ‘Finn-Kelcey’s work has always contained a strong element of surprise: no pieces resemble one another. Each has represented a kind of dare in terms of its actual production, and yet has been finely tuned to a particular place or space.’

Life, Belief and Beyond is the first solo exhibition of the pioneering British artist Rose Finn-Kelcey since her death in 2014. Finn-Kelcey gradually shifted from work that was almost entirely performance based in the decade between 1975 and 1985, to an installation and object-based practice in the 1990s and 2000s. This exhibition embraces the spirit of reinvention that is so central to the artist’s practice. Focusing on Finn-Kelcey’s negotiation of power, politics, spirituality, values and notions of the self, *Life, Belief and Beyond* includes unfinished works, drawings, and archival materials never before exhibited.



Rose Finn-Kelcey, *Glory*, 1983.
Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London.
Image courtesy the Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

Quite often my work comes from the material first ... I have this idea that I want to reinvent myself each time I make a new piece of work ... If I choose a new medium, that gives me that space, and I can feel I’m starting again – Rose Finn-Kelcey

conventions of televisual journalism. The means by which a missile is now directed to its target and the reporting of that event as “news” both converge at the point of the television image.’ Finn-Kelcey consistently engaged with current affairs and the media, even operating as a public voice of dissent, seen in *House Rules* (2001). She frequently embedded works in the social fabric of the city, cultivating an element of surprise with their unexplained appearance in public spaces, often mimicking the linguistic tropes of bureaucratic institutions.

I have always tried to make specific things for specific places. I have either gone out and found a site or been offered an interesting one. And to a certain extent I have geared my ideas accordingly – Rose Finn-Kelcey

Her site-specific works subtly altered the environments they occupied for the benefit of passers-by, such as the series of flags including *Fog*, flown from Nottingham Castle in 1971, and *Power for the People*, hoisted briefly at Battersea Power Station in 1972. Finn-Kelcey also welcomed the unpredictable social ‘ripple effects’ of her public interventions; such as the conspiracy theory that ran in a local newspaper implying her *Fog* flag represented the initials of a clandestine organisation.

From the early 1970s through the 1990s, Finn-Kelcey’s works in the public realm questioned power and agency. In 1999 she contributed an outdoors sculpture for the Millennium Dome’s public walkways. She conceived of a project to reconfigure vending machines to dispense non-denominational animated prayers, each named after a popular chocolate bar. As she explained: ‘I thought that you go to a chocolate vending machine when your blood sugar levels are low, and you also pray when your spiritual levels are low, so I wanted to make that connection.’ Such a statement typifies the artist’s wry, yet deeply felt, take on public life, human nature, and personal belief.

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Cover images: Rose Finn-Kelcey, *The Restless Image: a discrepancy between the seen position and the felt position*, 1975. Tate. Purchased 2002. *Power for the People*, 1972. Images courtesy the Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.



Rose Finn-Kelcey, *Bureau de Change*, 1987. Tate. Presented in memory of Adrian Ward-Jackson by Weltkunst Foundation 2013. Image courtesy the Estate of Rose Finn-Kelcey.

In 1980 Finn-Kelcey developed an important expansion of performance art through her concept of the ‘vacated performance’. She explained that ‘I was really interested in the idea of the surrogate performer; the stand-in, of removing myself from a performance.’ By questioning the necessity to be physically present as performer, she articulated her desire to inhabit a space simultaneously inside and outside the work. The vacated performance enabled Finn-Kelcey to explore her own self-doubt as well as powerful charisma, elicited by her interactions with a live audience.

Across her decades of artistic practice, a witty sense of imaginative possibility remained vital. The finished works often invite a leap of faith as ideas are transformed into images and materials. This can be seen in trainee priests’ drawings of God in *Visual Questionaire* (1996) and the tiny being representing the artist’s unconfident, anxious side in *Book and Pillow* (1978). In *Bureau de Change* (1987), an installation that deals with the shifting relationship between art and the economy, the value of van Gogh’s *Sunflowers* is represented through loose change.

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