

coast he to claimed have seen the faces of his revolutionary idols Marx, Engels, Mao and Castro in the surface of the moon. In Titchner's re-working of this story, each famous face fades away, like the mythical man in the moon. Each gives a reassuring wink as if to say, "Well we did our best, no hard feelings. Just remember us now and then." The tune of Bob Dylan's *Blowin' in the Wind* is played backwards and adds to the thoughtful, reflective mood.

On the second floor in GALLERY 5 are two artworks, one by Mark Titchner, the other, by **Austin Osman Spare**. As well as being an artist, Spare was also a practising occultist and developer of occult systems such as sigilisation. Mark Titchner has used sigils in works throughout this exhibition.

Spare's *Automatic Drawing II*, was produced as an attempt to visualise the unknown; a spirit. The process can be seen as the artist losing control, but there are also many ritualistic processes leading up to these moments of expression.

Titchner's *English Language Golem* is also ritualistic and systematic. It is a computer-generated sound work programmed to produce every possible

combination of letters in the English language. In the Kabbalistic legend of the golem, it is linguistic magic that brings a clay figure to life. In this story, mastery of language is the key to manipulating the universe, with both beneficial and disastrous consequences. Referencing the golem in the work's title, Titchner appears to be suggesting a search for a hidden linguistic code within the English language that will unlock a spell.

Throughout works in this exhibition, Mark Titchner manipulates language. He uses a visionary call for action or a song lyric, he generates coded messages, designs magical symbols based names and twists the words of capitalism to suit the needs of a collective. For Titchner his exploration of belief systems is also an examination of language and an attempt to imagine the world as a different place.

This guide is intended as an introduction to the exhibition. Please feel free to talk with stewards about the work.

There is more information including a glossary of terms used, images, books and articles on many of the ideas and references explored in Mark Titchner's work. This is in the Reading Room on the Second Floor.

Introduction to the exhibition

IT IS YOU
Mark Titchner
25 February - 23 April 2006

Mark Titchner's work samples, layers and mixes references from a wide range of sources. Texts used are based on, for example, corporate mission statements, philosophical writings, pseudo-scientific theories and political slogans. Images and objects are influenced by designs and ideas as diverse as trade union banners, billboard posters, optical illusions, psychedelic posters, underground 'counter-culture', William Morris patterns and occultism.

Many of the ideas explored by Titchner are associated with passionate, visionary individuals and groups from the recent past. These beliefs and ideas may now be forgotten or discredited. Revisiting them and looking at them afresh, Titchner is interested in exploring systems of belief, both secular and spiritual. What is belief? What do we put our faith in now? What happens when belief changes or is lost?

The first encounter with Mark Titchner's work at Arnolfini is the banner, *The Invisible Republic* in the FOYER. The text makes ten demands, each one joined to the next to form a list. Who is making these demands? An organised collective? An elected government? Arnolfini? Are they a set of religious commandments or a political manifesto?

The *10 Point Program* of the Black Panther Party in late 1960s America had a similar phrasing (each demand began with 'We want ...'). It contrasts with the more familiar 'You Shall ...' commandment, 'We believe ...' creed or 'You want ...' advertising strategy. In writing this way, Titchner suggests these might be concerns for all of us.

Mark Titchner has based the specifics of each demand on a selection of mission statements from the world's biggest companies such as Coca-Cola and Microsoft. Presented as a Trade Union

ARNOLFINI

16 Narrow Quay
Bristol BS1 4QA

T: 0117 917 2300

F: 0117 917 2303

E: info@arnolfini.org.uk

www.arnolfini.org.uk

style banner, decorated with designs influenced by William Morris, these statements can take on a new meaning.

It is surprising to find that the language of global capitalism is concerned with 'Realising potential', 'mutual loyalty', and shaping 'the world's future'. Trade Union banners symbolise one kind of relationship to labour. Here, this format is used to display another kind of relationship, where consumption is considered more important than production.

The carved wall panels in **GALLERY 1** contrast in appearance with the digitally designed banner. Each panel contains many poetic ramblings, soundbites and found quotes. The construction of the work appears as a monument to fleeting comments and one-off remarks. Each is lit by candles held within the work, illuminating its own text for others to see.

The other work in this gallery, **How To Change Behavior (Tiny Masters Of The World Come Out)**, is dominated by the billboard poster. The slogan's exact meaning is ambiguous, but it is clearly a powerful call to action. As with the banner format of *The Invisible Republic*, the billboard is more familiar in another context, in this case, advertising. Here there is an unmissable slogan, but no product.

In this piece Titchner is concerned with creating a work that requires action. It is incomplete without visitors' involvement. The instructions

on the wall, although appearing like institutional text, are more like an evangelical rant. It requests both action and faith.

Each of the boxes on the table appears carefully crafted with quotes and slogans about collective action and awareness. The boxes are radionics amplifiers, used in the science of Psionics to amplify psychic potential. In this case the energies are channeled toward one point, a booth in which a person can stand.

The tree-like aerial structure is based on similar 'wishing trees', the best known of which is in Hong Kong. One can also be found at the Glastonbury Festival. Here the wishes hung on the tree are sigils, magical designs based on the letters that spell out the thing requiring a blessing.

In this case the sigil is a design based on the name of the artwork, and the substance in the flasks on each box is leftover material from the construction of the boxes. The item being wished for here is the machine itself.

The lightboxes in **GALLERY 2** use a format similar to the banner and billboard. The texts are taken from a range of sources, from philosophical writings to alternative country and western band lyrics. Some are calls to action, others foreboding or cynical statements. Like the candle-lit texts in Gallery 1, the presentation of these images as light boxes means they light themselves; they contain within

themselves the means to shine and be visible.

There is a change in atmosphere, moving from the glowing gallery of lightboxes into **GALLERY 3**. *When We Build, Let Us Think We Build Forever* is surrounded by black drapes. It is a dark, perhaps unsettling space. This feeling is enhanced by the use of mysterious objects, symbols and video of inexplicable events. It could be a space for a ritualistic performance.

Two projected images of Tate Modern, inside and out, dominate the space. Each shows an uncanny event. As in a time when the building was a power station, smoke billows from it. Like the Biblical burning bush, flames create a beacon of light and power, but do not destroy the building. The other image projection is a view inside the massive space as it flickers, melts, fades and then reappears. Monitors show a contemporary fly-around image of the building in flames.

Printed on the screens around the gallery are pictures of a burning bush, minimalist sculpture and Op art style designs. Are these decorative backdrops or might they have a function? Like Titchner's use of William Morris designs and sampled texts, it is not clear if they have been emptied of their meaning and function, or still have some power to affect change.

Mark Titchner was partly inspired in making this work by the stories of psychic torture from the Spanish Civil

War. This, reportedly, used devices resembling Modernist painting and sculpture to unsettle and play with captured prisoners' perceptions. The background sound is a stretched version of four notes from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, used in the novel and film *A Clockwork Orange* as a form of torture for someone who formerly loved this musical work.

Some elements in this work seem to echo and re-work objects found in Gallery 1. Here the tree is not for hopeful wishing, but is hung upside down, burnt, but intact. Sigils are found again, but here with light within them.

In all aspects of this work, there is an emphasis on questioning permanence. Modernism was once seen as the utopian visionary future. Tate Modern is often seen as an embodiment of British contemporary culture. A burning bush is a symbol of power without destruction. A pyramid is a colossal symbol of power and permanence after death. In this work, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Modernist designs change from being artworks into methods of revelation, confusion and torture.

The video projection in **GALLERY 4**, *Bedtime for Necromancy*, also explores people and progressive ideologies that once seemed to have a much greater following and relevance. Based on a true story of Eldridge Cleaver, a Black Panther. While alone and depressed on the Mediterranean