

was that the majority of products made in China are not cultural products: "everything's made in China but nothing is considered Chinese." She wanted to apply these ideas to the creation of an artwork primarily as an experiment.

For **Root Entry**, 2006, Jackson made three drawings of a woman planting a seed. The images came from a page on the United Nations Website detailing research carried out into the minimum amount of land needed to sustain a human life.

She then made an open call on the Internet for animation companies across the world to take her drawings and animate them, in whichever way they chose, to complete the narrative, for a fee of two hundred pounds. She wanted to see how each company would treat the brief, whether they would politicize the drawings or not and how much she could get in return for her two hundred pounds.

The responses she received were mixed. Although Jackson's original drawings were of an African woman, four of the animations turned her into a blonde European woman; "for most of them it turned into something about desire, about reproduction and about fertility."

## ARNOLFINI

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### FAMILY PACK AVAILABLE FROM ARNOLFINI RECEPTION

For any small group of children and adults, the family pack offers a great way of exploring this exhibition. This guide is intended as an introduction to the exhibition.

Please speak to a steward and visit the Reading Room on the Second Floor for further information.

## Introduction to the exhibition

Melanie Jackson  
Road Angel

8 December - 28 January 2007

Melanie Jackson's work draws on many different sources. She actively collects a wide variety of media outputs from around the globe: newsprint, video footage and other printed matter, which she then uses as a catalyst for the creation of films, animations, sculptures, posters, pamphlets and maps.

"I am interested in the sheer quantity of news from elsewhere that is available to us with out leaving home, how much people have to filter, how they make sense of what comes into their lives through the TV and through newspapers".

Her work explores the movement of people, ideas and goods around the world. She is interested in the way that this movement is highly restricted in some parts of the world and largely unrestricted in others. Some works

are made in direct response to a story; others are fantasised imaginings or made from memory. She follows tales of peoples who have transformed the cultural or political landscape in different ways through very low key, domestic responses to international concerns.

### GALLERY 1

**Some Things You Are Not Allowed To Send Around The World**, 2003, is an installation of small-scale sculpture and video that has grown out of an ongoing interest in found stories and news media.

As a starting point Melanie Jackson decided to collect as many international newspapers that she could find in her local area of London. She wanted to see how far she could 'go' or travel in her imagination without actually leaving

her immediate environment. Inspired by these foreign news stories - understood or imagined - the newspapers themselves became the raw material for the painstakingly constructed models seen here. The minutely detailed architectural models include cranes, water towers, satellite receivers, refugee camps and container ports amongst others. The slow and laborious process of making these models sits in stark contrast to the news media's obsession with circulation and speed.

"I wanted to make something intricate and time consuming in defiance of their single day currency".

A series of spotlights guide us through these 'communities' giving us an aerial viewpoint of tiny imaginary landscapes. These are displayed in what appears to be an unfinished gallery space, alluding to the resourceful occupancy of appropriated spaces by people on the move. The compact beauty of this installation draws you in and then forces dealings with the uncomfortable associations that Jackson presents.

Amongst this Lilliputian landscape are placed a number of video works, each telling a story that highlights temporary occupations - those of the migrant workers. These workers are engaged with what Jackson terms 'hidden work'. She says, "production (and over-production) is virulent, but labour is seen as something one ought to try and get someone else to do. And that's a crucial aspect of the immigration

issue...it's about displacing, labour and effort."

One of the videos, **A Westerly Wind and a Clear Night Sky**, tracks an illicit journey by boat between Africa and the foothills of the Sierra Alhamilla in Spain. The southern desert terrain is covered with a sea of geometrical, criss-crossing waves and occasional gaps filled with scrubby bushes draped with thousands of scraps of torn plastic. These are the El Ejido greenhouses, an estimated 64,000 hectares covered with sheet plastic and designed for the mass production and export of produce. Ironically, this thriving industry that exports fruit and vegetables around the world, relies on the illegal settlement of a migrant labour force. Amidst this labyrinth of greenhouses live the workers. They live in walls of dilapidated buildings, shells of old camper vans, or sheds alongside the pesticides and sacks of fertilizer. This underground economy generates tremendous wealth with produce from this province accounting for 80% of Spanish fruit and vegetable exports. The accompanying soundtrack is Moroccan 'haragas' music. Haragas translates as 'blazers' or 'burners', alluding to workers' perilous crossings from North Africa in un-seaworthy boats and to the custom of burning or destroying their papers before they leave for Europe.

Melanie Jackson has also created a poster (from which the installation takes its name) made up of the recent 'prohibition and restriction' guidelines issued by international post offices

listing all the things you are not allowed to send to different countries around the world.

The list of items offer insights into the political, religious or socio-economic situations of individual countries and often reveal residual superstitions or other eccentricities; for example you can't send spoons, forks or whistles to Croatia, blank invoices with headings to Israel, Rubber balloons to Kuwait, condensed milk to Somalia, musical greetings cards to Qatar or goods originating in Cuba, North Korea or Vietnam to the USA. The poster containing the complete list is available to pick up in the gallery.

The story continues in the centre of the gallery with a cluster of TV monitors that echo the groups of domestic workers from the Philippines gathered in Statue Square on a Sunday in Hong Kong. These women are conditionally contracted; the only work they are allowed to undertake is that of a domestic servant. Sunday is the only day they have away from their work. The women, numbering ten thousand, congregate to socialise, sing, eat and share stories. For one day a week, they take over one of the most expensive piece of real estate in the world in what seems like a public performance.

Another part of the story depicts one of the Filipino maids who has no bedroom and sleeps in a kitchen cupboard; we see her going through her daily ritual of removing and replacing the crockery.

The tragic comedy of this animation gives us an insight into Jackson's long-standing interest in the newspaper cartoon with its ability to depict humour and adversity simultaneously.

## GALLERY 5

Shown at Arnolfini for the first time, the new animated work **A Global Positioning System**, 2006, deconstructs a hand-held GPS satellite-positioning unit, attempting to trace each component part back to its source. By animating the routes and methods of production, Jackson reveals an incredible journey from the rubber trees of Sri Lanka to the tin mines of Congo, on to the production lines of China and finally to the palm of your hand. This voyage reveals the complex web of locations, processes, materials and labour that go into the production of this hi-tech consumer product, uncovering the paradox of the expansive infrastructure needed to produce a device used to locate just one person in the world. For the creation of this work Melanie Jackson had the opportunity to travel to China and spend time in an electronics factory, seeing first hand how the GPS units are manufactured.

## READING ROOM

Whilst in China Melanie Jackson became more aware of what is known as 'outsourcing', where one country uses another country to manufacture their products. What interested Jackson