Acknowledgements

The Cleveland (UK) International Drawing Biennale is organized and sponsored by Cleveland County Council with the support of Northern Arts.

Judges
Sona Boyce
Richard Cork
Dr Marianne Stokoe Brand

Invited Artist
Claes Oldenburg/Coonie van Bruggen

Catalogue Essay
Marina Vazey

Advisory Panel
County Councillor Maureen Taylor (Chairwoman), Alan Alden, Janet Barkers, Steve Chetts, Audrey Collins, Judith Croft, Peter Davies, Mike Hill, Ron Jetson, Malcolm Lockey, Robin Simpson, Geoffrey Watson

Catalogue
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Middlesbrough

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Foreword

At a time when the arts in Britain – and in particular the Visual Arts – are enjoying a higher profile than they have had for many years, the Cleveland International Drawing Biennale offers a typically controversial view of what constitutes good contemporary drawing, and by extension good contemporary fine art. The 100 works on display have been selected from a total of some 2000 (representing 56 different nationalities) by an independent panel of judges, and the exhibition is their assessment of the best works received for this open competition which is unique in Great Britain. The three judges – one of this country's most exciting young artists, whose work has been widely shown on both sides of the Atlantic; a leading London critic; and one of the foremost Gallery Directors from West Germany – spent two long and arduous days viewing the entries (each work was considered at least twice) before making their final selections and awarding the prizes. In the end, they felt unable to single out one work from the many to receive the prize, and instead awarded prizes of £1,500 each to eight artists, whose work now passes into the growing and increasingly important collection of Cleveland County Museum Service.

One of the most exciting aspects of this year's exhibition is the inclusion of Claes Oldenburg, who works with his wife Coosje van Bruggen, as invited artist. This celebrates not merely the artist's pre-eminence in the field of public sculpture, but also a more direct relationship with Middlesbrough, Cleveland's principal town, whose Borough Council has commissioned a major sculpture from Oldenburg to be sited in the heart of the County. The display includes some of the artist's preliminary work for 'A Bottle of Noses', which contains references to the travels of the locally-born explorer, James Cook.

Marina Vazey's essay 'Drawing on Drawing' renews this eminent critic's connection with the event. In 1975, she was one of the judges for the Second Biennale. Her reminder of the pedigree and purposes of the medium form a timely counterpoint to the exhibition which is of contemporary, imaginative work.

The Biennale must move forward at the same time as renewing contact with maintaining the past. For many years, the exhibition was hung in Middlesbrough Art Gallery, but was moved to the Cleveland Gallery in 1987. Now, for the first time, the exhibition will be shown in both venues, permitting a more generous selection of works and a display of greater depth.