



The hole truth: Julianne Swartz's periscopes and piping provide a distorted view of the outside world

Breaking boundaries

When Metro catches up with New Yorker Julianne Swartz, she is busy with a power drill, boring discreet holes in walls and feeding optic viewing and listening devices through them into the neighbouring rooms. However, she's not a secret government agent staking out a suspected al-Qaeda hideout, but a sculptural installation artist making her latest piece, *Breaches And Leaks*, at Sunderland's Reg Vardy Gallery.

Fascinated with the social and spatial barriers created by architecture, Swartz's work involves

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Julianne Swartz presents her first installation in Europe, *Breaches And Leaks*

'perforating' spaces, allowing external visual and aural information to seep into them. Working with hi-tech materials such as plastic piping, wire and scrap wood, together with lenses and mirrors, she creates 'participatory periscopes' that transmit sights and sounds from either outdoors or elsewhere in the building.

Previous work has included

pumping pop songs from a basement into a museum via 400ft of plastic tubing; projecting images of an installation from a storage cupboard; creating camera obscura projections from holes in a barn door; and constructing a two-way audio-visual telecommunication device, facilitating conversations between residents of a New York hotel and passers-by.

'My work is about making people aware of the boundaries we exist in,' explains Swartz. 'I'm composing with reality, painting with what's there.'

Visitors to *Breaches And Leaks* (her first show in Europe) will be able to view the café next door and the adjacent hallway, as well as listen to the radio in the security guards' office. But, the images do not arrive in the gallery uninterrupted; distorted by the crudeness of Swartz's devices, she manipulates them further by consciously angling the periscopes, mirrors and lenses.

'They're pretty low-tech, but their inefficiency is what makes it more of an aesthetic experience,' she goes on. 'I'm offering a quarter turn on reality.'

Swartz reckons the inspiration behind her work comes from her background in photography and sculpture, arising from what she perceives to be the strengths and weaknesses of these mediums. As a sculptor, she says she felt 'overwhelmed by the materials' traditionally used, and that 'it didn't make sense' to create such work when there was already so much

existing source material. As a photographer, meanwhile, she is fascinated in the way it captures reality and the manner in which the artist is in control of how this reality is represented – however, she bemoans the fact it is limited to capturing a moment in the past.

'I'm much more interested in the present,' Swartz reveals. 'In some ways, what I do is like real-time photography or video. Gallery spaces, in general, are very sterile and separate from reality. I want to pierce that and bring a dirtier reality into the space.'

You have to admire Swartz's shoot-from-the-hip approach to creating work. Having never seen the Reg Vardy Gallery prior to her visit, she has had only a week to make her installation from a standing start. But, she is more than happy working without any sort of safety net.

'I enjoy the challenge of being presented with the site and then having to come up with a piece for that place,' she continues. 'At the beginning of a project it can feel really remote, then I'll come up with something that works – that is "art". When it comes together it's very exciting... like uncovering treasure.'

Christopher Collins

Tomorrow until Feb 17, Reg Vardy Gallery, University Of Sunderland, Ashburn House, Ryhope Road, Sunderland, Tue 10am to 8pm, Wed to Fri 10am to 6pm, Sat by appointment, free. Tel: 0191 515 2128. Metro: Park Lane. www.regvardygallery.org

ART

Turner: Tours Of Durham And Richmondshire

It was at the age of 22 that the then-budding artist JMW Turner made his first visit to the North-East, sketching in Yorkshire, Durham and Northumberland. This exploratory tour was enough

to open his eyes to the inspiring landscape of the region, and he returned many times throughout his career. A new exhibition at Bowes Museum brings together more than 30 paintings of the region by the artist, offering not only an opportunity to view images of local interest, but also charting his development as he experimented with painting techniques.

On display in the region for the first time is Turner's luminous painting of *Barnard Castle*, on

loan from Connecticut's Yale Centre For British Art, as well as further loans from The British Museum and V&A. From Bowes Museum's own collection are two paintings of *Gibside*,



commissioned by the Earl Of Strathmore to illustrate his country property, depicted from the north and south vantage points, Turner's works capture the sweeping hills, grand woods and dramatic ravines of this stunning local landmark.

Any Road Sat to May 14, Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, County Durham, daily 11am to 5pm, £7, D6 concs, free under-16s. Tel: 01833 60606. www.bowesmuseum.org.uk