

CRASH!

NOSTALGIA FOR THE JET AGE

Sadie Young: Nostalgia For The Jet Age, is this a love letter to the space race, petrochemicals, machismo... or what?

Scott King: Not exactly, not at all maybe. I realised the other day exactly what it is, or at least what it is to me. When you first asked me to do a project, I immediately thought 'John O'Groats would be a great place to make The Earl Brutus Museum'... it's a very Earl Brutus thing to do: put a museum at the most northerly and sparsely populated spot in Britain, a museum that might get ten visitors a month. But we couldn't do that, and you're not in John O'Groats. So, I think, in a way, we've made The Earl Brutus Museum In A Box.

Sadie: So, for those who don't know, Earl Brutus were the 90s art attack cum indie band that you were closely associated with... you designed some of their record sleeves...

Scott: Well, I was great friends with them as was Matt, they were very influential to us. I think this project is really like a pub conversation with Earl Brutus - or at least a pub conversation with Nick Sanderson and Jamie Fry from the band. It has all the hallmarks. Nick was brilliant at flights of fancy - he would sit in the pub and after he'd got warmed up, he would just fly off on to another mental plane. I've said it many times, but Nick was a pub genius. So, I think all the propositions here are really material things, things Matt and I have made real, that could quite easily have come from a drunken conversation with Nick and Jamie. They were born in the early 60s and they remembered seeing the Moon landings on TV, they remembered seeing Bowie on Top of the Pops, that much-repeated clip of him in make-up and campily draping himself around Mick Ronson, singing 'Starman', they remember Concorde's first flight in 1969, they loved Kraftwerk and the science TV show Tomorrow's World. So they - not Matt and I - grew up with the belief that we would live in space colonies, eat food from tubes and commute to work using jet-packs. So, I think we're presenting something more like 'nostalgia through osmosis'.

Sadie: Tell us about the contents of the box.

Scott: Well, as I say, you have to imagine that this is a conversation in a pub - so imagine all the contents of this box are a memento to the things we discussed and laughed about 'the night before'. So, in the box: there is the magazine - this is the thrust of the conversation. Then there's the Esperanto poster, this commemorates a night Matt and I went to see Earl Brutus play in Manchester in 1998, then afterwards, we accidentally met the Manchester Esperanto Association - the poster reads 'The Village Green Demolition Society' - we imagined the Manchester Esperanto Association plotting to takeover over the world - we imagined these four or five people huddled in a pub plotting to modernise and democratise the world at this meeting we'd stumbled across - so this poster is one we've made for them retrospectively, we imagined them fly-posting this poster around Manchester in the week before the meeting... hoping to boost interest, but still only attracting the usual few members... you know, nobody can read it, nobody is interested. Then there's the postcard, renaming the BT Tower as 'Spaca Colonia' - 'Space Colony' in Esperanto, and renaming 'Fitzrovia' as 'Buckminster' in tribute to Buckminster Fuller... so it is the fantasy of taking

control, rebuilding and renaming or just claiming... for a while after Nick died, Jamie and I chose to see The Shard in London as monument to Nick, it was perfect for him, that kind of huge modernity, so we renamed it, 'The Imperial Nicholas Sanderson Monument and Cocktail Bar'. The Neil Armstrong quotation is a fake, we imagined him at home, one year after he came back from the Moon, at a party his wife had organised in his honour, and he's nostalgic for the Moon, feeling trapped by the dreary normality of his fellow Earthlings... we liked the idea of a fake Neil Armstrong quotation, given the on-going conspiracy theory that the Moon landings themselves were also faked. There is the scarf '100% Polyester' - a very 1970s item - kind of horrible, like the cheap 'fan scarf' they would have handed out on TV pop shows for kids to wave to camera... reading 'Marc Bolan' or 'GROOVY!' or something. The other postcard - with 'Britain Before Central Heating' hand stencilled on to it by local pensioners - refers to an obsession of mine, or a theory at least, about how Britain was a different country before the advent of mass central heating. I remember been so cold as a kid in the 1970s - a kind of damp, immobilising coldness none of us can experience by watching old films or reading other people's accounts - I firmly believe that central heating and Thatcherism are connected, that in-part, Thatcherism was fuelled by mass central heating: the haves and the have-nots... and this kind of thought is exactly the kind of thing that would have drunkenly been discussed in a pub in the 1990s by Nick, Jamie, Matt and myself.

Sadie: So, it's really 'Nostalgia For The Earl Brutus Age'?

Scott: Yeah maybe. It isn't really 'Nostalgia For The Jet Age' as remembered by me and Matt - because we don't remember it, or much of it, we were too young. It is nostalgia for a highly romanticised and simplified jet age as seen through the eyes of Nick and Jamie... they loved the poetry and possibility of the jet age and the space age... there was no thought for the ecologically disastrous or militaristic aspects of what really drove the jet age, they were just kids in love with what they saw on TV - and that romantic, poetic aspect is what influenced Matt and I. So, however you look at it, I think what we've really done here is made a love letter to Earl Brutus' understanding of the jet age - it's a love letter to dreamers and to dreams that fail: be it the idealism of Manchester Esperanto Association, Magnus Pyke's belief in a better, science-driven future on Tomorrow's World or Earl Brutus' bid to destroy banal pop music... so, in that sense, it's really all about optimism and imagining a brighter future, it's not at all about the ecological realities of the jet age, it's not really about nostalgia for Apollo 10, Kraftwerk or Concorde. It's about nostalgia for hope... it's a tribute to dreamers.