

Transcript from KALEIDOSCOPE [nd.]



**Presenters: Sarah Kent  
Natalie Wheen**

**Producer: Lis Edwards**

**NATALIE:** And so to quite another vision of the world – inspired by the gutter – and I quote the artist herself” Ann Carrington finds enormous interest in junk: she finds in it a million ideas for sculptures and new life in redundant objects. And you can see what she means with her show KEEP BRITAIN SPICY. For instance; there’s an enormous rug in the shape of an alligator made from old shoe uppers, birds out of kitchen equipment, two magnificent classical horse heads made out of salami – now there’s a thought on where proud nags end. My favourite of all was an armadillo from old tyres. It looks very appealing from the outside and there were lots of people about as I joined Sarah Kent from Time Out in the central part of the show, underneath a sheer fantasy of toy aeroplanes- we could have been in the nursery:

**SARAH KENT:** It’s a very sophisticated version of childhood isn’t it, but there is a sense of glee there. I think one imagines Ann Carrington wandering the streets, pouncing on things with great excitement, you know, and I think the sense of creative energy is marvellous in the work. It’s a very sharp kind of fun.

**NATALIE:** Well, let me talk about her aeroplanes first, because here we are actually sort of in the middle of a dog fight really – being buzzed and strafed by all kinds of amazing planes made of Kentucky Fried Chicken, vegetable oil and Shell oil cans. She makes you look ever more closely. I mean, you could have walked past and then you come back and think ‘Good heavens, what has she here?’

**SARAH KENT:** Yes, I think one of the joys of the work is suddenly recognising the various elements that things are made out of. For instance, there’s one of those tacky old aeroplanes – well, it’s a helicopter isn’t it? And it’s got a pair of garden shears as its’ fins, and its’ tail is a guitar, and its’ wheels are casters. And I mean if you just look at the things she makes the wheels out of; you’ve got bike pedals, roller skates, casters and old forks, and there’s a sort of tackiness about all these...they’re junk aeroplanes, but they’re heroic junk aeroplanes. There is an underlying point, I think, to the humour about the wastefulness of our civilization, about the predatoriness of it, about the way that we’re, you know, we are exploiting the natural world, returning to the natural world all this junk with not much concern. But I think that the ecological point is very understated and you come to it humorously and that, in many ways, makes it stronger and sharper.

**NATALIE:** There’s a whole section, which is quite definitely, she says, from the great hurricane of 1987; broken glass and the references of what she

makes with broken glass. Do you think that's as successful as allowing her imagination foray?

**SARAH KENT:** There seems to be an element missing in the boats- they're made out of layers and layers of broken glass and bits of bottles-but they don't have the edge of humour, One of the classic examples of this kind of sculpture is Picasso's bull's head, which is made out of a pair of handlebars and the bike saddle. The enjoyment of that sculpture comes from its dual existence. You recognise the original objects- and their purpose and their function, and then you recognise the new alignment of them, so it's sort of doubly figurative. In Ann's boats, you don't have that double edge. You haven't got the absurdity of the heroic bird standing on its' pedestal suddenly realising that the pedestal, instead of being some wonderful piece of granite, beautifully carved, it's not an odalisque, it's actually a banister, or it's a bit of old chair-leg or something. And the bird is a mincer: and what's it got as a beak? Some scissor blades.

**NATALIE:** I think those birds are actually the most exciting part of the exhibition because she has turned these objects into something else and they've got an emotional quality invested in them.

**SARAH KENT:** I think that's very true of the lecterns as well, and they work in a similar kind of way. There's definitely a debunking of pomposity here. I mean, they're eagle lecterns; they've got these wonderful outspread wings, but the wings are made of hairgrips. On the lecterns are her sketchbooks, which are jam-packed full of her source material, which might be anything from a postcard of a Byzantine mosaic to a sweet wrapper, or the paper you wrap around an orange. Just a mass of visual junk. The notion of taking something which is – which embodies the masculine position; you know; the public speaker who thinks of himself as really important, and she is offering you in place of that, an agglomerate of assorted nonsense really. But nonsense that is really critical nonsense. It looks into the society that the junk comes from, and it also looks out into the Third World in quite an interesting way because, of course, there are many people in the Third World who similarly use car tyres, old tin cans, to make things that they need, because they can't get them any other way. So there's a sort of double irony here, isn't there? That she's making useless things from the waste of a society that finds them useless. So there's a double ecological message there. I don't want to make it sound too weighty, because it's actually very funny but nevertheless, I think the fact that elements in there prevent it from just being a joke.

**NATALIE:** Sarah Kent at Ann Carrington's exhibition KEEP BRITAIN SPICY, a title she got from the back of a samosa packet. It's currently on at the Rebecca Hossack Gallery in Windmill Street, off London's Tottenham Court Road, and it's well worth a detour.