



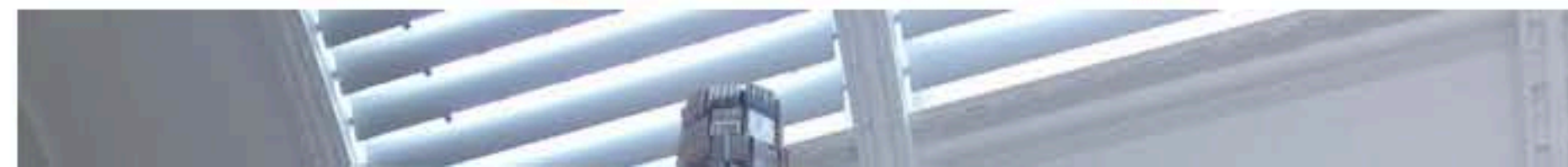
Barnaby Barford's Tower of Babel

The Tower of Babel is a six-metre high installation created by artist Barnaby Barford for the V&A in London. Consisting of 3,000 tiny ceramic London shops, the artwork aims to raise questions about consumerism, and the ever-changing face of the London high street...

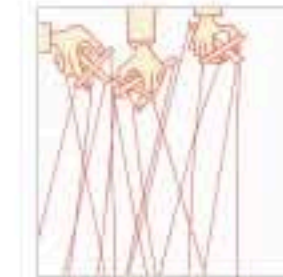
By Eliza Williams 9th September 2015

Barnaby photographed over 6,000 shop fronts across the city in the process of making the tower, with half that number making it into the final installation. The photographs were created as ceramic transfers and fired onto bone china to make the shops. The sculpture features shops from almost every postcode across London and is arranged as a tower with derelict shopfronts at the bottom, and exclusive private art galleries and boutiques – which sell the most expensive products – at the very top.

“You work your way up and you have the chicken shops, the pound shops... we’ve got brothels, cafés, antique stores, chocolatiers,” says Barford. “The top tier has Sotheby’s, Christie’s and eight contemporary art galleries.”



Latest



The World According to Creative Directors

10th October 2016



Google Noto: a typeface for the world

8th October 2016



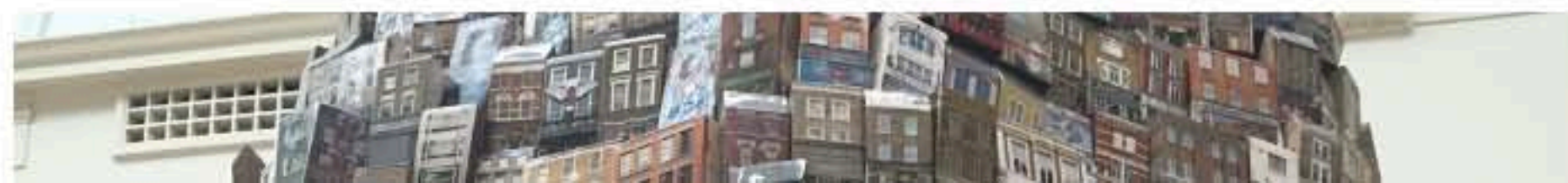
Let Them Eat Chaos: Kate Tempest teams up with Peter Kennard for new

7th October 2016



Björk's virtual world

7th October 2016



Latest



The World According to Creative Directors

10th October 2016



Google Noto: a typeface for the world

8th October 2016



Let Them Eat Chaos: Kate Tempest teams up with Peter Kennard for new...

7th October 2016

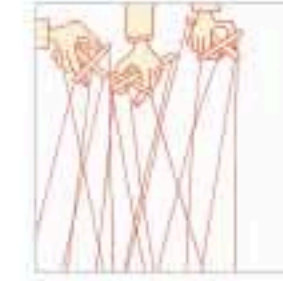


Björk's virtual world

7th October 2016



Latest



The World According to Creative Directors

10th October 2016



Google Noto: a typeface for the world

8th October 2016



Let Them Eat Chaos: Kate Tempest teams up with Peter Kennard for new...

7th October 2016



Björk's virtual world

7th October 2016

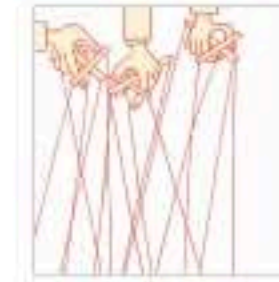


“I’m in love with London,” he continues. “In one way it’s a celebration of this city built on trade. But I’m also asking questions. We’ve ceased to be citizens, we’re consumers. How and why have we become so complicit in that? We love shopping, that’s our economic structure. I’m asking the question: how do you feel about it?”

Barford and the V&A have addressed the shopping question head on with every piece of the installation available for sale (prices range from £95 to £6,000) via a dedicated [online store](#), where visitors can search the shops included using a map to see where they are located, or simply browse the images. “It’s not just a passive sculpture, the fact that they are for sale is conceptually integral to the piece,” says Barford.



Latest



The World According to Creative Directors

10th October 2016



Google Noto: a typeface for the world

8th October 2016



Let Them Eat Chaos: Kate Tempest teams up with Peter Kennard for new...

7th October 2016

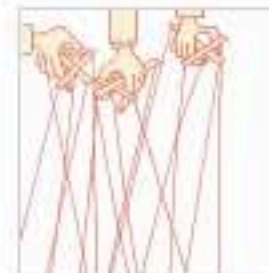


Björk's virtual world

7th October 2016



Latest



The World According to Creative Directors

10th October 2016



Google Noto: a typeface for the world

8th October 2016



Let Them Eat Chaos: Kate Tempest teams up with Peter Kennard for new...

7th October 2016

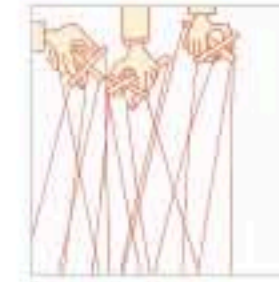


Björk's virtual world

7th October 2016



Latest



The World According to Creative Directors

10th October 2016



Google Noto: a typeface for the world

8th October 2016



Let Them Eat Chaos: Kate Tempest teams up with Peter Kennard for new...

7th October 2016



Björk's virtual world

7th October 2016



Barford describes the work as a snapshot of London's shops today, with the photographs taken during 2014-15. It doesn't directly address the effect that online shopping has had on our high streets although that is evident perhaps in the layer of derelict shops, which includes an empty Foyles book store (which moved rather than simply closed). The entire structure looks somewhat precarious in the space, perhaps an appropriate metaphor for the position of high street retail in today's digitally driven world.

It's an appealing artwork for anyone to explore, but for those familiar with London it holds a special romance, as all those quirky, ugly, downright weird shops that we pass every day, hardly noticing, are suddenly made visible. It feels apt that it is the cheaper stores that are the easiest to examine at the base of the sculpture, as arguably these are the most unique, compared to the high street chains and even fancy boutiques that are out of sight higher up.

"They're the wallpaper of our city," says Barford. "They are all beautiful, they're people's businesses and homes, hopes, dreams, aspirations, character. Each one has a story and they all play an integral part in this city."

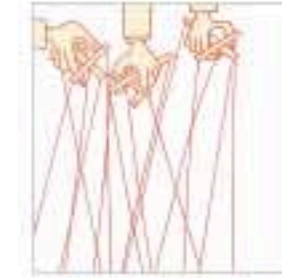
The Tower of Babel is on show at the V&A until November 1. More info is at vam.ac.uk

News

Art



Latest



The World According to Creative Directors

10th October 2016



Google Noto: a typeface for the world

8th October 2016



Let Them Eat Chaos: Kate Tempest teams up with Peter Kennard for new...

7th October 2016



Björk's virtual world

7th October 2016