

GO
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Public

**The Napoleone
Collection**

***International Art
Collectors in Sheffield***

**Seminar Notes
by Louisa Buck**

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Going Public: International Art Collectors in Sheffield was conceived to explore how public galleries and philanthropists can better develop meaningful, mutually beneficial relationships.

Co-originated by Mark Doyle and Sebastien Montabonel and led by Museums Sheffield, the project launched in 2015, bringing work from some of Europe's finest private collections of contemporary and 20th century art to Sheffield in a citywide series of exhibitions, accompanied by a major summit which asked the question 'How can public art institutions unlock the potential of philanthropy?'

In 2016 *Going Public* continued with an exhibition at the Graves Gallery drawn from the collection of Valeria Napoleone.

The exhibition was displayed at Graves Gallery 15 July — 1 October 2016, before travelling to Touchstones Rochdale, Greater Manchester 10 December 2016–11 March 2017.

The exhibition at Graves Gallery was accompanied by a seminar on 16 September 2016.

The story continues...

The report on the first phase of *Going Public* — which involved five exhibitions of four major international contemporary art collections across the city of Sheffield accompanied by a summit in October 2015 — concluded by stating that,

"many of the conversations generated by this extraordinary initiative are likely to reverberate throughout the city and way beyond for many years to come."

Going Public 2015 was a starting point — not a conclusion. It instigated an ongoing series of conversations around the ways in which regional galleries with visual art collections could benefit by working closely with private collectors.

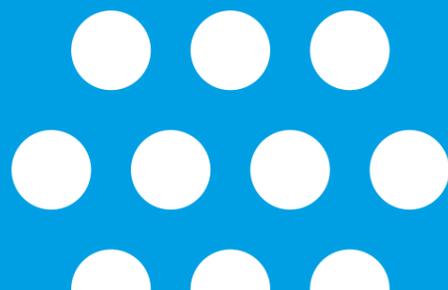
The seminar held at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre on 16 September 2016 marked an important continuation of these conversations.

Organised by Museums Sheffield and supported by Art Fund, this one-day event was attended by representatives from the regional and civic museum sector and other key organisations including the Department for Culture Media & Sport (DCMS).

The aim was to draw on the experience of the *Going Public* Summit to dig down into the practicalities of what was actually needed to initiate, to nurture and to maintain conversations between public institutions and private individuals now and into the future.

Sessions 1:
The Collector's Experience

Journalist and critic Rachel Spence in
conversation with collector Valeria Napoleone.



Valeria Napoleone only buys the work of female artists. Since beginning her collection in the mid 1990s her support has proved pivotal to the careers of Nicole Wermers, Phyllida Barlow, Daria Martin, Ghader Amer and Julie Verhoeven, amongst others. She also sits on numerous committees and boards both within the UK and the US — from Studio Voltaire, a small not for profit organisation in South London, to the Institute of Fine Art in New York and the President's Global Council at New York University. She recently became involved with the charity Women for Women International which supports women survivors of war.

In 2015 Napoleone launched the project Valeria Napoleone XX with the Contemporary Art Society with the intention of increasing the representation of women artists in UK regional public art collections by donating an artwork to a selected collection. The project was initiated in the US by funding the production of an artwork by Anthea Hamilton at the Sculpture Center in New York, which resulted in Hamilton being shortlisted for the 2016 Turner Prize.

Spence asked Napoleone why she chose to lend her artworks to a museum in Sheffield, and why — especially given Brexit — she had felt the need to connect London with the regions. Napoleone replied that working on regional commissions for her XX project was in keeping with her general philosophy to 'connect the dots' and with her long-standing desire to involve herself in activities and with organisations where she feels she can make a significant impact. She stated that more can be achieved with less resource outside the crowded London art scene. Napoleone finds that working in collaboration yields richer and more meaningful results.

“It's a kind of connecting the dots of what I have been doing for the last 20 years... dedicating my energy and resources to art and realities that are overlooked and artists, not-for-profit spaces, causes, and publications that I feel will be deeply impacted by my involvement...and where I am widening my reach beyond the walls of my house. With a little gesture you can change so much.”

VALERIA NAPOLEONE

Whilst Napoleone is used to lending single works for exhibition, this exhibition was the first time she had lent such a significant body of work and she felt especially protective towards it. Her main consideration was that the work be well looked after and that there be full communication between lender and the recipient. She was full of praise for the experience of working with Museums Sheffield, declaring that “*the whole process has been fantastic.*”

“Collaborations with artists, curators and institutions take you much further than travelling alone. I really enjoy working with people and collaborating, doing projects together: when you do it for the right reason and with the right people, the ripple effect is enormous.”

VALERIA NAPOLEONE

Napoleone was closely involved with every aspect of the exhibition and wanted it to offer a sense of the range and diversity of her collection, as well as an insight into her concerns. She also hoped it would reflect her attitude towards the way in which the collection has been built up, slowly and in depth. Napoleone does not employ an art advisor and emphasized that the process of researching artists to acquire for her collection was a crucial part of the journey. For her, it is as, if not more, enjoyable and important than actually buying the work.

“I wanted the artworks to reflect the sense of a personal journey, and the fact that I have been collecting for 18 years. These are not pieces accumulated in three years. And then I wanted to give a sense that my collection is not about names — I look at practices that speak to me. So I made a mixture of artists that are much more well known and others that are more niche, and also from different places. I wanted to give as much variety as possible because we live in a world that is full of different cultures and religions. Showing this difference was very important to my selection.”

VALERIA NAPOLEONE

Whilst studying in New York in the 90s Napoleone gained insight into the workings of the contemporary art world. She became aware of the way in which women were under represented and also of how she found their work adventurous, courageous and experimental — three qualities that she still considers key. However, she did not start out to collect women artists as a concerted strategy, but that approach gathered momentum over time. Also right from the beginning, when she was buying work from the then emerging scene in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, engaging with the artists was always important, and this became even more the case when she moved to London, eighteen years ago.

On the subject of patronage, Napoleone emphasized the importance of longevity: the first gallery she supported was the South London Gallery when she first arrived in the UK and she continues to be a patron. Another long-term relationship is with Studio Voltaire in South London, which stretches back 12 years. With both she wanted to be more involved than “*just to give a cheque at the end of the year*”.

Spence raised the issue of the ‘moral maze’ — the potential conflict of interest between private collectors supporting public collections, especially when they donate works which can then increase in value. Napoleone again stressed the importance of working collaboratively so that any support or donation comes about through discussion and exchange of ideas rather than as an individual initiative. When selecting for Napoleone XX in the UK, she narrows down a long list of artists in close discussion with CAS Director Caroline Douglas, along with the Director of their chosen museum, and then applies the same rigorous interrogation to choosing the individual artwork.

“It’s about sitting and discussing and engaging. And not about me coming in and saying, I bought this work and I’ll give it to you. I want to be involved, but it’s a team decision, not a decision I make on my own.”

VALERIA NAPOLEONE

Regarding Napoleone XX’s work with Sculpture Center in New York, decisions are also made collaboratively and she doesn’t take part in the initial selection. Sculpture Center share their forward programme and together they select a project for her to support.

On why private collectors should share their works, Napoleone suggests that collectors may not realize the long term benefit of a short term loan. She reiterated the importance of convincing collectors that their collections would be professionally handled and looked after.

“It’s a no brainer. Many collectors are so focused on their collections they don’t realize that this could be done very easily. People are nervous that there is a risk of damage when the work leaves the crate but I had a great experience. As long as you have great handlers and that there is proper insurance and safeguards, then it can be simply done.”

VALERIA NAPOLEONE

She also noted that, some collectors might also need the reassurance of curatorial support and assistance in making choices, and that some collectors are more private about revealing what they have than others. However, while each overture has to be carefully considered and tailored both to the nature of the institution and the individual, her overall message was:

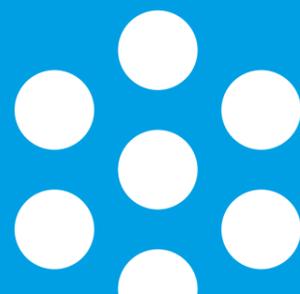
“It’s a missed opportunity: if you don’t ask, you don’t get!”

Finally, Napoleone suggested that, working on the assumption that the art world largely operates on the basis of informal relationships, the first course of action would be to identify the collector you wish to approach and then to make personal contact with anyone you know either directly or obliquely connected to that person. It may be circuitous, but going through friends of friends, or colleagues of friends, is the best way to affect an introduction, or an introduction that might then lead on to another introduction.

Session 2: Making it Happen

Key organisers of *Going Public 2015* shared their experience of the project, including its origins, as well as the logistics, the practicalities — and pitfalls — of delivering on a citywide scale.

Taking part were Mark Doyle (Art Gallery Curator & Collections Manager, Touchstones Rochdale and formerly Head of Contemporary Art Society, North); Chris Harvey (Communications Manager, Museums Sheffield); Kirstie Hamilton (Head of Exhibitions & Displays, Museums Sheffield); and Kim Streets, (Chief Executive, Museums Sheffield)



Origins of the Project

In his previous post as Head of the Contemporary Art Society, North, Mark Doyle had been trying to develop and nurture a market for contemporary art in the North West of England, extending to Yorkshire and the North East. This involved taking potential collectors to public organisations, commercial galleries and artist's studios to build their knowledge and confidence. In the process he discovered that, while a need was identified for the two sectors to make contact, there was nonetheless little understanding and a large amount of unease from the public sector about how to make contact and engage with commercial galleries and private collectors.

In 2010 Doyle organized a seminar on collecting contemporary photography at the National Media Museum, to which Sebastien Montabonel came and talked about his personal collection. Afterwards he learned that Montabonel was also an art advisor and consultant who encouraged his clients to share their collections and to develop relationships with the public sector. Montabonel was keen to initiate a project outside London and to get some of his clients involved and from their conversations, the idea of 'Going Public' was born.

"We decided that it would be interesting to invite a number of different collectors with different models of collecting to show their collections across a number of sites in a particular city or town in the North of England. But also to use that as a starting point for a bigger discussion that would bring the public sector together with some of these individuals to talk about the issues and some of the challenges and to be quite honest and open about it."

MARK DOYLE

Making *Going Public* Happen

Sebastien Montabonel's role was crucial to the project as he provided the initial point of contact with the collectors, some of whom were his clients. He was also instrumental in helping Museums Sheffield navigate the hitherto uncharted waters of a VIP weekend. Mark Doyle's knowledge and familiarity with the public sector in the North of England meant that together they could successfully develop a plan for these two very different constituencies to work in tandem.

"I don't think we could have done this project without Sebastien — it's all about relationship building, and he was the broker. But then Mark's was the same role on the other side, so the pairing of Mark and Sebastien was perfect."

KIRSTIE HAMILTON

The value for Museums Sheffield.

For Museums Sheffield, the promise of significant international works of art gave the project its initial appeal; and the way in which showing the very best art of its kind acted as a prelude and backdrop to the building of important new relationships for Sheffield.

This initiative gave the city of Sheffield, and Museums Sheffield in particular, a chance 'to move up a gear' and 'to do something extraordinary'. But even more crucially it also provided an opportunity for the city to change the way in which it regarded its museums and galleries, and art in general. Rather than seeing art and culture as a marginal embellishment, *Going Public* helped to shift art and culture to the centre of Sheffield's broader plans for the future, and to make it play a key role in how the city regarded itself.

"We saw that it would help us to start a slightly different conversation about economic vibrancy that would help to reposition art and culture at the heart of city strategy — I don't think that they necessarily are yet, but we are further down that journey."

KIM STREETS

But before the benefit of *Going Public* could be reaped, there was the necessity and the challenge of persuading the city of Sheffield to provide the essential funds to enable the project to get off the ground. This was especially difficult at a time of government cuts and reduced budgets. To enable this, senior council officers and councilors were taken on visits and came to understand that many art collectors are also involved in the world of international business, and that art can be a highly effective way of drawing them into the city.

"With great wealth comes great art — there was a strong connection between our big business people in Sheffield and big business people out there in the world and that the magnet could be great art."

KIM STREETS

Receiving mainstream and international media coverage in advance of the project provided important validation and helped Sheffield to be seen in a different light. Hiring London-based PR Company Scott & Co helped to generate important mainstream media coverage. Scott & Co were a crucial sounding board and kept the balance of the coverage between the four collectors and based on issues pertaining to Sheffield rather than the personalities involved.

"The Chief Exec of the council was in China with George Osborne at the same time as we got a full page in the international press, this was very helpful"

KIRSTIE HAMILTON

Scott & Co were already fully networked into the London art world and could act as informal advocates and profile raisers for the project.

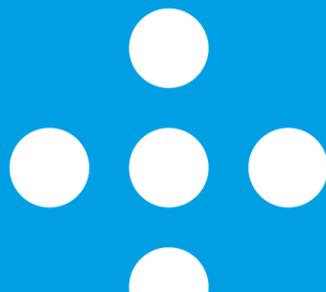
"Scott & Co really interrogated what our ambitions were, what the objectives were, and they distilled them really effectively. I think that really helped us shape what we were trying to achieve through the wider campaign. It meant that we had this really effective framework when we were trying to talk about the project throughout... because of the experience that Scott & Co brought to the table, the collectors had confidence in them. "

CHRIS HARVEY

The involvement of Sheffield Cathedral was a key factor in shifting perception of the project from being solely something restricted to the art galleries to a project that embraced the city in its entirety. To this end, the support of the Very Reverend Peter Bradley, Dean of Sheffield, was a huge asset. Taking contemporary art out of the gallery and into one of the city's most iconic public spaces provided a new dimension to the project and opened it up to new audiences. The Dean's encouragement of Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo to place some of her more radical and provocative artworks within the cathedral was very forward thinking and provided a vital component in generating media interest.

Session 3: Next Steps

This plenary session hosted by Louisa Buck explored ways in which the conclusions and outcomes of the *Going Public* projects could be implemented and taken further. The discussion was inspired by questions, including: What do we need now? What can we do? What do we need to invest in? How can we move this forward?



Institutional Links

Co-operation between museums and galleries throughout the region should be encouraged. The connectivity between the Yorkshire Sculpture Triangle of Leeds Art Gallery and Henry Moore Institute in Leeds; Hepworth Wakefield; and Yorkshire Sculpture Park was noted as a good model and also acknowledged that there needed to be well-developed co-operation between local authorities.

There is a general fear that institutions' patrons will be poached when sharing contacts. However, pooling resources can make an organisation stronger, especially as collectors like to see as much as possible. The *Going Public* VIP tour to other museums, galleries and organisations in the region was an example of this. It was felt that the sector needs to work together more, take risks and promote itself as a connected network to support.

Going Public was mainly publicly funded by Arts Council England and the city of Sheffield. Public funding was crucial in getting *Going Public* off the ground and for the time being this situation remains unchanged. However, this project has clear strategic objectives and in the long term aims to achieve a true private/public partnership equally supported from both sides.

Multilingualism and Telling Stories

There was agreement on the need for investment to train public museum and gallery employees to be adept and nimble in their dealings across both sectors, public and private. This 'multilingualism' promises to be evermore important.

“There are sets of words that I use with the Chief Executive of the City Council which is quite different from those with the Arts Council, for example, but which in turn is also quite different from our trustees and from people like the leaders of our businesses in the city — and it can be quite a challenge to get out there and use the right vocabularies!”

KIM STREETS

Art Fund is currently conducting research into what skills are most important for today's curators to develop. It is emerging that whilst the more predictable requests to support knowledge, exchange, travel and networks are important, the need for curators to be storytellers and active advocates for their collections is also significant. Communication skills in the broadest sense are needed, and the knowledge to speak the right language to the right audience. Curators of public collections increasingly need to be able to identify the appropriate 'hook' to attract wider interest in a collection or exhibition. The British Museum's 'History of the World in 100 Objects' was cited as a good example of this.

Curators and development officers need compelling stories in order to advocate for corporate sponsorship or philanthropy partnerships. Sarah Lingard from the DCMS pointed out that auction houses are especially adept at telling stories around objects.

What emerged from the *Going Public* Summit was that museums and galleries need to have a clear vision of what they want and that it should be a positive one: nobody wants to hear a sob story. Patrons and philanthropists want to support a confident organization which knows where it is going.

Mentoring, Training and Time and Space

There was shared understanding that it is important to plan a concerted programme of training. Individuals must learn how to be well-versed in the language of both business and culture in order to make successful pitches to patrons, as well as to corporate and public and local government funders. This training needs to be rolled out across the country.

Louisa Buck cited Godfrey Worsdale, Director of Henry Moore Institute, who, when interviewed for the *Going Public* Report, believed that older curators had a duty to mentor the next generation, and to pass on skills that they had learned at the rockface.

Research from Art Fund also places importance on the need for curators to have the time and space and the resources to be able to spend time with their collections and to think about them. Funding tends to work from project to project and in a climate increasingly preoccupied with meeting targets, time set aside simply to think is a rare commodity. Curators must be given the opportunity to work out what the USP of their collection is.

“People say that curators are not taking risks, they are not looking for those slightly odd, unusual stories, and just doing things that that they think will get people through the door. But they are saying that ‘we don’t have the time or the luxury of the time or the money to spend six months looking at the collections and thinking, actually, what’s interesting here?’”

SARAH PHILP

Andrea Hadley Johnson of Derby Museums Trust talked about the role of social media and advertising in telling stories to bring in audiences and as well as those that might attract patrons to support a project or organisation.

The Personal Connection

It was agreed that overall, establishing a personal connection, whether with an audience or a potential individual sponsor, and then harnessing that enthusiasm and interest, was key. Napoleone’s intensely personal engagement with her collection was then channeled to the benefit of Sheffield as, in different ways, was the engagement of the four collectors participating in *Going Public* 2015. Working for institutions can sometimes involve a sublimation of the personal response and this needs to be re-activated.

It is important to be specific when targeting patrons for support, letting them know precisely what is required and why. If a collector is being approached to lend works it is essential to inform them how their art will be seen in a new context and what will be achieved.

The way in which universities fundraise through finding their alumni was referred to, but it was agreed that this highly professional use of databases and wealth mining required considerable investment. It was noted that the value of this information means that it is closely guarded by universities, who would only be prepared to share it with their local museums and galleries if there was some form of quid pro quo.

Reaching Out Beyond the Culture Sector

To achieve effective support, museums and galleries need to forge more active links with the business sector. Without designated teams or expensive software, this has to be achieved through legwork and pro-active networking, using social media and every means possible. Computer programmes only provide data; to forge productive relationships, the personal encounter is all-important.

The importance of the personal encounter extends through all elements of an institution. The *Going Public* summit also referred to making meaningful grass roots connections with volunteers, school children, and friend’s groups, as well as making sure that gallery attendants and front of house staff were engaged, informative and enthusiastic.

It was noted that collector philanthropists attached great importance to educational programmes and reaching out to communities. All the participants in the *Going Public* summit, including Valeria Napoleone, cited that inspiring and engaging new audiences was a key factor for them.

“Valeria wanted her art to be seen by this new community and to inspire new people.”

KIRSTIE HAMILTON

Joining the Dots and Moving Forward

The day offered an opportunity for fruitful discussion and meaningful insight. The main conclusions cover six key areas.

Issues of Autonomy

The fact that many regional and civic museums around the country are still local authority run can cause complications if all decisions need to be ratified by the local council and if any monies raised also risk being channeled back into the council. It also makes it more challenging to fundraise if there is a perception that a gallery is being supported by the local government.

“How can a regional museum work out what its message is and what it is meant to be when it isn’t even allowed to have its own website? Or when its business cards carry the council logo? It’s difficult to say, ‘go out and find a philanthropist’, when they are actually still part of the council and are barely allowed to paint the walls without going through a procurement process. It’s really hard.”

SARAH PHILP

While one solution can be for a local authority museum or gallery either to become a charity or to establish a charitable arm for development and fundraising, this often can only be achieved with council consent, which may or may not be forthcoming. Also, it can be problematic if a museum is looking after a council-owned collection. It is critical that councils are able to understand the benefits those opportunities may provide. However, it was also emphasized that no two local authorities are the same and there may be a multitude of protocols and practices to negotiate. A form of network or consortium is necessary, albeit complex to achieve.

Barnsley was cited as an example of a local authority museum service which has recently established a development trust to fundraise. Kevin Wallace, Arts and Events Officer, Barnsley Council pointed out that they had set up a Charitable Trust, however it had been a struggle to achieve because all Barnsley’s sites are individually branded. He also noted that it was challenging for council-owned institutions to raise funds through philanthropy as local authority run museums or galleries aren’t always in a position to guarantee that the funding will be spent where originally intended.

Hired Help

There is the potential to employ an independent third party to enable museums and galleries across the region to join forces to attract private philanthropy and sponsorship — and public funding — without raising concerns that they were using valuable resources to the benefit of others. They could pool funds and employ a specialist to act on their collective behalf.

“Much as there may be a will to do so, it is unrealistic to expect organisations to work together to provide opportunities for collectors or philanthropists. The organisation or individual who takes the lead on this will soon start to get pressure from senior management who will say, hang on, why are we doing all this work to the benefit of everyone else? Why isn’t it just about us? So there needs to be an independent post, someone who is doing it for the greater good”.

MARK DOYLE

It was noted that a good development manager is expensive and that it can be difficult to justify this expenditure, especially when many regional and civic museums around the country are still local authority run. Yet given the need to ensure that funds raised by council owned institutions are used for their direct benefit and not simply channeled into local government finances, it would be beneficial to tender a shared funding bid for an independent, autonomous third party to be appointed to act on behalf of a council’s art spaces. This appointed individual would not only fundraise but also ensure that the funds were used directly to the benefit of the museum or gallery in question.

One successful example of this was Nottingham Castle, a local authority run museums service, which successfully established a separate fundraising Castle Trust for capital development. This Trust has appointed specialist fundraisers with expertise in corporate and private giving to initiate and nurture those relationships.

Curated Tours

Carefully structured tours for cash and time poor curators and museum staff offering a VIP style programme of meetings and events where they could engage with colleagues and interface with key individuals and organisations would be hugely valuable. Such an event could take place during Frieze week, or during an important Biennial or art festival, where the maximum encounters could be effected. Richard Parry, Curator, Grundy Art Gallery suggested a framework where regional museum and gallery curators could present their institution to potential sponsors/partnership organisations.

Key Events

It was agreed that activities around Hull as City of Culture in 2017 and the Great Exhibition of the North in 2018 should be utilized to raise the profile of *Going Public* and museums and galleries in the North of England in general. The north should not need to justify itself but work together to articulate a confident, connected and culturally significant area of England.

Role of Artists and Dealers

The generosity of artists and their enthusiasm for sharing and giving back to communities beyond London — often where they grew up — can be a great asset to regional museums and galleries.

Dealers are often generous and can energetically advocate on the behalf of museums, especially if one of their artists is in an exhibition.

Access

Sarah Lingard of DCMS pointed out that for Central Government, access was currently a key consideration, especially among disadvantaged groups that don't have access to the London bubble. More data was needed — and was being gathered — around corporate and private giving within heritage and the arts, which can then be used as an advocacy tool for the regions and their communities to gain more public funding.

Reaching out to wealthier individuals living in the regions was also a challenge, with the need to make supporting local museums and galleries more attractive and 'cool'. Richard Parry, Curator of the Grundy Art Gallery in Blackpool, pointed out that high profile exhibitions like the Neon show at the Grundy can attract more affluent local interest, especially when they involve prominent artists such as Tracey Emin or attention grabbing artworks such as Mark Leckey's giant inflatable Felix the Cat.

List of Works

10 Drawings, 2003–2004

TOMMA ABTS

pen, pencil, coloured pencil, collage and watercolour on paper

Ohne Titel, 2009

MONIKA BAER

oil on canvas

Hausfrau Swinging, 1997

MONICA BONVICINI

video, drywall and wooden structures

12 Paintings, 2011

ANDREA BÜTTNER

wooden stretchers with work suit fabric

Portrait (mesing), 2012

ALEKSANDRA DOMANOVIĆ

inkjet print

Game, 2010

IDA EKBLAD

welded iron, mixed media

Ladies Room, 2010

MARTHA FRIEDMAN

silicone rubber and fiberglass, reinforced FGR

Fat Yellow, 2004

JOANNE GREENBAUM

oil and flashes on canvas

The Beauty They Started With, 2004

KERSTIN KARTSCHER

ink marker on fabric, bird's claw, leather, chain, tassels, lights, brass, chandelier chains

14 Pots, 2009–2011

SHIO KUSAKA

porcelain and stoneware

Neobros, 1998

MARGHERITA MANZELLI

oil on canvas

Untitled (01–06), 2006

REBECCA MORRIS

oil on canvas

Untitled, 1998

SHIRIN NESHAT

photograph

Untitled, 1998

SHIRIN NESHAT

photograph

Blankets, 2000

KARIN RUGGABER

nylon, cotton, loden, polyester

La Fée Électricité, 2005

MAI-THU PERRET WITH LIGIA DIAS

wire, papier mâché, dispersion laquer and gouache, wig, steel pedestal, silk dress and neon ring

Untitled, 2005

MAI-THU PERRET

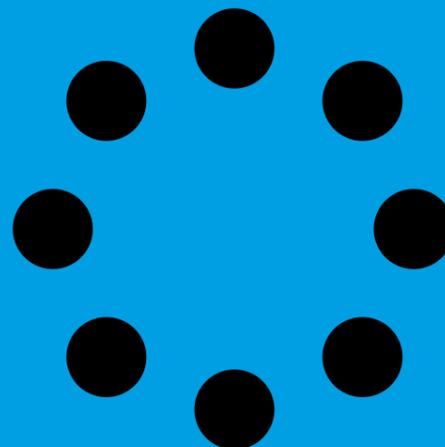
cotton, application

A-Z Time Trails, 1999

ANDREA ZITTEL

steel frame, clocks, electrical steering

DESIGNED BY HTTP://DU.ST



MuseumSheffield Napoleone Collection

Art Fund_



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