



**NORWICH**  
UNIVERSITY  
OF THE ARTS

**DR MARK WILSHER**

Everyone is an curator

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**CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION**

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# 1. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

**Output title** Everyone is an curator  
**Output type** M - Exhibition  
**Output date** 2015

In 2014 Wilsher was invited to stage a solo show of his work by the curator of the Minorities in Colchester. The project developed from Wilsher's study of the coverage of contemporary art in newspapers and his socially-engaged art practice, to research the bricolage of artworks that the people of Colchester select to adorn their homes. It investigated how fine art tropes filter through to the products of industrial mass culture and researched the aesthetics of a locality, individual tastes and subjectivity filtered through the mechanisms of contemporary capitalism. The grammatical error of the exhibition title explicitly and ironically references Joseph Beuys' declaration that 'every human being is an artist'.

Wilsher defined the parameters of the research, recruited and briefed twenty volunteers. He promoted the project in local media, to local community groups and through gallery circulation lists to encourage public involvement. Wilsher and the team visited over 150 homes in a three-month period (April to June 2015) and documented over 2000 artworks in Colchester homes through conversations, by identifying how the artwork was acquired and photographing it in context. From this documentation Wilsher selected works and curated the exhibition.

The research functioned as a community-engaged participatory project with insights that documented and displayed the domestic aesthetics of the Colchester area; this was the element that local media responded to and promoted. However, it also explored the wider social and commercial forces that impact on individual tastes and self-expression, informed by Wilsher's doctorate and ongoing research into the sociology of the artworld, and how art is consumed outside the gallery. For example, his display highlighted the relationships between ancient sculpture and Garden Centre statuary, between MC Escher prints and a Minecraft® poster.

The exhibition was open from August to October 2015, covered in local media and reviewed in Art Monthly.



Fig.1 Installation shot of the entrance to the exhibition

## 2. RESEARCH PROCESS

The exhibition title explicitly references Joseph Beuys' declaration that 'every human being is an artist'. However, in this context it reflects that such agency not so easily conferred, although the notion of curating is widespread. The research was informed by De Certeau's (1984) proposal that cultural consumption is active, that consumers select, pick and choose, from cultural products that are designed to be consumed whole.

## THE MINORITIES GALLERIES

### Press Release March 2015

Wanted: Your Art!

Mark Wilsher wants to make an exhibition from art found on the walls of people who live in Colchester.

Norwich based artist, Mark Wilsher, has been invited to present an exhibition at The Minorities Galleries. He plans to work with the gallery to visit people's houses and survey the artworks that are found on their walls. These could be anything from photographic prints of stones or flowers, wedding photos and children's drawings on fridges, to words that sit on shelves or Justin Bieber posters. Once the survey has been done, Mark will select common groups of artworks and organise them into a display that will form an exhibition at the gallery.

If you would your home to be included in the survey, please get in touch with the gallery at [the.minorities@colchester.ac.uk](mailto:the.minorities@colchester.ac.uk) or 01206 712 237.

A team of helpers will visit homes near The Minorities and photograph the artworks that they find. Once the final selection of artworks has been made people will be contacted and collections will be arranged. Everyone who takes part will be invited to the opening of the exhibition, which will be a celebration of the art we all love to live with.

Mark is interested in exploring how art travels from artist's studios to galleries and museums to find its way into common cultural use. This democratising of artworks allows us all to enjoy art in some form or other, sometimes without realising it, or thinking about what its origins may have been or what may have inspired it.

The exhibition will open at The Minorities Galleries on Friday 28 August, from 6-9pm, and will then be open from Saturday 29 August – Saturday 24 October.

The gallery is open Monday – Saturday, 10am – 5pm. Admission is free.



Colchester  
School of Art



Fig.2 Minorities Press release



■ Artists – Cydney Barrows, Zoe Harley, Douglas Angel with organiser Mark Wilsher  
 Picture: NIGEL BROWN C0104738

# Home is where the art is

**H**OME is where the art is. Well that's what staff at the Minorities in Colchester are hoping to discover for their latest art project.

Led by Norwich-based artist and lecturer Mark Wilsher, the idea behind the scheme is to find the cultural make-up of the town by uncovering the artworks lurking in people's homes.

"We're looking for all kinds of art," Mark says. "From photos, posters, paintings, even children's artworks from school."

"With a team of students and volunteers from the Minorities we'll go into people's homes and photograph what's on their walls."

"They could be anything, from Justin Bieber bedroom posters or Constable prints."

"That first stage is just to get an overview of the kind

of art people in the town like."

By NEIL D'ARCY-JONES

After collating the photographs, Mark is then hoping to borrow 50 or 60 of the original artworks in order to stage an exhibition in the Minorities in August and September.

"I've never done this before," he adds, "but I've been wanting to do it for a while. I just think it's interesting how people create their own identity with their art, but I'm hoping some common themes might crop up which are unique to the town. We will be led by what we find which is a bit scary, but exciting at the same time."

Anyone who wants to take part in the project can either e-mail [minorities@colchester.ac.uk](mailto:minorities@colchester.ac.uk) or call 01206 712437.

## August 2015 Minorities exhibition project outline

Everyone has artworks in their home. Some people have original paintings and sculptures, some people have canvas prints off the shelf from IKEA. In every house there is a unique and vibrant visual culture waiting to be discovered.

This project is based on exploring and sharing the domestic visual culture of Colchester. We will be going into local people's homes to view and document their art collections: everything from textile wall hangings and Justin Bieber posters to wedding photos and drawings from the fridge door. I will borrow a selection of actual works from people's houses, and bring them to the gallery. Stories about some of the pieces will be included, for instance saying why someone bought a picture and what it means to them.

There are some categories of image that many people have in common: the wedding photo, children's paintings, holiday photos, family portraits. These can be highlighted by grouping similar or identical works together.

This project is about the way that we interpret and engage with visual culture in all of its complexity, expressing ourselves as creative individuals through commercially-available products.

### Project schedule

- April-June Documentation of artworks in local people's homes
- By 30<sup>th</sup> June Send information & images to the Minorities
- 26th-28th Aug Installation of exhibition in gallery
- 28th August Private View 6-9pm
- 29th Aug – 24<sup>th</sup> Oct Exhibition open to the public

### What I am asking you to do...

The more homes and artworks we can document, the wider the choice of artworks I will have to work with, and the better the final exhibition will be. I will be relying heavily on you to help with this collecting process. Working together in pairs for support, I hope that you will be able to cover at least 20 households over the 12-week period from April to June.

We will be able to give you names and addresses to contact and arrange a convenient time to visit. But I also want you to use your local knowledge to find additional households. Family members, neighbours, friends, acquaintances. All of these would be brilliant.

There is a checklist to fill in for each of the households you visit, so that you note down all the details that we will need (things like names, contact details etc) and everyone's research is kept in the same format. I also need you to

Fig.3 Article in The Colchester Gazette 24 March 2015

Fig.4 Briefing sheet for volunteers (1 of 4)

Reference	Description	Contact progress
MC80	Venice The Range canvas print	Spoke and emailed 31/7
MW131	Matisse clothed woman on sofa	Left mssg & emailed 27/7
KC 12	Rembrandt, Awoman bathing in a str	Emailed 13th August
MW217	Matisse Creole Dancer 1950	Spoke and emailed 27/7
MW 67	Small Bridget Riley framed postcard Nataraja 1993	
MF29	Frozen poster	Emailed 1/8
MW27	Escher print	Left message and emailed 1/8
KC 24	Escher print	
MC 84	Rachel Whiteread Tree of Life 2012	
JLAS 17	Georgia O'Keefe flower	
MC 8	Turner framed print	
JLAS29	Green flower canvas print	Spoke and emailed 1/8
JA26	Rachel Whiteread Tree of Life 2012	Left mssg & emailed 28/7
MW5	Hans Holbein portrait of Thomas Moc	Left mssg & emailed 29/7
MW12	Van Gogh Sunflowers	Emailed 1/8 (in Australia)
TGLS 32	Van Gogh Church of Auvers-sur-Oise 1890	
AC3	Van Gogh Village Street in Auvers 18!	Spoke and emailed 31/7
AC62	Water Bearer sculpture	Spoke and emailed 28/7
MW 56	1st painting by Jonathan	
LT20	Hercules sculpture	Spoke and emailed 1/8
AC 56	Carved wooden face	Spoke and emailed 27/7
MW314	Carved wooden face	Spoke and emailed 28/7
KC 36	Minecraft poster in large frame	
MF29	Frozen poster	Emailed 1/8
MC80	Venice The Range canvas print	Spoke and emailed 31/7

Fig.5 Data log (1 of 6)

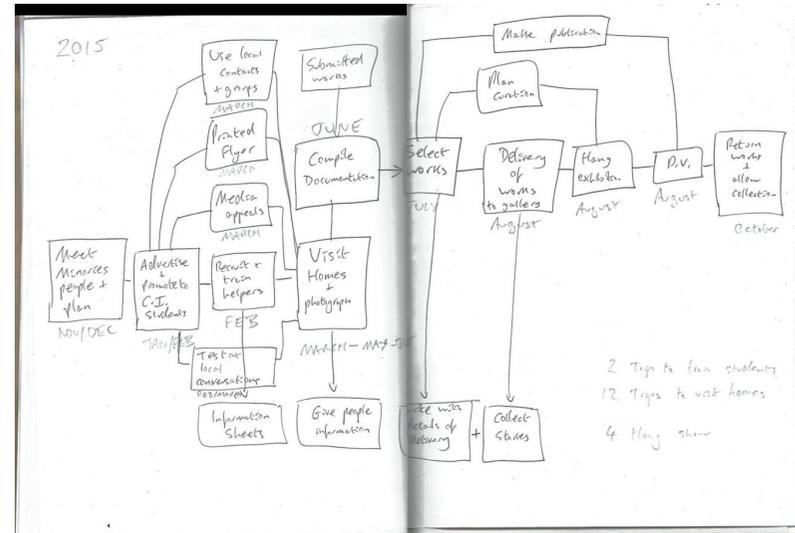


Fig.6 Initial outline of project timetable

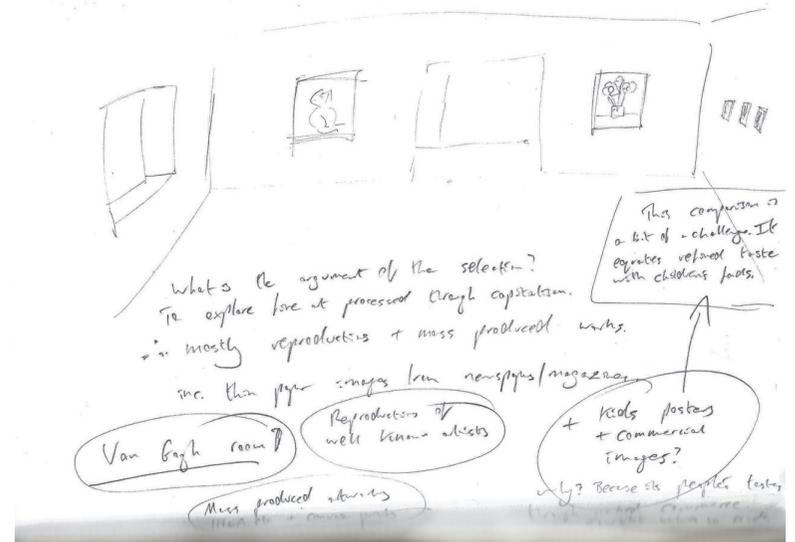


Fig.7 Sketch and notes for exhibition

### 3. RESEARCH INSIGHTS

The research documented the domestic aesthetics of areas of Colchester and considered issues related to the selection and consumption of artworks in the home. Wilsher developed a successful process for community engagement with an art project and local gallery. His curation connected fine art tropes to the products of industrial mass culture and expanded his socially engaged art practice.



Fig.8 Documentation images

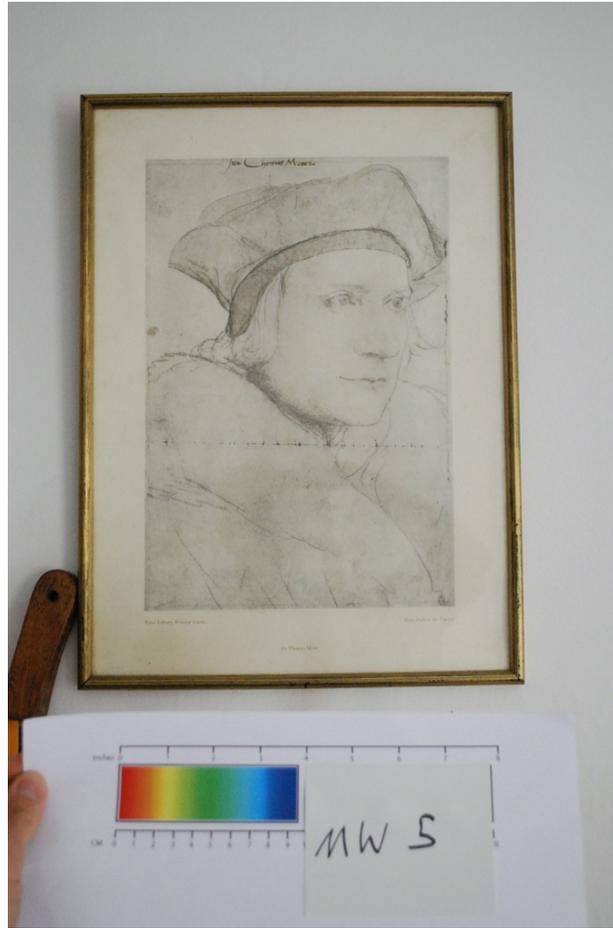


Fig.9 Documentation images



Fig.10 Documentation images

## 4. DISSEMINATION

26 works were selected, borrowed and displayed in the exhibition at the Minories galleries from 29 August to 24 October 2015

Leaflet guide to the exhibition with a text by Wilsher

Essex County Standard newspaper 7 August 2015 featured the upcoming exhibition, including interviews with lenders to the exhibition, pp. 35-37

BBC Radio Essex interview with Mark Wilsher on the Tony Fisher show 2/9/15

Art Monthly Talk Show on Resonance FM Interview with Mark Wilsher

12th October 2015 <https://www.artmonthly.co.uk/magazine/site/events/category/talk-show/>

Reviewed by Matthew Bowman in Art Monthly 390, October 2015

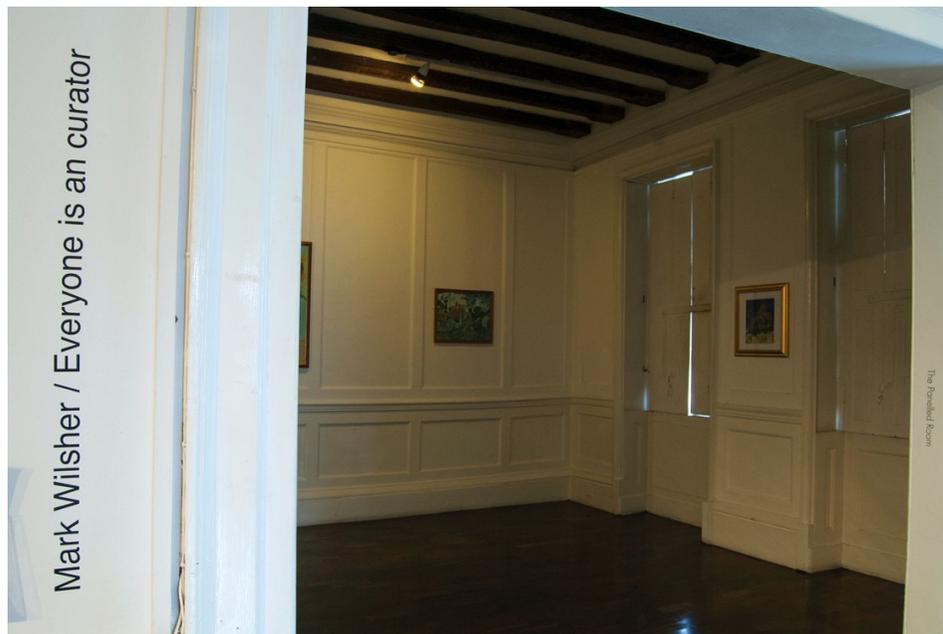


Fig.11 Exhibition installation shots



Fig.12 Exhibition installation shots



Fig.13 Exhibition installation shots

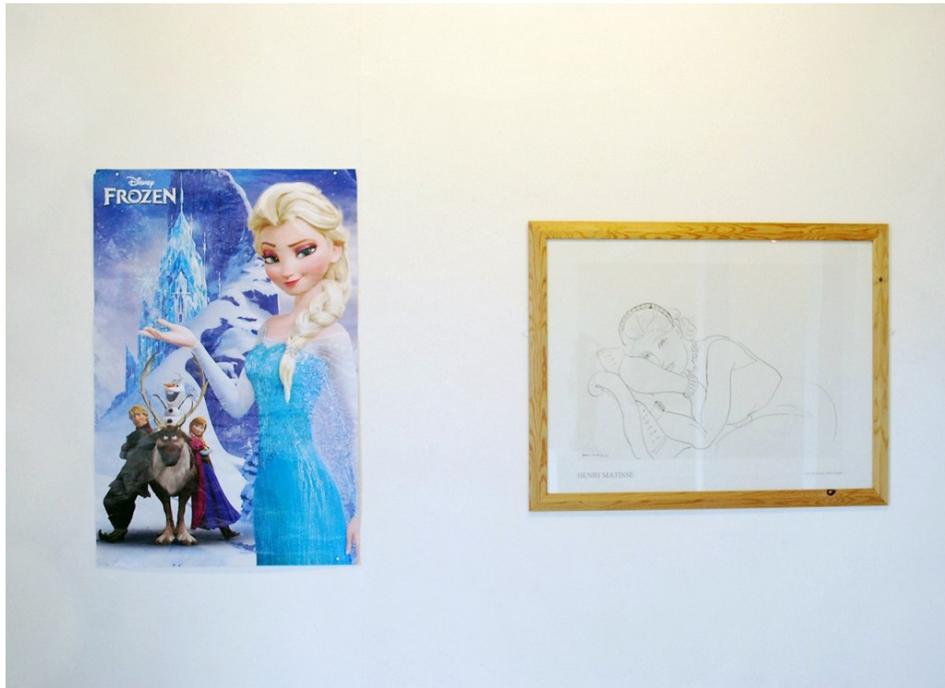


Fig.14 Exhibition installation shot



Fig.15 Exhibition installation shot

Everyone has artworks in their home. Some people have original paintings and sculptures, some people have canvas prints off the shelf from IKEA, or pictures from Athena. People put up posters, wall hangings, photos, calendars, postcards, souvenirs, ornaments, oddities. In every house there is a unique and vibrant visual culture waiting to be discovered. This is a private culture, but is also sometimes meant to display a certain identity or set of values to those who we invite into our homes.

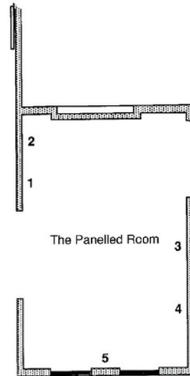
Low cost printing, mass production and the global trade with workshops in east Asia have enabled a cheap and homogenous market for good quality artworks sold as interior decoration in the UK. These industrially-produced artworks are distant cousins of the glamorous contemporary art market. But there are family resemblances.

It would be all too easy to denounce artworks from B&Q or The Range as some of the lowest products of the culture industry, and their owners as passive victims of a malevolent industrial complex. "The elite always assumes that the public is moulded by the products imposed on it," writes Michel de Certeau. But that would be to deny the day-to-day enjoyment that we get from our home art collections, and the creative ways in which everyone uses commercial culture to construct a self-image from its fragments. De Certeau redefines cultural consumers as "unrecognized producers, poets of their own acts, silent discoverers of their own paths in the jungle of functionalist rationality".

Over the last five months, Mark Wilsher and a team of volunteers have been visiting over a hundred and fifty households within two miles of the Minorities Galleries. Over two thousand artworks have been documented, and from these a selection of thirty have been borrowed from living room and bedroom walls to make up this exhibition.

29.08.15 Mark Wilsher  
 ~24.09.15 Everyone is an curator  
 List of Works

The Panelled Room



- 1  
Carved wooden face  
Lent by Jean & Don Quinn  
Given instead of a payment for stall rent at Colchester Christmas market
- 2  
Carved wooden face  
Lent by Rebekah Stovold  
Bought home from holiday in Belize or Sydney
- 3  
Vincent Van Gogh *Sunflowers* 1888  
Lent by Catherine D'Arcy-Jones  
Bought from The Barbican
- 4  
Vincent Van Gogh *Village Street in Auvers* 1890  
Lent by Dorian & Sheila Kelly  
Bought in a junk shop
- 5  
Vincent Van Gogh *Church of Auvers-sur-Oise* 1890  
Lent by Alec D'Arcy-Jones  
Bought at the Musée D'Orsay, Paris

The Girling Room

- 1  
M C Escher  
*Ascending and Descending* 1960  
Lent by Tim & Jo Nelson  
Page cut from a book
- 2  
*Minecraft poster*  
Lent by Felix Stovold  
Bought locally
- 3  
M C Escher *Waterfall* 1961  
Lent by Tim & Jo Nelson  
Page cut from a book
- 4  
Bridget Riley  
*Nataraja* 1993  
Lent by Jonathan & Linda Pearsall  
Bought from the Tate
- 5  
Bridget Riley  
*Nataraja* 1993  
Lent by Phaedra Bishop  
Bought from The Minorities
- 6  
Rachel Whiteread  
*Tree of Life* 2012  
Lent by Tim & Jo Nelson  
Free with magazine subscription
- 7  
Rachel Whiteread  
*Tree of Life* 2012  
Lent by Stefanie Kogler  
Won in online competition
- 8  
Georgia O'Keeffe  
*From the Lake No. 1* 1924  
Lent by Tim & Jo Nelson  
Bought online
- 9  
*Green flower*  
Lent by Lisa Elvish  
Bought at The Range
- 10  
*Love*  
Lent by Pat Caplin  
Bought from the Co-op
- 11  
Henry Moore  
*Family Group* 1948  
Lent by Jonathan & Linda Pearsall  
Bought online
- 12  
*Frozen poster*  
Lent by Mali Mae Shepherd  
Bought from The Works
- 13  
Henri Matisse  
*Jeune fille avec tiare* 1936  
Lent by Susan Hobson  
Bought from Easyart.com

- 14  
*Water Bearer*  
Lent by Pat Doell  
Bought at Monks Eleigh garden centre
- 15  
*Hercules*  
Lent by Paul T Davies  
Bought at the old florist on North Station Road

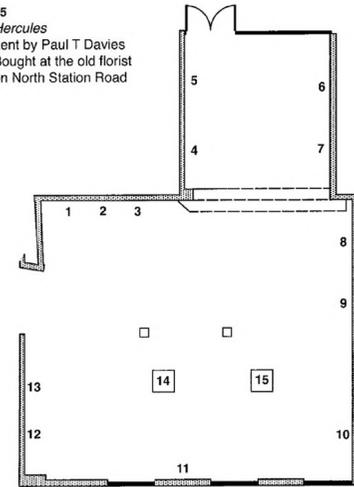


Fig.16 Exhibition Leaflet/1

Fig.17 Exhibition Leaflet/2

The Corner Room

1  
Jonathan's 1st painting  
Lent by Pat Doell  
Painted by eldest son

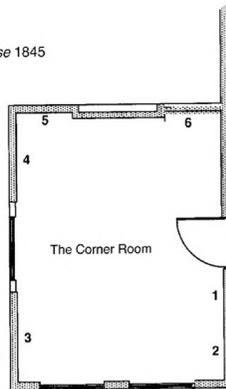
2  
Henri Matisse *Creole Dancer* 1950  
Lent by Jonathan & Linda Pearsall  
Bought at a gallery in Antibes

3  
JMW Turner *Norham Castle, Sunrise* 1845  
Lent by Tim & Jo Nelson  
Bought at the National Gallery

4  
*Venice*  
Lent by Daisy Giddings  
Bought from Dunelm Mill

5  
Hans Holbein the Younger  
*Portrait of Thomas Moore* 1526-7  
Lent by Rosamund Cairns  
Gift from mother, originally bought  
at the Queen's Gallery,  
Buckingham Palace

6  
Rembrandt  
*A woman bathing in a stream* 1654  
Lent by Susan Hobson  
Bought from Easyart.com



**THE MINORIES**  
GALLERIES  
74 High Street Colchester CO1 1UE  
www.theminories.org.uk



It is possible to discern some common themes in the selection. Reproductions of famous works by Turner, Holbein and Matisse bring to mind Mairaux's "museum without walls". These iconic paintings have escaped from the museum and we are able to enjoy them in our daily lives. Canvas prints on stretchers emulate the form of traditional easel painting. Posters from children's bedrooms advertise recent Disney movies and the Minecraft phenomenon. This exhibition suggests that the same drive to put up a poster in our childhood bedroom lies behind what we choose to hang over the mantelpiece.

Each borrowed artwork is seen afresh in the white space of the gallery, given its due as a unique and distinctive object with particular aesthetic qualities. The "objectness" of these artworks is emphasised by their being wrenched from their natural domestic settings.

These images suggest the aesthetics of a locality. They document the way that we interpret and engage with visual culture in all of its complexity, expressing ourselves as creative individuals with a Van Gogh over the stairs, or a Greek god in the garden. The selection also represents the idea of consumer capitalism as an all-pervasive mediating force in our lives.

Mark Wilsher studied at the University of Westminster, Central Saint Martins, and Norwich University of the Arts. He has exhibited nationally at venues including Leeds City Art Gallery, the ICA, Wysing Arts Centre and Gimpel Fils. Solo exhibitions include *Gallery Shots* (2013-14) Chelsea College of Art & touring, *The Yesable Proposition* (2010) OUTPOST gallery, and *Unfinished Business* (2008-9) Henry Moore Institute & Chelsea Space. He lives in Norwich and is a regular writer for Art Monthly.

Fig.18 Exhibition Leaflet/3

essexcountystandard.co.uk Friday August 7, 2015 Essex County Standard 35

Essex County Standard

# weekend life

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## Art at heart of our town on show

Everyone is a Curator, at the Minories P 36/37

arts  
Bill Bailey is back with new gags P 45

food  
Fresh and local fish proving a hit P 40/41

history  
Town's female Great War casualty revealed P38/39

### art & events what's on theatre food looking back

**DELITO GO** pop the co-op

Exciting and delicious range of fresh local food from some of the region's leading and innovative producers.

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Fig.19 Feature in the Essex County Standard newspaper 7 August 2015



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