

**MODERN ART
OXFORD**

SEAN LYNCH

A BLOW BY BLOW ACCOUNT OF STONE CARVING IN OXFORD

12 April – 8 June

This exhibition presents the varied practice of artist Sean Lynch (b. Kerry, Ireland, 1978) through a range of works including sculpture, photographs and a slide projection located in Modern Art Oxford's yard, shop, Project Space and cafe. Lynch is interested in recovering moments in history which have thus far eluded popular consciousness. Adopting an ethnographic approach to his research, he reassembles lost artefacts, fragments and narratives to present an alternative perspective on the past.

For this exhibition, Lynch concentrates primarily on the legacy of the O'Shea brothers, stone carvers from Ireland whose handiwork can be seen in Oxford today. Known for their skilled carvings adorning significant Victorian buildings in Dublin created during the 1850s, the O'Sheas were invited by the University of Oxford to work on the new Museum of Natural History.

Lynch's slide projection, presented in the Project Space, explores a controversy that arose after the O'Sheas carved a series of monkeys into the facade of the Natural History Museum. Construed as a reference to Darwin's then contentious theory of evolution; the brothers were dismissed, only to attempt a final rebellious carving of parrots and owls over the doorway of the museum, intended to caricature the authorities of the University.

Lynch carefully weaves this tale into the documented history of The Ark, the UK's first public museum located in Lambeth, London and founded in the 1630s by John Tradescant, whose collection later formed the basis of the Ashmolean Museum. Currently the site of a fried chicken outlet, the artist carefully intertwines the restaurant's fast food branding with the Oxford museums' collections, deliberately contrasting 'high' and 'low' imagery to question how knowledge is classified and, furthermore, how stories once made can generate further narratives, becoming history in the process.

Lynch's examination of narrative continues in the cafe where an ancient stone, catalogued by curator Henry Balfour, from the Pitt Rivers Museum as a 'flint resembling a monkey's head' will be on display alongside a selection of archival material from the Favorite chicken outlet in Lambeth. Other Favorite ephemera including napkins, boxes and bags can also be found in our bookshop if you look carefully.

In the yard, the artist has placed a group of sculptor's bankers amongst rubble and a selection of photographs, setting the stage for a four day stone carving symposium which will take place from 17-20 April. A carving of a monkey, completed by carver Stephen Burke following the style and working ethos of the O'Sheas is also on display.

An artist's book, published by Modern Art Oxford and Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane will accompany the exhibition alongside a series of talks and events detailed below. In addition, the stone carvers Stephen Burke and Andy Tanser will lead a four-day carving symposium in the Yard during the Easter weekend where informal discussions between the artist and carvers will be held at 4pm each day.

Saturday 12 April, 2pm

Walking Tour: Sean Lynch and Pitt Rivers Museum curator Dan Hicks host a walking tour in central Oxford, charting the route between the Pitt Rivers Museum and Modern Art Oxford and reflecting on the architectural, social and cultural histories encountered along the way. **FREE**

Thursday 17 – Sunday 20 April

Stonecarving Symposium: Stone carvers Stephen Burke and Andrew Tanser will take up residence in the Yard at Modern Art Oxford during which they will create a new collaborative work as part of Sean Lynch's exhibition. The resulting installation will remain in the Yard until Sunday 8 June. **FREE**

Friday 25 April 2014, 6pm

Performance and Screening: Artist Amanda Ralph presents a response to the Sean Lynch exhibition explaining the theme of Irishmen working in Britain. The event includes a screening of Philip Donnellan's powerful 1965 film, *The Irishmen*, followed by a short performative lecture with fiddle playing of the Sean nís tune, *The Rocks of Bawn*. **FREE**

Thursday 1 May, 7pm

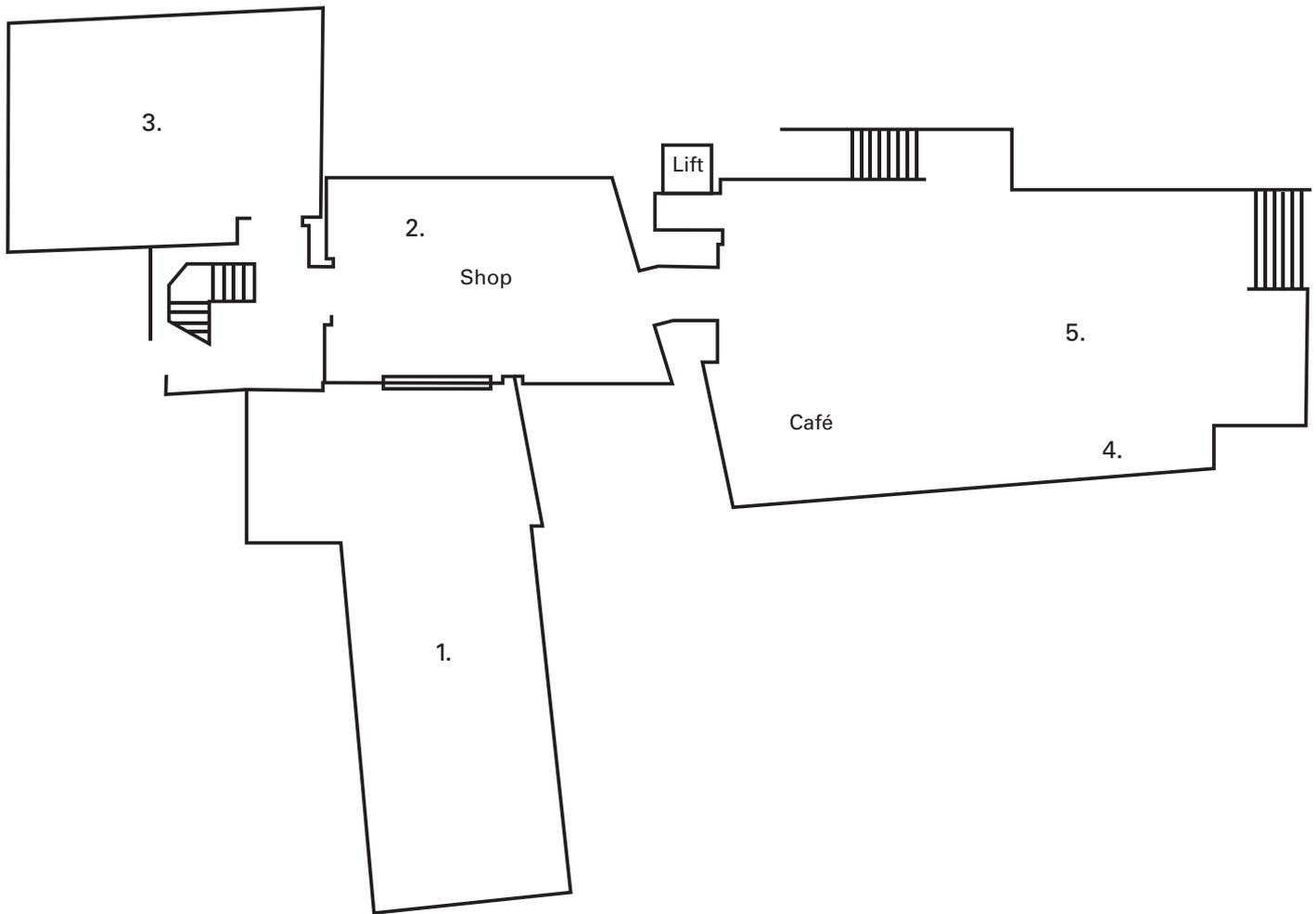
Talk: Chipping Away at a Block of Stone Carving History: Join Sean Lynch and Associate Professor of Literature at Reading University, John Holmes as they discuss the life and history of the O'Shea brothers.

Thursday 1 May, 8pm

Book Launch: Join us for drinks and the launch of Sean Lynch's new publication produced to mark his exhibition at Modern Art Oxford. **FREE**

Thursday 22 May, 7pm

Talk: Gargoyles and the Grotesque: writer and cathedral stonemason Alex Woodcock presents a short history of architectural stone carving in Oxfordshire.



1. Sean Lynch

A blow by blow account of stone carving in Oxford

Stone carved by Stephen Burke
 Printed matter by Sean Lynch and Wayne Daly
 Six photographs
 2014

2. Sean Lynch

A blow by blow account of stone carving in Oxford

Favorite Chicken & Ribs packaging
 2014

3. Sean Lynch

A blow by blow account of stone carving in Oxford

Slide projection, 15 minutes duration,
 voiceover by Gina Moxley
 Taxidermy owls, courtesy Natural History Museum, University of Oxford
 2014

4. Sean Lynch

A blow by blow account of stone carving in Oxford

Plastic sign, fabricated c.1995, donated to the artist by Favorite Chicken & Ribs following renovations at the South Lambeth Road branch in early 2014
 Favorite business archive, documents from 1986 onwards
 2014

5. Sean Lynch

A blow by blow account of stone carving in Oxford

Natural flint resembling monkey's head, courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford
 2014