

## Recommended reading list by Marjolijn Dijkman

**Sally and David Dugan**  
*The Day the World Took Off*  
Channel 4 Books

**Denis Gielen**  
*Atlas of Contemporary Art for Use of Everyone*  
Exhibitions International

**Donna Goodman**  
*A History of the Future*  
Random House

**Michael Jay**  
*The Atmosphere of Heaven:  
The Unnatural Experiments of Dr. Beddoes  
and his Sons of Genius*  
Yale University Press

**Gerlinde Schuller**  
*Designing Universal Knowledge:  
The World as Flatland*  
Lars Müller Publishers

**Jenny Uglow**  
*The Lunar Men:  
The Friends Who Made the Future 1730–1810*  
Faber and Faber

## Related events

**Saturday 30 April, 2pm**  
Exhibition tour with artist Marjolijn Dijkman and  
Helen Legg, director of Spike Island

**Saturday 7 May, 2pm**  
Exhibition tour with Katie Davies, artist based at  
Spike Island

**Saturday 14 May, 7pm**  
Pre-colonial dinner and exhibition tour

**Saturday 4 June, 2pm**  
Exhibition tour with Jonathan Mosley, architect  
and artist based at Spike Island

**Wednesday 15 June, 6pm**  
LUNÄ table discussion with artist group Time  
Capsules and Conditions of Now

**Thursday 16 June, 6pm**  
LUNÄ table discussion on radical protest and the  
Enlightenment

For more information on these events please see  
the brochure or visit [www.spikeisland.org.uk](http://www.spikeisland.org.uk)

**Spike Island**  
133 Cumberland Road, Bristol BS1 6UX  
Tel. 0117 929 2266  
[www.spikeisland.org.uk](http://www.spikeisland.org.uk)  
[admin@spikeisland.org.uk](mailto:admin@spikeisland.org.uk)

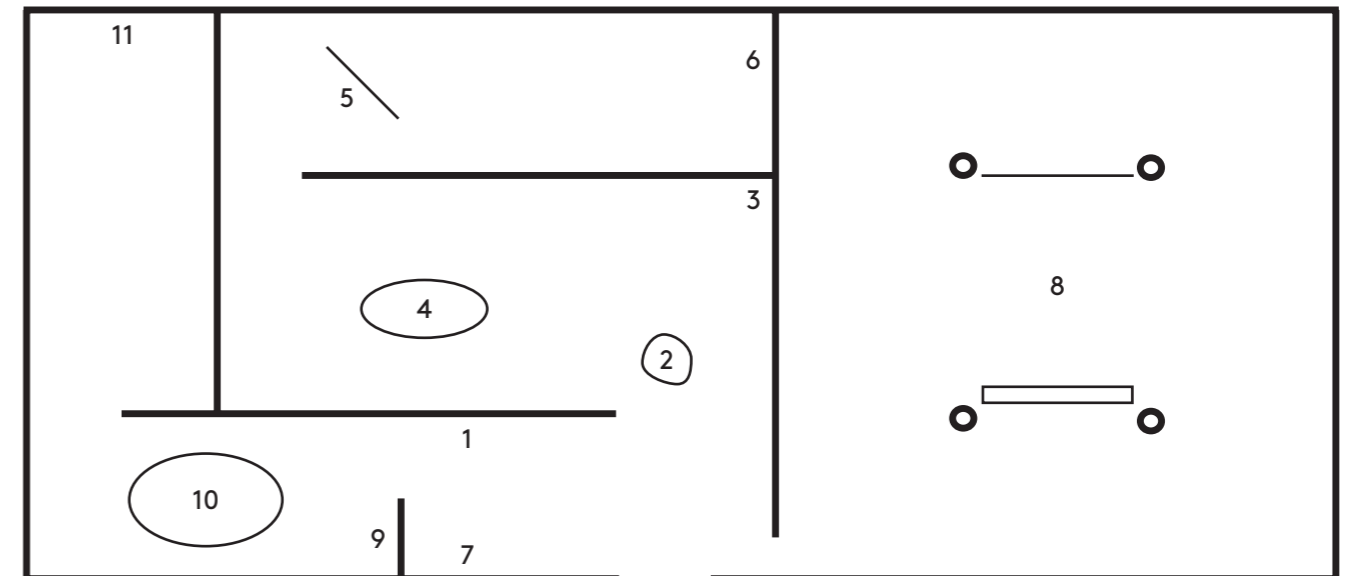
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/spikeisland](http://www.facebook.com/spikeisland)  
Twitter: @\_spikeisland

**Visitor Information**  
Gallery open Tuesday to Sunday, 11am–5pm  
(during exhibitions only)  
Admission to the galleries is free.

Café open Monday to Friday, 8.30am–5pm  
Saturday and Sunday, 11am–5pm

Spike Island aims to be a fully accessible  
building. There are three Blue Badge parking  
spaces outside the main entrance.

# Exhibition Guide



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## Spike Island

## Marjolijn Dijkman Theatrum Orbis Terrarum 29 April to 26 June 2011

This is the first major solo exhibition by Dutch artist Marjolijn Dijkman. It explores the underlying themes of a practice that is formally varied and geographically dispersed. Most of Dijkman's work to date has been site-specific, made in particular places across the world in response to invitations from communities, other artists and institutions. This exhibition presents key works from the last six years, drawing together the artist's ongoing interests and concerns, including futurology, public space, knowledge organisation, cartography, environmentalism and anthropology.

Originally produced as a postcard, in reference to travelling and tourism, *Wondering Around* (2011) collages together pictures of a single figure, always viewed from behind, surveying the landscape. Drawn from computer games, movies and early travel photography, the repeated pose is a romantic one, representative of the explorer or *flâneur* — the person who walks the city in order to experience it, at once part of it, and apart from it — and as such sets the scene for Dijkman's own working practice. Suggestions of innocent exploration belie a will to power and it is this attitude especially that the artist seeks to undermine within her work. *Geography is a Flavour* (2009–ongoing) takes its title from the slogan used by the Starbucks coffee brand, a strapline that belittles the specifics of place, suggesting difference as mere sensation. Here the artist films sets that are familiar to us from theme parks or historical visitor centres, reconstructions that depict other places. However, they are clichés, standardised displays that speak more powerfully as a projection of a society's own desires than of other environments. As with *Wondering Around*, Dijkman follows a taxonomic procedure, grouping recurring images so as to demonstrate their prevalence within our culture: in turn, this suggests a fundamental impulse within ourselves. Different forms of representation be they verbal or visual, through photographs, film, language or diagrams and maps, are used throughout the artist's practice to evidence our own systems of thought and perception.

Dijkman's projects always emerge from a process of close observation and cataloguing embodied by *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (2005–ongoing), the

ever-expanding picture archive that sits at the heart of the exhibition. Referring to Abraham Ortelius' *Theatre of the World* (1570), thought to be the first atlas, it ambitiously seeks to map the planet through thousands of digital images taken by the artist across the globe. Like Ortelius, Dijkman brings together a vast body of information and standardises it into a single logical system. Images are classified in columns that each correspond to a list of verbs and arranged so as to make visual connections. As such, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* amounts to a kind of anthropological survey, playfully pointing up similarities in human behaviours all over the world. The geographic source of each image is left unstated — the whole instead comes to signify shared means of structuring and ordering our environment.

Alongside the archive is *LUNÄ* (2011), a work that arises out of Dijkman's ongoing fascination with the eighteenth century Enlightenment. Also known as the Age of Reason, the Enlightenment stressed the importance of rationality and science and so challenged long standing institutions and traditional values. Faith in logic and technology led to belief in the possibility of progress and mankind's ability to conquer nature. The framework for Western thought and culture as we know it today was largely developed during this period and Dijkman's frequent references to it convey her overarching interest in why we think and behave the way we do. *LUNÄ* is a facsimile of the original table around which an influential group of industrialists and thinkers known as the Lunar Society would meet each month in Birmingham. Members included James Watt, Josiah Wedgwood, Matthew Boulton, Joseph Priestley and Erasmus Darwin and they forged strong links with Bristol based contemporaries including Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Beddoes. Dijkman's flat pack version of their grand dining table is typical of the artist's wry humour, collapsing the optimistically progressive value systems that were enthusiastically promoted during the Enlightenment into the mass production and globalised retail environment that can be seen as their legacy today. The table, commissioned for this exhibition, will travel with the artist and be used for an ongoing series of discussions updating topics that occupied the Lunar Men. Also presented here is *The Pleasure of Recognition* (2011) a large boulder cut to hold an information panel, typical of the kind often found in zoos or nature based tourist attractions. In place of an explanatory text the rock offers a mirror that

reflects the viewer's own image. The title refers to a psychological term developed by Sigmund Freud, who argued that humans experience pleasure when they are familiar with what they encounter.

The rear exhibition space features *Here Be Dragons* and *Surviving New Land* (2010), works commissioned as part of a project to mark the Maasvlakte 2 development, an expansion of the Rotterdam harbour that involves the creation of new land by spraying 190 million m<sup>3</sup> of sand into the water. For *Here Be Dragons*, the artist erected a billboard combining two images at the site. The first, a drawing of a water-spouting dragon allegedly sighted by the Norwegian/Danish missionary Hans Poulsen Egede in 1734, is typical of the images then used on European maps to indicate the end of 'discovered' land and warn sailors of the dangers of the unknown. Conversely in China, dragons were used on maps to indicate potential sources of power and wealth. The second is of one of the dredgers that feature prominently in promotional literature for the Maasvlakte project. Both images are mixed symbols of power and dominance as well as reminders of what humanity does not know and cannot control.

*Surviving New Land* is a video shot from a boat slowly circumnavigating the newly created island, thus adopting the point of view of an explorer about to set foot on undiscovered territory. The image — reminiscent of the watercolour impressions Dutch explorers made of the foreign coastlines they encountered — shows the sea washing up on virgin land. But the accompanying soundtrack, composed of clips from feature films that tell of Westerners encountering new frontiers, suggests that the very idea of undiscovered territory, or a blank zone on a map waiting to be filled in, is a cultural fiction. The gripping orchestral music dramatises the excitement of discovery as well as the despair of marooned expeditions. New land is aligned with fantasy, imagined either as a place of opportunity or catastrophic danger while parallels are drawn between colonisation and empire and the ever more extravagant global property developments of recent years.

*Wandering Through the Future* (2007) features excerpts from seventy feature films. In chronological sequence of represented time, from 2008 to 802,701 AD, it is a cinematic collage that is relentlessly bleak. Scene after scene of natural disasters, dystopian cities, viruses and monsters fill the screen. As Dijkman explains, 'I couldn't find a single

optimistic future scenario'. *Wandering through the Future* confronts issues of ecology and ideological conflict, giving an insight into fear of the unknown through a sequence of fictional scenarios. The film is presented alongside a timeline that, as a mapping of time, corresponds to Dijkman's ongoing interest in cartography and other systems of organising and presenting knowledge.

Another diagrammatic form is proposed by *Composition of the Universe* (2011). Astronomers believe the universe to be made up of normal matter (4%), dark matter (22%) and dark energy (74%). Dijkman has produced a number of models representing the same breakdown, but depending on the use of different colours or shapes new yet equally complete universes are brought into being. Designed for children, who are welcome to play with the wooden forms, the artist is again referencing a human compulsion to explain, quantify and record our environment. Above *Composition of the Universe* is *Blue Marble* (2008–ongoing), a digital animation which takes as its starting point an image so widely appropriated as to have been almost severed from its source. A photograph of Earth, alone in space, was shot in 1972 by the crew of the Apollo 17 and has subsequently changed our perception of the planet. It has since provided a backdrop for countless acts of imaginative projection, being pressed into service through the production of thousands of symbols and logos representing the widest variety of activities, organisations and political, social or environmental causes. Here we see 1,500 such impositions onto the original iconic picture.

*All Alone Among the Stars* (2007) involves the exchange of two young oak trees of similar size and age between 13HA forest at Heeswijk-Dinther in the Netherlands and Bialowieza National Park, on the border between Poland and Belarus. The Bialowieza National Park dates back to 8000 BC and is the last remaining part of a once immense primeval forest that has been visited over the years by poets and philosophers seeking inspiration. Now however, parts are diminished by logging while other areas are carefully managed as a tourist attraction. The forest in the Netherlands is a modestly sized wood, its trees planted mechanically at the same time, a measured distance apart. They represent very different ideas of nature each reflecting the cultures of their respective nations; both are staged experiences. Dijkman's exchange provokes questions about the incommensurability of artificially constructed, temporary woodland and 'real' nature.