



ANGEL

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A NEW WORK BY ROSE FINN-KELCEY

COMMISSIONED BY ART AND SACRED PLACES

HOSTED BY ST PAUL'S CHURCH, BOW COMMON, LONDON E3

FEBRUARY 22ND – MAY 23RD 2004

VISIBLE 24HRS A DAY (situated on the outside of the church, illuminated at night)

For six weeks *Angel*, a spectacular shimmer disc 'mural' on the west wall of St Paul's Church, has been the talking point in Bow.

The word most frequently used to describe this work is 'stunning'.

Angel is a response to the minimal architecture of St Paul's, Bow Common, listed as one of the most important post-war churches in England. What the artist mischievously calls a 'mural', conscious of its loaded history, transforms the west wall above the entrance to the church. Designed to be decoded, and more boldly enigmatic than shocking, *Angel* 'delivers' a simple text message (emoticon), consisting of a capital O, colon, dash, and bracket. Instantly recognisable to some as a smiley face on its side with a halo, to others its a visual conundrum in which they seek to extrapolate scientific equations, religious symbolism, advertising logos and more.

Universally this emoticon is used to refer to the angelic – "you are an angel" or as a means of pleading innocence – "I am an innocent soul". With her usual playful twist, the artist's scaling of this shimmer disc emoticon to over 80 m² makes it anything but ethereal. Likewise, the concept of an angel on the side of a church suggests an orthodoxy these secular cryptic symbols aim to challenge, employing a visual medium more readily associated with Bollywood or Las Vegas.

Passers-by take pleasure daily in monitoring the mood of *Angel*. The mural changes minute by minute, depending on the prevailing wind and light, each disc moves independently and the whole surface mirrors the movement of local air currents with dramatic effect. On a windy day the work is apocalyptic and on a sunny day a sizzling retinal feast. The entire surface is in essence digitalized, but perversely each disc or pixel was positioned by hand, working from a computer print-out. *Angel* exemplifies Finn-Kelcey's interest in the pixallated surface divorced from the technology it originally inhabited. "One of

the things I most enjoy" comments the artist, " is that Photo mobile users are capturing and sending the transformed message to their friends giving wider access to the work, while returning the image to its technological source."

Invocations of the spiritual are a recurring motif in Finn-Kelcey's work for example in *God Kennel* 1992, Documenta IX, which was a visual and verbal pun. The shimmering *Pearly Gate*, the yellow rubber sacks, *Souls*, and the *Jolly God* carpet, (complete with eye patch) formed part of her one person show at Camden Arts Centre, 1997. *It Pays to Pray* was her first truly interactive work using vending machines to display prayers, animated on LED screens. This was commissioned for the River walk, Millennium Dome in 1999 and is currently installed at Goodwood Sculpture Park.

Angel can also be seen in relation to work from the early 1970s when Finn-Kelcey made a series of flags bearing short messages spelled out in bold letters. These messages made clever reference to the wind and weather in which they were shown, *Here is a Gale Warning*, 1970, installed on top of the BBC2 Broadcasting Station at Alexander Palace, and *Fog*, 1971, at Nottingham Castle. They also referred to the buildings on which they were sited - *Power for the People*, 1972, flew from both Battersea and Bankside Power Stations.

Finn-Kelcey's hallmark is unpredictability, each work changing dramatically from one piece to the next. In contrast to *House Rules* 2001, where she aimed to create the smallest electronic message sign (so small in fact it is wearable), *Angel* is a low-tech rendition of the digital on a scale that is simply stunning.

***Angel* was Commission by Art and Sacred Places.** ASP celebrates and encourages the interaction of art and religion by commissioning artists to make work for sacred places in the South East of England. *Angel* the third and final project in the current Art and Sacred Places series and follows the success of Nathan Coley's *Black Tent* at Portsmouth Cathedral and Deimantas Narkevicius' *The Role of a Lifetime* at Brighton Parish Church of St Peter. www.artandsacredplace.org

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High resolution images are available upon request.

Angel was curated by Artwise Curators www.artwisecurators.com



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