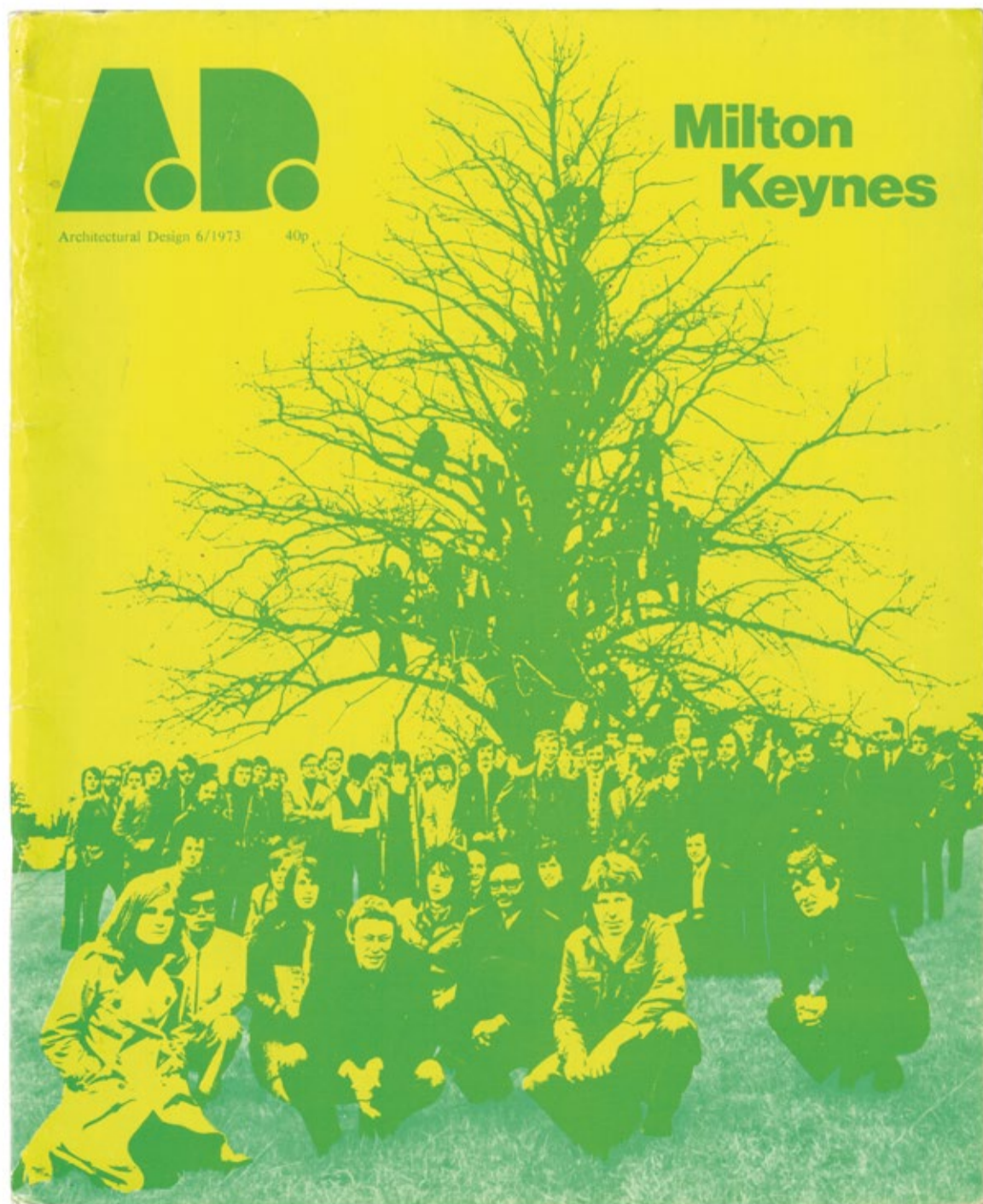


CITY CLUB

A SPACE FOR EVERYONE



Architectural Design magazine, June 1973. The Milton Keynes Development Corporation launched their unusual plan for a City of Trees by posing with a fully-grown example. The first of three special editions of AD magazine documenting the work of this visionary team.

Welcome to the City Club – a programme of new art, performances, family activities, happenings and talks inspired by the original vision behind Milton Keynes.

Milton Keynes has a history of art like no other city, developed in collaboration with its pioneer residents. One minute you were painting a mural in an underpass, the next someone stuck a video camera in your hand and invited you to talk about your life. Artists turned up everywhere: in schools, at community workshops, festivals and fairs.

The Milton Keynes Development Corporation, pictured left, was fond of quoting Shakespeare in their publicity material. Early on, they reminded us 'the people are the city'. We've made this the theme of our 50th birthday special edition, which not only celebrates a unique place but also invites us to look again at everyday creativity.

In this issue we hear a myriad of voices from Milton Keynes, go on a camping trip to the Blue Lagoon and plan the mother of all parties. If you aren't already exhausted, we share our interior design scheme for MK Gallery and propose how you can help to shape the art of tomorrow.

MK Gallery is undergoing a major expansion. Once work is completed, City Club will be a permanent physical space. For now, it's a pop-up space in different parts of the city; a virtual space through its own website; and an imaginative space for the people of Milton Keynes.

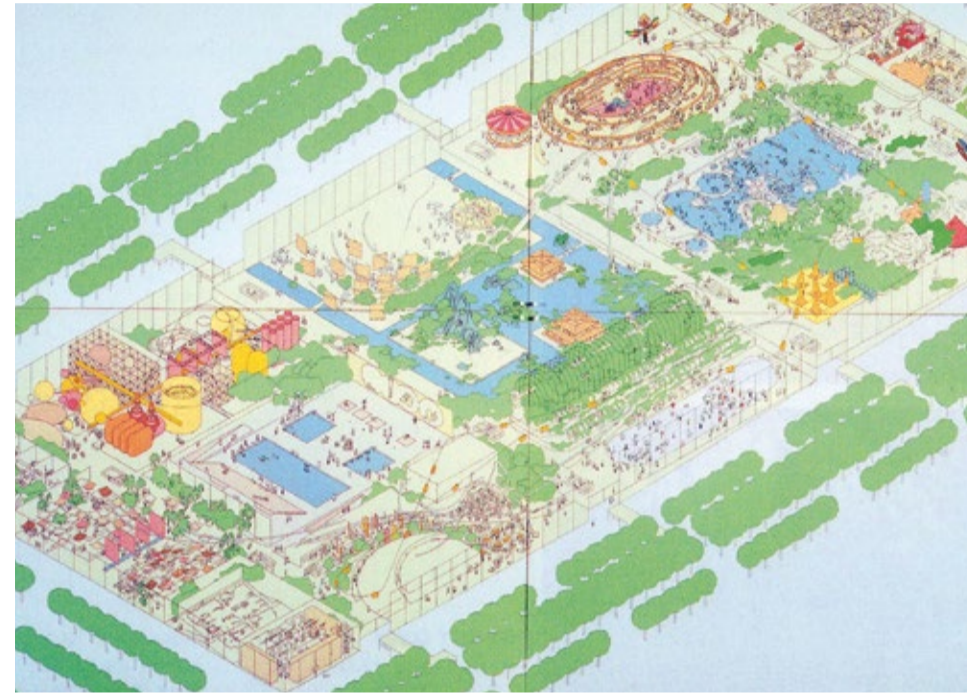
MK is 50
X

To find out more and how to get involved:
www.cityclubmk.org

Happy Birthday Milton Keynes! On October 21st, Midsummer Boulevard between The Point and MK Gallery will come alive with *Feast of Fire* and other City Club events. On the right, a timeline of the main moments; below, City Club lead artist Gareth Jones charts a brief history of leisure in MK.

THE LEISURE PRINCIPLE

City Club begins in the early 1970s with a national theme park proposed for the disused brick pits south of Bletchley. Cowcommon Canyon ambitiously aimed to “combine the cultural attractions of a metropolis with the climate and beaches of the Mediterranean.” It was too fantastic to be built, but you can marvel at what might have been on the back page of this newspaper.



Future leisure: In 1974, the City Club boasted a complex array of activities, including an Electric Garden.

The thinking behind this project was then incorporated into a sequence of mind-boggling plans for the City Club in Central Milton Keynes, from which we’ve drawn inspiration. None of these futuristic schemes were built.

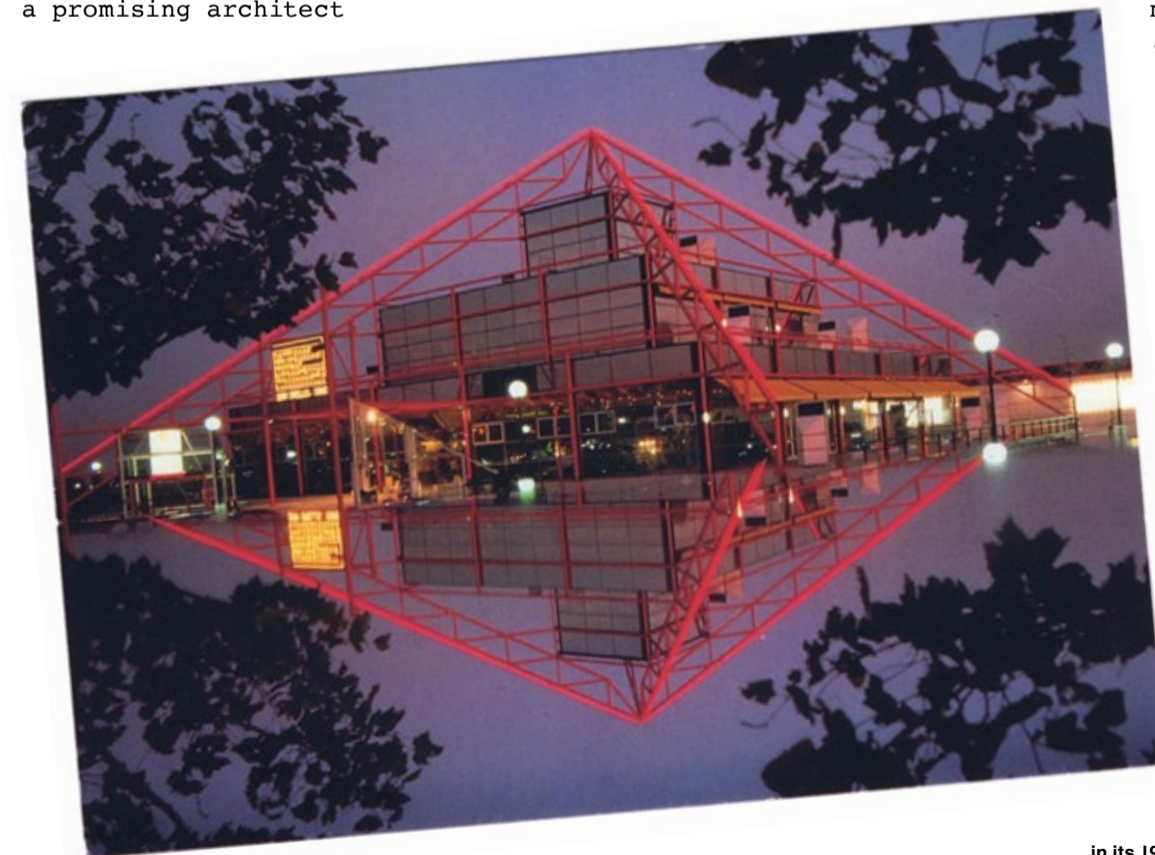
called Norman Foster designed an avant-garde leisure complex for a private company, an arrangement that reflected the

Following from this, a promising architect

political climate of the late 1970s. Funnily enough, it wasn’t built. But the idea did morph into The Point, the UK’s first multiplex cinema, and a social space for the people of Milton Keynes. Amazingly, it was built.

And now, some thirty years later, it is set to be demolished. But the City Club also rises, focused around MK Gallery and the radically expanded field of contemporary art in the 21st century. We look forward not back, watch the latest movies at Xscape, and visit Citylab to find out what happens next.

Wish you were here? The Point in its 1980s heyday, as featured on a striking postcard by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation. The UK’s first multiplex cinema is today scheduled for demolition.



OCTOBER 21ST – A DATE TO REMEMBER

During the day, visit Caroline Devine’s *City of Things* in Midsummer Arcade or create slogans and badges with Freee in Margaret Powell Square.



Feast of Fire kicks off from 6.30pm at The Point car park, with the *Spellbound* shadow show. Afterwards, nearby Midsummer Boulevard will be lit up with fire sculptures and soundworks until 9pm or thereabouts.



At around 8.45pm, *The People’s Procession* will leave the MK Rose in Campbell Park to promenade along Midsummer Boulevard. From here, Mr Wilson’s Second Liners will lead us back to The Point car park for a live set of dance classics in their inimitable New Orleans jazz style. Afterwards, dance to DJ Ritu spinning tunes from the last fifty years.



The evening will be rounded off with a finale of music, fireworks and fire drawings. All events are free, street food and drink will be for sale throughout the evening. Party!

PLAN YOUR EVENING AT CITYCLUBMK.ORG

DEVINE SOUNDS

What is the sound of a city? Is it traffic humming, sirens wailing, builders shouting? Or neighbours arguing and pigeons cooing? The noise of urban sprawl is something we desperately try to block out rather than make an effort to hear.

Not so for Caroline Devine. *City of Things*, her new immersive sound work, explores by ear the city where she lives and works as an artist and composer. It captures the rich acoustic ecology of Milton Keynes, with all its subtlety, layers and detail.

A meeting point between the urban and the natural, Milton Keynes was a modernist city planned to be greener than the surrounding countryside. As with its design and architecture, communities and customs, the sounds of a city are central to its identity.

From the dawn chorus in Linford Wood, to the micro worlds of buzzing mosquitos, Caroline has recorded the natural sounds of the city over the last year. Using advanced recording techniques, *City of Things* captures Milton Keynes at different times of day and throughout the year, as one season morphs into the next.

Through song, chant and poetry the voices of the city also weave their way through the composition, creating a powerful harmony. Football fans, Buddhist monks and a host of choirs bring their passion, verve and dignity to this sonic portrait of a city, whose people are its energy, strength and future.

In our contemporary world of noise we often forget how powerful and significant sound can be in communicating a mood, a meaning and a resonance. Sound can transport us to a specific time and place, and also bring heightened awareness of our immediate environment.

City of Things’ complex and evocative soundscape offers a new way of listening to this remarkable place. It will be presented through to 5 November in centre:mk. Using

Caroline Devine’s immersive sound installation, *City of Things*, will resonate through Midsummer Arcade until 5 November. Fiona Boundy responds to this major new work, commissioned by Bletchley Park for City Club.



The power of listening: Caroline Devine in Midsummer Arcade, the location of her new sound work for City Club

“Football fans, Buddhist monks and a host of choirs form a sonic portrait”

window resonators, tannoy systems and hidden speakers, the very fabric of this building – for many the heart of Milton Keynes – will sing with the voices and sounds of the city.

City of Things was commissioned by Bletchley Park working in partnership with MK Gallery, Heritage MK and The Open University.



Last summer, City Club Associate Artists Bethany and Willow Mitchell met a group of Bletchley residents for a campout at the Blue Lagoon. Would the nature reserve turn out to be haunted by Cowcommon Canyon? They filed this report.

MIDNIGHT AT THE BLUE LAGOON

It started with a closed road and ended with an imagined rollercoaster. From the outset, our campout experience on the edge of the Blue Lagoon drew parallels to the captivating tale of the evolution of Milton Keynes and the unrealised vision for a theme park called Cowcommon Canyon.

Standing in the car park, waiting for a delivery of tables to furnish our temporary home and workshop venue, we chatted to a lifelong MK resident. She recounted the day she drove to the shops, through the rural villages of Simpson and Fenny Stratford to discover, to her dismay, the route blocked by a closed road. Construction of the new city had commenced. Some 50 years later our

campout adventure started in a similar vein as we struggled through Bletchley's current day roadworks, at every turn finding ourselves stumped by a barrier or crater in the road ahead.

With tables finally in place we set about organising our resources, aware that the clearing of stony earth was swiftly being transformed into a campsite as tents literally popped up around us. There is something quite magical about the spontaneous occupation of place by its people. How daring to arrive with a tent slung over one arm and a sleeping bag under the other. Some individuals were inquisitive about such a unique occasion, whilst

other family groups arrived seeking out entertainment for the night. No one was exactly sure what they'd find. Perhaps not so different from the original occupants of the city.

A campsite, like a city, needs amenities. With our lantern-lit gazebo and an open offer of conversation and activity, we tempted our new neighbours over. Inspired by the unique street lamps of the city, its tree-lined boulevards and the sense of adventure, discovery and outrageous colour of the unrealised Cowcommon Canyon, collectively we set about fashioning 'glow stick' lanterns which lighted the way on our tree top trail around the nature reserve.

What followed was a joyful example of how the innate creativity of people seeps into the adoption and appropriation of material, space and experience. Our makers became architects, fashioning teetering tripod and pyramid forms. A simple light sculpture was flailed wildly in the air, momentarily transforming our gazebo into a rave seducing all nearby mosquitoes to join the party.

The materials we brought swiftly developed lives of their own - playing their part in servicing this new city within a city. Our torches lit the route to the toilets for the unprepared, our scissors clipped back brambles to save bare legs from scratches and our dowels were used by the intrepid young fire starters to move burning grass. We became a late night city library with returns gratefully made the following

morning. An evident sense of ownership and authentic participation was revealed as people proactively shaped their situations and surroundings. This no doubt was the dream of the original architects for Milton Keynes, designed as it was to accommodate the needs of all of its residents.

Around the campfire, conversations circled the city past and present. Hopping from subject to subject we discussed the necessity of dumplings with stew, how the Lakes Estate residents long for the Adams shop to return, and how they should perhaps be known as 'Bletchens'. All reminding us of the value of shared social space and simple conversation in the cohesion of communities and connectivity of city dwellers.

The next morning, dog walkers stumbled into our new neighbourhood as we attempted to condense our luggage into containers it seemed unlikely to ever fit. A persistent rumble travelled across the reserve from some invisible source in the distance. 'What's that noise?' we curiously asked a volunteer helping us with our packing quandary. 'I'm not sure, it sounds like a rollercoaster' he responded. So maybe in those few hours Cowcommon Canyon, its dynamism, energy, innovation and that fabulous impossible theme park, were realised a little bit after all.



Don't stare at the flames: stories get told around a campfire.

“We set about fashioning ‘glow stick’ lanterns which lighted our trail around the nature reserve”

Art survival skills: newcomers acquire the basic knowledge needed for a campout with City Club. Photos: Jane Russell

THE PEOPLE ARE THE CITY

As the city prepares to celebrate Milton Keynes' 50th Birthday with *Feast of Fire*, Anthony Spira, MK Gallery's Director, caught up with event producer Monica Ferguson of The Stables, and outdoor arts specialist Liz Pugh of Walk the Plank, creators of this fiery and magical outdoor celebration.

ANTHONY SPIRA: There are similarities between the way City Club and the Milton Keynes International Festival occupy the public space of the city. Monica, as its Artistic Director could you tell us a bit about the thinking behind your approach?

MONICA FERGUSON: The Stables founded the Festival in 2010 with the aim of raising the artistic adventure of the city and inviting people to 'expect the unexpected'. Using parks, boulevards, empty shops or shopping centres enables artists to create performances, installations, pop-ups and exhibitions that would not be possible within the confines of an existing arts venue, and to really think about location and context.

AS: What were your first impressions of Milton Keynes, Liz, and how has thinking about the city filtered through *Feast of Fire*?

LIZ PUGH: I've visited Milton Keynes several times over the past ten years, and every time it's struck

me that almost everyone who lives in the city loves it, and that's quite unusual. The 1967 vision of a city built for the future seems to have made Milton Keynes a very liveable city in 2017. The City Club concept is also about a playable city, and our vision for *Feast of Fire* is to take over one boulevard and one car park to make fiery mischief in the city centre for one night.

AS: How important is it to you to work with Milton Keynes groups and artists?

MF: Various Milton Keynes-based artists and arts organisations, including MÓTUS, Pagrav Dance and Festive Road, will join us in animating the public spaces usually occupied by cars. Young people will also play an exciting role in *Feast of Fire*. Twelve trainees will learn to create fire drawings, supported by Walk the Plank's professional technicians and the Fire Service. Another 250 citizens will carry flaming torches in *The People's Procession* to lead audiences from the MK Rose in Campbell Park, through Midsummer Boulevard where fiery installations will light up the cityscape.

AS: What does the phrase 'the people are the city' mean to you?

MF: A city without people is just a building site. People can be individuals, families, groups, advocates, friends or adversaries. All are involved in creating and developing societies, communities, families and networks. We need consensus and challenge, to bring about change, and realise our hopes and dreams.

LP: *The People's Procession* will transform the heart of Milton Keynes. If Walk the Plank's job is to transform the everyday environment into something special for one night then it's the job of the citizens of Milton Keynes to put on their best party frocks - or vintage 90s rave gear in homage to Mr Wilson's Second Liners - to keep the party spirit going.

AS: Could you say something about Mr Wilson's Second Liners and why you invited them to perform in *Feast of Fire*?

LP: Coming from Manchester, the city famed for the Hacienda nightclub and rave music, Walk the Plank wanted to pay tribute to the role of Milton Keynes in the 90s rave scene. In 1992, Milton Keynes was 25 years old and the party spirit was alive and kicking. Our evening ends with a free party in The Point car park, with Mr Wilson's Second Liners playing 90s dance classics in a New Orleans jazz style on a flaming stage, joined by DJ Ritu spinning some fiery tunes.

"Walk the Plank wants to pay tribute to the role of Milton Keynes in the 90s rave scene"

AS: Who would you invite to your birthday party?

MF: People who make me laugh, are there for me when I cry and who love me for who I am not what I am. If I had a time machine I'd love to whisk my party-goers back in time to 1967 to witness the birth of Milton Keynes!

LP: The fires of invention will need stoking as Milton Keynes embarks on a journey towards being a European Capital of Culture in 2023. So I'd like to invite people from other European cities and Capitals of Culture - Aarhus in Denmark, Pafos in Cyprus, Matera in Italy and Valletta in Malta - to bring food and wine, and to have a great big feast in MK... with dancing that reflects the traditions of everyone gathered at my world party, be they from the Punjab or Bletchley!

Feast of Fire is on Saturday 21 October from 6.30pm in locations along Midsummer Boulevard between The Point and MK Gallery. Admission is free. For more information go to: www.ifmiltonkeynes.org

Feast of Fire is sponsored by Gallagher Estates, IDI Gazeley, centre:mk and Intu Milton Keynes, and supported by Arts Council England, Milton Keynes Council, The Rothschild Foundation, MK Community Foundation, PRS for Music Foundation, MK Dons Sports & Education Trust and YMCA. With thanks to Milton Keynes Development Partnership.

Feast of Fire has been created for MK50 and City Club by Walk the Plank working with IF: Milton Keynes International Festival and The Stables.

Photograph of Walk the Plank's Spellbound shadow show by Thomas Arran



Lead artists Gareth Jones and Nils Norman have been working with 6a architects and designer Mark El-khatib to weave City Club through the new MK Gallery building. Here, Gareth describes how they propose to decorate a new sequence of social spaces.

A LIVING ROOM FOR MK



High-Tech revival: the interior of the café quotes the early architecture of Milton Keynes in this computer generated image.

In the first issue of this newspaper we introduced you to the City Club Colour Chart, an algorithm for generating novel solutions to town-planning problems. On the left-hand side are the crisp neon colours of Downtown; on the right, those of the North Buckinghamshire landscape in late summer. This combination of the urban and the pastoral contains the DNA of the UK's most extraordinary city, and we've used it to assist our plan to apply the utopian vision behind Milton Keynes to the northern end of Midsummer Boulevard.

Planning permission pending, upon arrival in Margaret Powell Square you'll be greeted by a giant neon heart.

"Milton Keynes is a Modernist city that has been shaped by Postmodern lives"

In the 1970s, leading design firm Minale Tattersfield generated numerous publicity images for the new city, including a stylised heart to represent the central area. We're proposing to use this symbol to sign the City Club, joining other striking logos from the

design history of Milton Keynes on the facade of the existing MK Gallery building. A porte cochere and a classic MK street sign complete a theatrical backdrop.

Once inside, the visitor quickly discovers the new café, which we think should be decorated in homage to the notorious yellow interior of the Architect's Department of the Development Corporation. Milton Keynes was the first and last city in the UK to be built in the High-Tech style, which was famous for its use of industrial components to fabricate whole buildings and interiors. We'd like to start its revival right here.

Analogue algorithm: the City Club Colour Chart (left) takes on a life of its own in the auditorium and stairwell (below) of 6a architects' new building.



AUDITORIUM

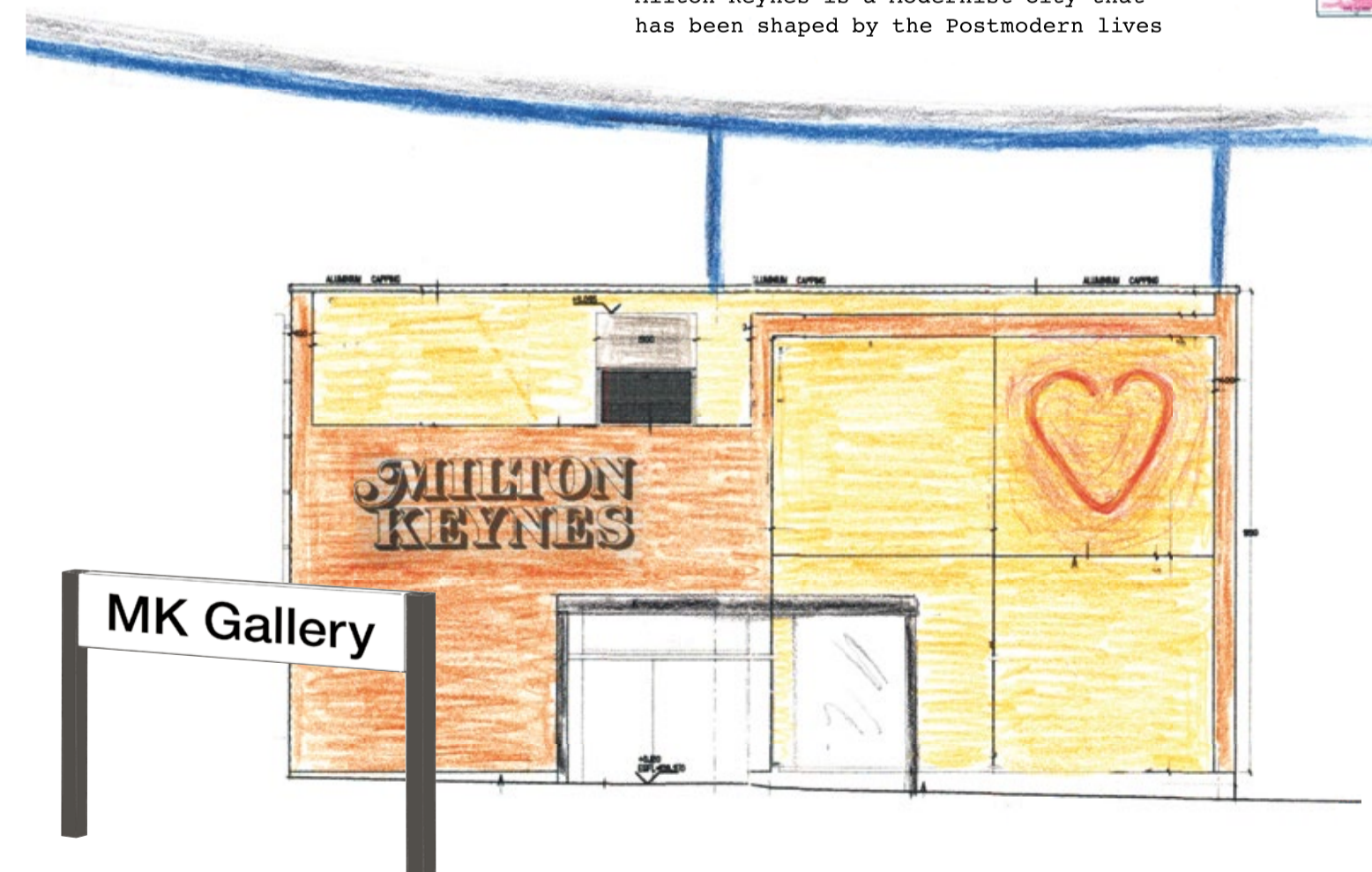
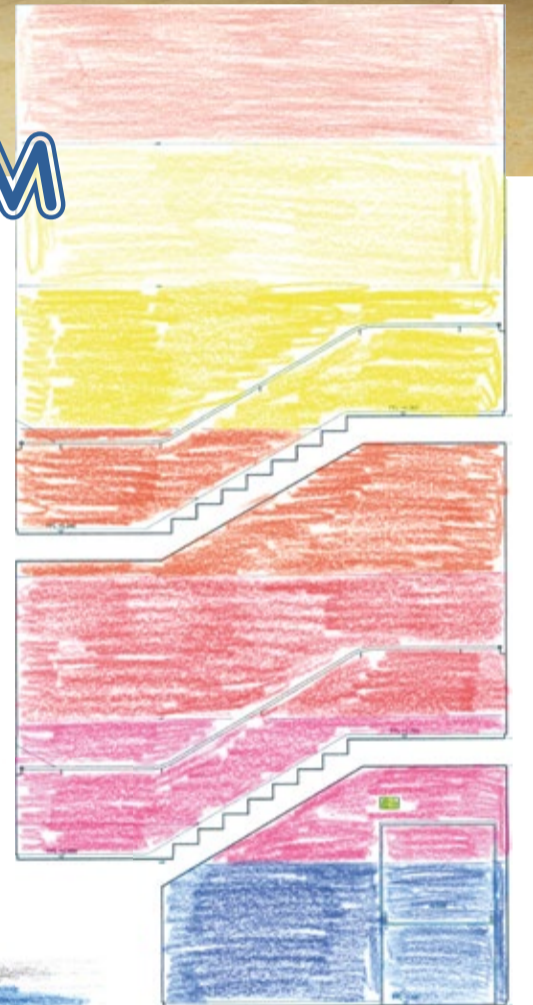
Moving beyond the café, you are now standing inside 6a architects' new building for MK Gallery. Straight ahead, you can see the latest developments in contemporary art, unfolding across a handsome new suite of galleries. You can also admire the colours of the Downtown side of the Colour Chart, drawing you up the stairwell. From Navy Blue at the ground floor fire escape, through a sturdy Pillarbox Red, to Candy Pink in the heavens.

On reaching the upper level, you discover the new auditorium. This is dominated by two memorable images: a semi-circular window framing the view of Campbell Park and the countryside beyond; and a giant curtain formed from the pastoral side of the Colour Chart. This can wrap around the entire interior, a synthetic representation of nature that will block out its reality during screenings and performances.

Please note that this space will also be available to hire - a perfect venue for your 50th birthday party.

Work on City Club began three years ago with a document called *MK Decades*, which considered how the popular culture of fifty years could be used to frame our design work and mark the anniversary of Milton Keynes. This idea now takes shape in a plan for signing the different zones of the new MK Gallery building, using fonts from each of the decades the city has witnessed. Examples for the Café and Auditorium appear on these pages.

Milton Keynes is a Modernist city that has been shaped by the Postmodern lives

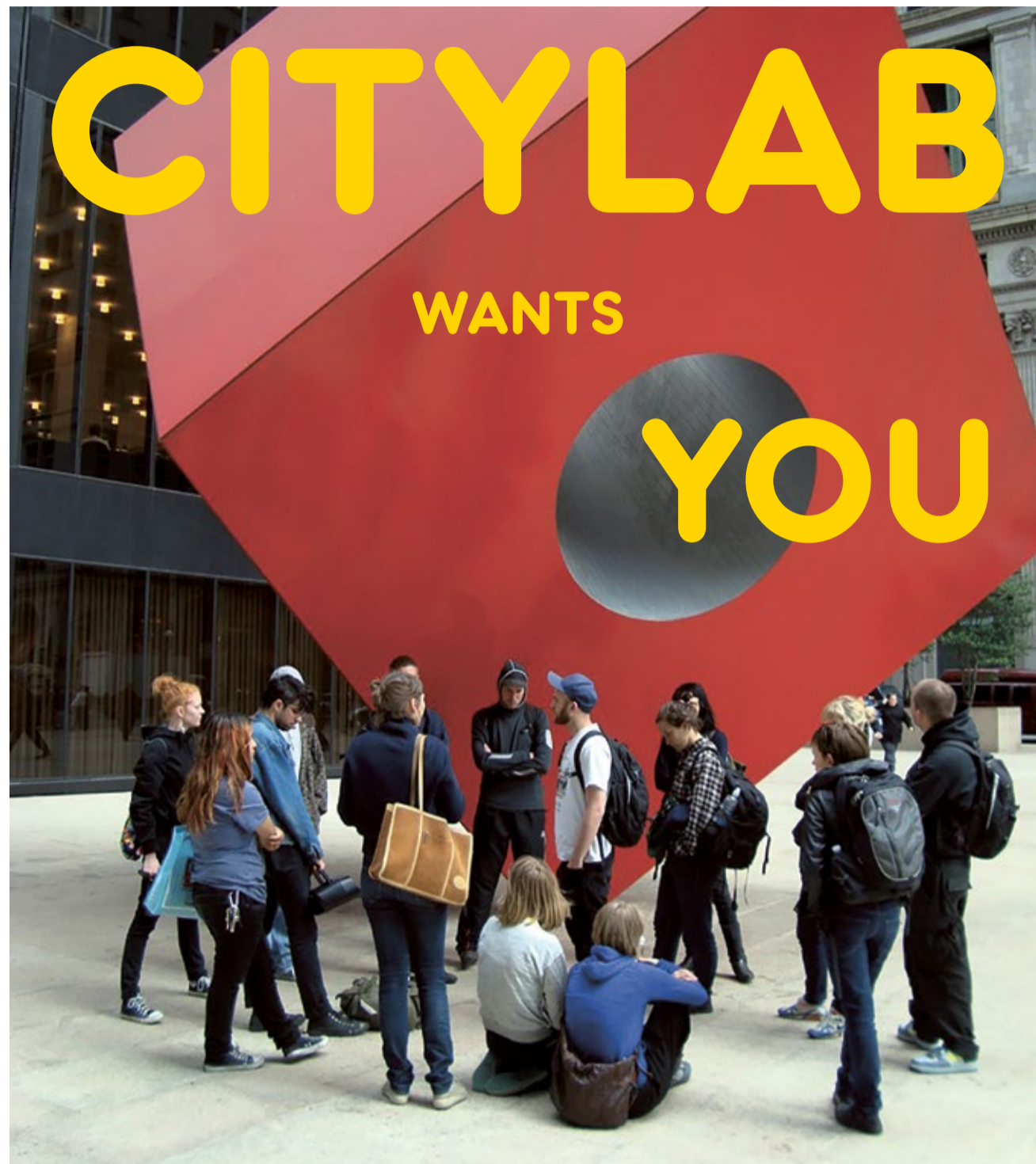


of its dynamic citizens. As this brief tour of the new building demonstrates, we'd like City Club to reflect this concept, mixing styles, perspectives and attitudes. Think of it as a form of time travel, as eclectic as your own living room.

To see more plans for the City Club go to: www.cityclubmk.org/projects

The cultural heart of the city: key elements from the design history of the new city join forces on the facade of MK Gallery, creating a theatrical backdrop for events in Margaret Powell Square. Nearby, a classic Milton Keynes street sign says "I'm home".

Enrol today! In 2018, Citylab will launch a professional development programme for Milton Keynes based artists who want to expand their practice in the public realm. This will include contributions from City Club lead artist Nils Norman, drawing on his extensive experience as an educator. Find out more below, and don't forget to visit our website for details of this autumn's Citylab events, outlined on the right.



Art in the public sphere: Students from The School of Walls and Space on an audio walk in New York City

For a decade, artist and educator Nils Norman led The School of Walls and Space at The Royal Danish Academy of Arts in Copenhagen. Utilising traditional and experimental teaching methods, the interdisciplinary school explored contemporary public space and the role of the artist as a critical and political agent within it.

Employing a 'school without walls' methodology – where public squares, parks, housing estates, public art or new urban development became sites of learning and investigation – the students collectively developed their own research-driven projects

in response to a particular theme or issue. Drawing on Norman's long-term interest in alternative models of teaching, we are currently developing a professional development programme for Milton Keynes based artists to research new work for the public realm.

Launching in spring 2018 with a 'Teach In' led by Norman, the programme will also involve contributions from our Associate Artists and develop organically over the course of the year through ongoing exchange and discussion. You can find out more about how to get involved via the City Club website.

TALK OF THE TOWN

Over the autumn, Citylab will host three talks in partnership with the Fred Roche Foundation. On 12 October, hear presentations about a new transport strategy for the city. Could Milton Keynes' groundbreaking mobility programmes become an exemplar for cities around the globe? On 9 November, we are delighted to welcome former Director of Planning at the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, Lee Shostak OBE, who will be in discussion with invited speakers. And lastly, on 14 December, you will have a rare opportunity to hear pioneer MK artists-in-residence Boyd and Evans talk about their work.

SOUNDS AND WORDS

Throughout October in our Project Space, Freee and Caroline Devine will display work and materials associated with their respective City Club commissions, *Citizen Ship* and *City of Things*. Join Freee on 2 November for a special in conversation event about their work with Prof. Johnny Golding from the Royal College of Art.

UTOPIAN DYSTOPIA



Architect Oscar Niemeyer and urbanist Lucio Costa's visionary capital of Brazil is the focus of this new documentary by American filmmaker Bart Simpson which will be screened on 23 November. *Brasilia: Life after Design* focuses on the lives of three citizens – an urbanist, an aspiring civil servant and a street vendor – as they try to find meaning in a city ultimately built to divide.

**THE
FUTURE
IS NOW:
CITYCLUBMK.ORG**

2017...

During MK CityFest, progressive choir Musarc (below) responded to the architecture of centre:mk. They were joined by TONGUE (right). Photos Jane Russell



Summer Solstice on Midsummer Boulevard: In June, the city centre was animated by numerous City Club events.

Right: Artist Julie Myers worked with musicians to create site-specific compositions across three locations. Here, saxophonist Simon Rose performs in the mysterious Leylandii Circle. Photo: Simon Wright

Artist collective Freee took *Citizen Ship*, their portable kiosk, to Art in the Park. Mel Jordan is shown leading a badge making workshop – work with them again in Margaret Powell Square on October 21st. Photos Jane Russell



CITY CLUB NEWSPAPER IS PUBLISHED BY MK GALLERY
900 Midsummer Blvd
Milton Keynes MK9 3QA

T +44 (0)1908 676 900
info@cityclubmk.org

www.cityclubmk.org
www.mkgallery.org

EDITORIAL TEAM
Niki Braithwaite
Gareth Jones
Anthony Spira

DESIGN
Mark El-khatib

PRINT
Sharman & Co

City Club is produced by MK Gallery with Bletchley Park, Milton Keynes Arts Centre, Milton Keynes International Festival & The Stables, and On The Verge.

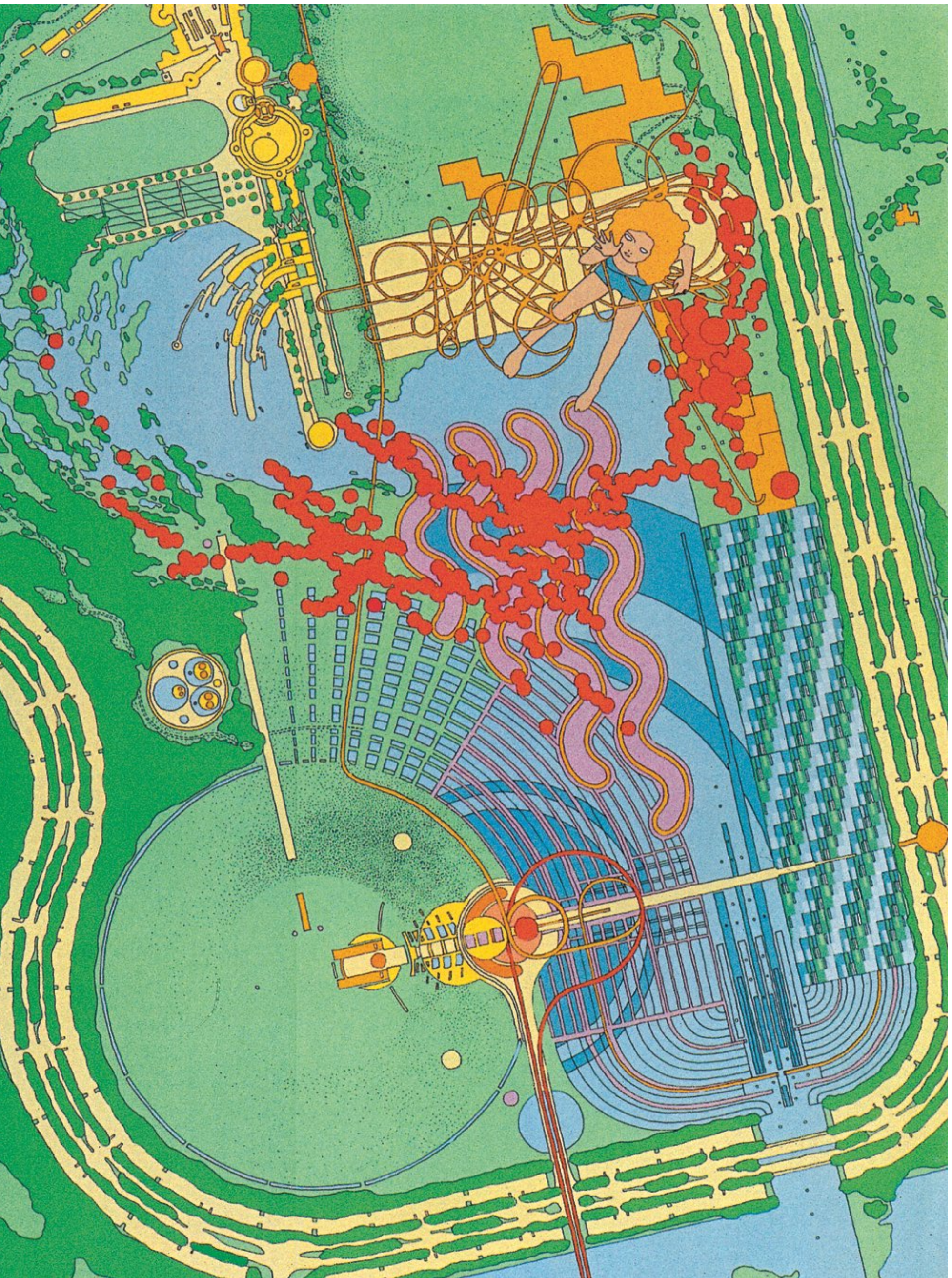
We are also delighted to be working with Big Local Conniburrow, Cowper & Newton Museum, Living Archive, Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre, Milton Keynes Museum, The Open University, and the University of Northampton.

City Club is supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England,

by MK Council as part of the MK50 anniversary celebrations, the Ernest Cook Trust, The Elephant Trust, The Open University, and the University of Northampton.

City Club Steering Group:
Cllr Liz Gifford (Chair), Lucy Bedford, Fiona Boundy, Niki Braithwaite, Julie Dawes, Shane Downer, Cllr Derek Eastman, Moncia Ferguson, Cllr David Hopkins, Anouar Kassim, Francesca Skelton, Clare Sapsford, Anthony Spira, Iain Standen, Sunita Yeomans.





Cowcommon Canyon: a theme park for the disused Bletchley brick pits, visualised by Andrew (Bo) Mahaddie, Milton Keynes Development Corporation, 1973.