

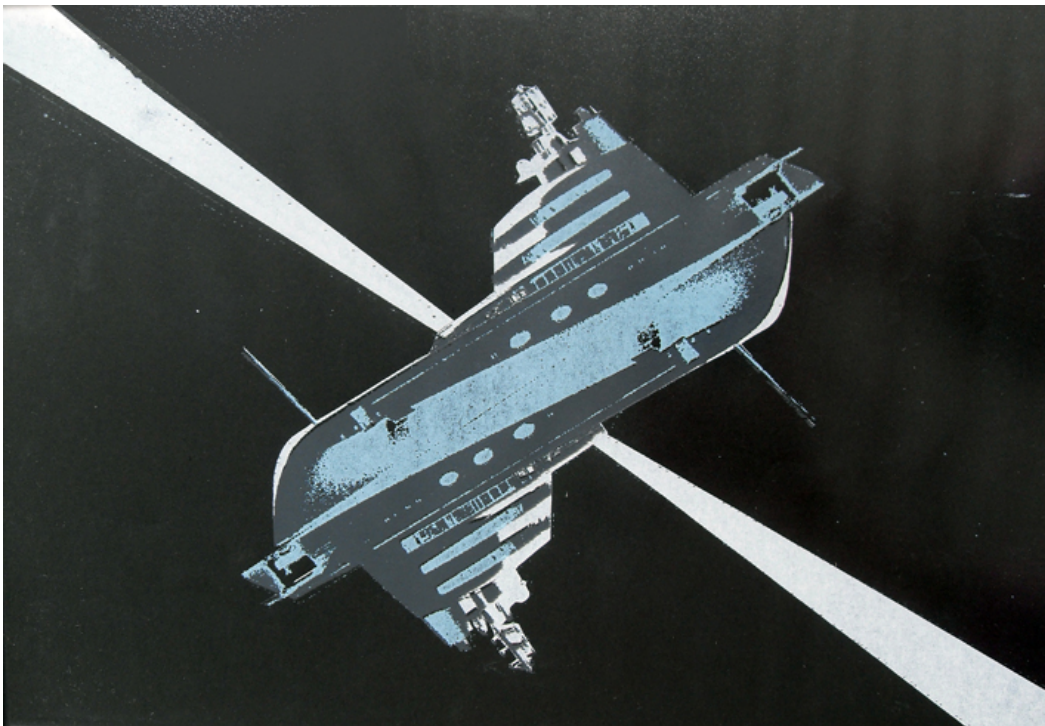
# T U S K

---

## EXHIBITION: RADICAL CONSERVATISM @ CASTLEFIELD GALLERY

---

DECEMBER 10, 2013



Proposals for a Future Monument for a Post-Catastrophic Society - Pil and Galia Kollektiv (2009)

---

### [Radical Conservatism](#)

*Castlefield Gallery, 30 November 2013 – 2 February 2014*

In a nice moment of serendipity, driving North up the M6 offers you the choice of heading left for Liverpool and [Art Turning Left](#) at the Tate, or right for Manchester, and [Radical Conservatism at Castlefield Gallery](#).

The sort of thinking behind a large and historical institution like the Tate examining left-wing politics would seem to have informed curators [Pil & Galia Kollektiv](#)'s decision to tackle the right-wing. Since the inception of New Labour, mainstream politics in the UK has largely been to the right of centre,

with the left-wing being relegated to the fringe. So, for now, the left is relegated to history, to be romanticised by institutions like the Tate, while [Pil & Galia Kollektiv](#) suggest that is the right who have been the radical influence on recent politics.

[Oscar Nemon](#) is the inspiration behind this exhibition, as an avant-garde artist in Brussels; he fled to the UK following the Nazi invasion of Belgium. In the exhibition you'll find an architectural model for his proposed Temple of Universal Ethics, showcasing a highly ambitious and unusual architectural style, it would surely have made for striking building if it had been built in London, as he had planned. But after settling in Britain he eventually abandoned his avant-garde practice, becoming known for sculptural portraits of figures such as Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher, and you can see some of the Thatcher portraits in the exhibition itself.

The trauma of war seems to have driven Nemon away from his cubist style, and towards a more traditional, naturalistic style. Evidently, Nemon felt that he could achieve more through traditional methods. This isn't the only instance of this sort of artistic regression, World War One seemed to remove the joie de vivre from the Fauvists, and the Soviet Union ultimately decided that the proletariat could more easily understand social realism rather than abstraction as developed by artists such as Kasimir Malevich.

Nemon is a hugely interesting figure, his story could provide for a whole retrospective exhibition, but the curators wisely leave most of it out of Radical Conservatism, as it would certainly overpower the rest of the artists involved.

Interestingly, Radical Conservatism exhibits work from a number of collectives, Pil & Galia themselves, Public Movement, and IRWIN. This seems to contradict the individualistic philosophies of neo-conservative politicians such as Thatcher.

Nonetheless, they provide some fascinating work, such as an unusual triptych from IRWIN (who can also be found in the Tate Liverpool's [Art Turning Left](#)) consisting of two traditional icon paintings depicting Jesus descending from the cross and his later entombment, with a central photograph of a Macedonian Orthodox Bishop posing with Marcel Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.* Thus, the icons are framed as the radical works of art, while Duchamp becomes literally orthodox.

The appropriation of tradition and craft is reflected in the work of Joseph Lewis and Patrick Moran's metal 'zine *Buried*. Lewis constructs alternative relic chests, exploring topics such as traditional folklore. He also builds hurdy-gurdies, and one of these archaic musical instruments is on display here. Visitors can listen to a recording demonstrating their droning noise, and it looks and sounds like an object existing outside of time.

Pil & Galia's own contribution is a series of prints proposing a monument to the future crimes of capitalism using the appropriate form of the yacht, contributing to an outright critique of conservative ideals that can also be found in Public Movement's and Chris Evans' film pieces. The exhibition ends up presenting a nuanced look at conservatism, as capitalism and social conservatism are critiqued, while tradition is respected rather than seen as antithetical to contemporary art.