



Press Release

29 April 2005

**JEM FINER: *The Centre of the Universe***

4 – 30 June 2005 – Oxford University Parks, Parks Road, Oxford, OX1  
Open from dawn 'til dusk. FREE

*The Centre of the Universe*, a major new installation by Jem Finer, artist in residence at the Astrophysics Department, University of Oxford, takes the form of a large-scale spiral tower supporting a radio dish. It is both a sculptural object set in the landscape and a working radio telescope.

The tower, in the region of 10 metres high, draws connections between the Tower of Babel, Konstantin Tsiolkovsky's space elevator and Vladimir Tatlin's monument to the Third International – a line through history seeking to reach into the cosmos, encompassing towers built around a spiral form. The spiral, a recurring pattern at all scales in the physical world, from the structure of galaxies to the microscopic twist of DNA, is present in the telescope in the helical winding of the antenna and the tower upon which the dish sits.

The tower and the dish allude to historical extremes of astronomical observation. The Tower of Babylon was a ziggurat, a tower from whose summit the path of the constellations could be charted so as to predict, among other things, the change of seasons. The dish reflects the current technology for collecting information from outer space in the electro magnetic spectrum - a bowl, waiting with a Zen-like acceptance for whatever may fall in. The work takes its title from the artist's understanding that regardless as to whether the universe is finite or infinite, it has no central point but is rather a decentralized network of points. This view is combined with the notion that all human beings may claim to be 'the centre of the universe' in that each individual perceives and observes the universe as existing around them.

Observation is central to all human interaction and, far from being practitioners in mutually exclusive disciplines, it is the act of observation that Finer finds integral to both the practice of the artist and that of the scientist. The tower in *The Centre of the Universe*, like The Tower of Babylon, is an observatory reaching upwards from its location on earth to the stars while the dish waits passively for information emitted up to 15 billion years ago.

Artpoint is supported by This project is supported by



## **JEM FINER: O – Maps**

9 – 19 June 2005 – exhibited in *Oxford 2015: Dreams, Plans, Visions*, at Modern Art Oxford

Jem Finer has assembled a collection of maps of the universe and Oxford, made by people from a variety of backgrounds, ages and disciplines including astrophysicists, children, artists and the general public of Oxford. The project explores the way in which individuals visualize their place in the universe.

Leaving university with a degree in computer science, **Jem Finer** became a founder member of The Pogues, writing, recording and touring for the next 15 years. Jem now works in a diverse range of fields, including music, film, performance, installation and photography. This year sees his highly acclaimed *Longplayer*, a 1000 year long composition which started to play on the 1st January 2000, celebrate its 5<sup>th</sup> year of continuous play. Since October 2003 Jem has been working as artist in residence in the Astrophysics Department of Oxford University. Resulting work includes *Landscape*, a large-scale sculpture and installation in Lough Neagh, Northern Ireland, Feb 2005. He is currently working towards completing *onearthsinheaven*, part of the *Day-to-Day Data* exhibition, July 2005. He continues to perform both solo and in groups. An LP of new songs, written and recorded with the legendary DM Bob is released in June. For more on these projects visit <http://cosmolog.org.uk>; <http://www.longplayer.org>; <http://elrino.co.uk>; <http://www.zerogenie.org>; <http://slowwalk.org>.

Jem Finer's work is included in a major new publication, *Re Views: Artists and Public Space* published to celebrate Artpoint's 10th Anniversary. *Re Views* focuses on key projects accompanied by essays examining artists' roles in reflecting and creating public space. Published by Black Dog Publishing, it includes work and writing by 10 artists including Simon Patterson, Jacqui Poncelet and Alison Turnbull with 10 commentaries by writers, artists and design professionals including Richard Layzell, Michael Stanley and Siân Ede, and a Foreword by Sir Christopher Frayling. It is available in June 2005 from Black Dog Publishing - [www.bdpworld.com](http://www.bdpworld.com) - at £19.95. 10 specially commissioned limited edition prints by the featured artists are reproduced in the book and will be available for sale from Artpoint [www.artpointtrust.org.uk](http://www.artpointtrust.org.uk).

**For further information about the projects and the Press trip contact: Nick Hallam on 07709 887 814 or 0115 9502 283 – email: [nick\\_hallam@hotmail.com](mailto:nick_hallam@hotmail.com)**

### **Notes to Editors:-**

Since October 2003 Finer has been artist in residence at the Astrophysics Department at Oxford University funded by the Arts Council of England and the Gulbenkian Foundation. *Centre of the Universe* has been made possible with the support of the Astrophysics Department, Oxford University Parks, Atelier One and H & S Fencing and Sheds. An education programme to coincide with the project has been made possible with the support of Einstein™ Year.

**The Astrophysics Department at Oxford University** is one of the top research institutions in Astrophysics and Cosmology in the world. It has a number of active research groups studying the early universe, the origin and evolution of the galaxies and the structure of compact objects and energetic events. A theoretical programme runs in tandem with an observational and instrumental programme, covering a wide range of techniques and expertise.

*The Centre of the Universe* and *O-Maps* are part of ***Evolving City***, a year long programme showcasing Oxford's vibrant creative life and the biggest cultural celebration ever to take place in Oxfordshire. The project is coordinated by **Oxford Inspires**, the cultural development agency for Oxford and Oxfordshire, and funded through a grant from the Urban Cultural Programme, with additional contributions from Arts Council England South East, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council and SEEDA. [www.evolvingcity.com](http://www.evolvingcity.com).

**Artpoint** is a creative company working with artists to support new thinking and practice for the built environment and public space across the South East region. Operating as a 'not for profit' limited company with charitable status, Artpoint believes that contemporary arts practice has a central role to play in developing our physical, intellectual and social environments. Artpoint's work includes public art commissioning, consultancy, research projects and audience engagement activities. [www.artpointtrust.org.uk](http://www.artpointtrust.org.uk)