

GALLERY OPENING HOURS

10AM - 5PM WEEKDAYS / 12 - 6PM WEEKENDS

GALLERY - ALFREDA BENGE: P.L.A.

Poor little Alfie trying to draw
Trying to draw

Poor Little Alfie trying to sleep
Trying to sleep

SPACE is proud to present a retrospective exhibition of paintings, illustrations, collages and lyrics by Alfreda Bengé (b. 1940). Her first showing in a public institution, the exhibition explores Bengé's solo and collaborative work, in particular the fascinating creative partnership she shares with her husband, the musician Robert Wyatt (b. 1945).

P.L.A. takes its title from a track on Wyatt's 1985 album *Old Rottenhat*. Painted by Bengé, the cover for this album opens the exhibition, one of a number of album artworks on show. These appear alongside a sequence of portraits depicting Wyatt alone and together with Bengé, a tracklist of Wyatt's songs featuring lyrics by Bengé, and other items relating to their five decade long collaboration.

While Bengé's work with Wyatt is indubitably significant, *P.L.A.* also attempts to look beyond it: on the one hand to different collaborations (e.g. with the humourist Ivor Cutler on the book *Herbert The Chicken* (1984) or the poet Bob Dixon, with whom Bengé worked on a special edition of leftist journal *Artery*) and on the other, to her incidental work as a solo artist.

In this sense *P.L.A.* functions as a retrospective only in the very loosest sense of the term. Previously unseen doodles, self-portraits, photography and printed matter from Wyatt and Bengé's home in Louth, Lincolnshire, are given equal standing alongside recognised album artworks. In a display that jumbles its chronology, responsibility for telling Bengé's 'story' is only partially taken up. By no means intended as a comprehensive overview, *P.L.A.* nonetheless represents an unprecedented opportunity to access Bengé's art; to encounter the pathos, wit, strangeness, agitation and whimsy of a diverse body of work as simple as it is complex.

Born in Austria to Polish and Austrian parents, Alfreda Bengé moved to the UK in 1947. Between 1958-61 she studied painting at Camberwell School of Art, going on to learn typography at the London College of Printing (1961-63) and film at The Royal College of Art (1963-68).