

The Towers of the Takers

I made this installation with my collaboration partner Stephen Dydo especially for this exhibition in celebration of Victor Kuell's 90th birthday. Vic was my first tutor when I was 17.

During a conversation I had with Vic some years ago about where our civilization might have taken a wrong turn I recommended Vic the book *Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn. In it a gorilla teaches that the wrong turn was taken when hunter-gatherers became settlers and agriculturalists – the Takers. The Leavers had existed in balance with nature for tens of thousands of years; a few still survive in small tribal societies.

The gorilla maintains that it isn't impossible for us to become Leavers within our contemporary environment and of course if we don't we will destroy our planet. It is very difficult for us to contemplate taking this step and make the sacrifices that would be entailed and it is highly likely it won't happen. This work uses the analogy of The Tower of Babel whose construction was a hubristic act of defiance against God. The work draws on elements of our industrialised Takers' world from photographs of telegraph poles loaded with disordered coils of cable in Kathmandu to rusty wire and other found metal objects. Emanating from these are sounds of smashing metal sheets mixed in with rhythms and melodies from a remote Himalayan culture; the sounds of the singing women are gradually replaced by electronic voices. The singing is from field recordings made recently by Dydo in Ladakh.