

## Hobson's Choice: Chris Hipkiss, L.I.E.S., at Ancient & Modern

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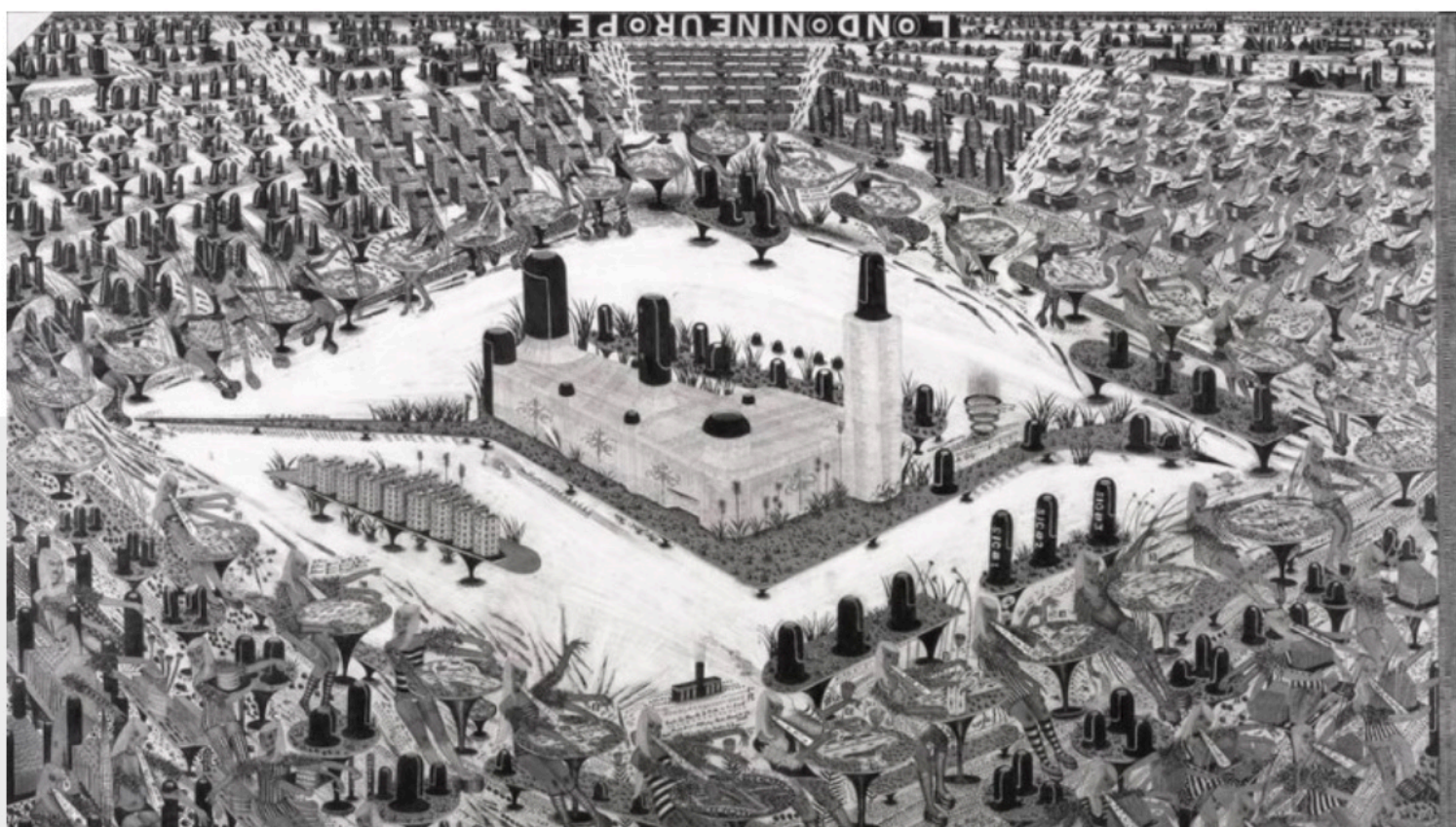


15 November – 22 December 2012

201 Whitecross Street, London EC1Y 8QP

[www.ancientandmodern.org](http://www.ancientandmodern.org)

Open Wednesday – Saturday 12 noon – 6pm and  
by appointment



Chris Hipkiss, L.I.E.S.1 (detail), 2011, courtesy the artist and Ancient and Modern

Chris Hipkiss is a pseudonym for artist couple Alpha and Chris Mason, who have been working together for more than thirty years, producing extraordinary figurative drawings ranging in size from miniatures to expansive panoramas, created using pencil, silver ink and metal leaf. Drawn with an obsessive intensity that suggests a compulsion to bring into visual reality an unyielding and non-negotiable interior world, the work is often described as 'outsider artist' – a categorisation refuted by the artists themselves. Ancient & Modern gallery off Old Street has just opened a new exhibition of recent works, titled the London In Europe Series or 'L.I.E.S.'. The large drawings share something approximate with Paul Noble's vast panoramic vista of fantastical civilisations, viewed from a god's eye perspective, in which colossal and ornate structures provide the compositional centres of painstakingly detailed and ordered hierarchical systems, where objects, organic and human worshippers are choreographed in some mysterious rite.

Androgynous figures – described by the artists as 'alter egos' – remind one of Henry Darger and Madge Gill, swimming in tightly interlocking patterns with the decorative logic of the Art Nouveau illustrations of Arthur Rackham and Aubrey Beardsley, benefiting from Mason's early training as a pattern maker at his father's factory in London. Theatres of political and cultural powers occupy vast plazas and are populated by ambiguous cultish symbols, texts, structures and characters, in synchronised parades that place the viewer as an alienated but intrigued spectator confronting what feels like an egomaniacal mind. An interesting if mind-boggling encounter.

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