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## My Night With Gavin Turk



Pictured above: Polly Hughes dressed in foil "Wear this" said Gavin Turk, handing me a tiny plastic pouch and a bulldog clip. Inside, after endless unfolding, was a foil cape. Sheepishly I wrapped it around my shoulders and instantly my temperature rocketed.

I was at the [Bristol Museum and Art Gallery](#) helping Turk set up an installation for [Culture24's "Museums at Night 2013"](#) - an inspiring festival which celebrates art, history and heritage in Britain; encouraging the public into museums and galleries by opening after-hours for rare and exclusive experiences.

Turk, part of the YBA scene and recognised for appropriating recognisable elements from other artists such as Warhol, Duchamp and Magritte, was collaborating with the Museum for a mystical evening of Egyptian themed encounters (think scarab beetles, Arabic music and belly dancers). This was to run alongside the Museum's latest exhibition [Pharaoh: King of Egypt](#) displaying ancient Egyptian artefacts on loan from [The British Museum](#).

Turk told me his original idea had been a giant magic flying carpet, but strict quarantine rules concerning pieces that might be smuggling moths or other textile munching insects into the Museum, meant a last minute change of plan.

Instead Turk was exploring the wacky world of Pyramidology - which, as every nutter knows, is the term used to describe pseudoscientific speculations regarding pyramids. In particular the possible existence of an unknown energy concentrated in pyramidal structures said to possess supernatural powers. Perhaps it isn't that surprising that these claims were made in the hippie era of 1960s. With this power, model pyramids are said to preserve foods, sharpen or maintain the sharpness of razor blades, improve health and trigger sexual urges. Naturally I was mustard keen to check this out.

Turk has pioneered many forms of contemporary British sculpture now taken for granted, including the painted bronze, the waxwork, the recycled art-historical lion and the use of rubbish in art.



Pictured above: Gavin Turk assembling a pyramid

The team of volunteers (of which I was one) constructed pyramids from lengths of copper tubing, and hung a rock crystal from the apex of each structure.

These pyramids were displayed in the Museum's vast atrium. Then, dressed in our flapping foil capes, we were to encourage the public to sit inside the pyramids for a short time to see if they felt any different. "Tingly" said one girl, "Warm" said another woman, "Hungry" said a little boy.

The curious onlookers were skeptical at first, but soon barged one another out of the way in their eagerness to participate. OK, so these were the toddlers, but people of all ages took part with surprising eagerness.

Meanwhile there was a children's workshop creating 3D model pyramids. This involved glow-in-the-dark straws, vast quantities of sellotape and even more patience.

As the evening wore on, my body temperature beneath my protective shield cape rose, the sellotape got stickier, and I found my foil exoskeleton became inadvertently attached to pot plants, furniture and small children.

It was difficult to tell if Turk saw this exercise as tongue-in-cheek, or was convinced by the theory, however several members of the public told me they were firm believers, and had had proven results from the supernatural powers.

As the evening drew to a close, the public were ushered out, the pyramids dismantled and the scarab beetles wheeled into the vaults. Despite the all-enveloping influence of ancient Egypt, Turk realized his team of volunteers could not live on bread and honey alone, and led the way to the pub.

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