

An Educators' Resource for:

Sadie Benning
Sleep Rock

Ian White
Any frame is a thrown voice

19 April – 24 June 2018



Sadie Benning

Sleep Rock

For this exhibition, Sadie Benning has created over 19 new wall-based works that occupy a hybrid space between painting, photography and sculptural relief. The title, *Sleep Rock*, evokes a dream state where perception is blurred by the merging of memory, vision, and association. Installed sequentially in Galleries 1 & 2, the works in the exhibition read with a filmic register, frame by frame – a picture can be read from a distance, or seen in detail close-up.

There is an important operation of scale brought into play, both in the varying sizes of the panels and in Benning's use of images. Scale also affects Benning's use of materials in this body of work. Large-scale works are built through a process of fragmentation and reconstruction. The works originate as small drawings, which are projected and traced onto wooden panels. The panels are cut into pieces following the lines of the drawing. Benning applies layers of aqua-resin onto each piece and sands them until smooth before painting and then reassembling the components. The surface of the finished work has an ambiguous materiality, sometimes resembling ceramic or leather. For the small-scale works, Benning has developed a new approach that involves slowly layering resin and composite transparencies, with painted and photographic cut-out elements.

Sadie Benning (b. 1973 Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA) lives and works in New York, USA. Benning began creating visual works at the age of 15 and left school aged 16. In 1997, Benning received an MFA from the Milton Avery School of Art at Bard College. Benning's work has been exhibited internationally since 1990 and is in many permanent collections. Benning's most recent solo exhibitions include: Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland (2017); The Renaissance Society, Chicago, USA (2016); the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA (2009). Benning is a former member and co-founder of the music group Le Tigre.

Key words

identity

film

sculpture

media images

time

surface

framing

photography

memory

imagination

gender

resistance

collage

layers

childhood

rebellion

Ian White

Any frame is a thrown voice

Ian White was an artist, curator and writer. His solo and collaborative performances derive from an expanded approach to the live event, whether film screening, lecture, dance or theatrical presentation. They draw on a wide variety of materials including slides, video, spoken word, gesture and collage. All of White's works have radically different starting points – the paintings of Thomas Gainsborough, a film archive in Berlin, Elizabethan gardens, listings from a gay cruising website – layering and colliding their adopted materials to produce what White called an “excess of content”. They do not offer explicit commentary or explanations for these juxtapositions, instead the works enlist the spectator to construct their own interpretation in real time.

This exhibition is also an act of interpretation. Almost all the works presented here were originally performances which have been reconfigured and interpreted specially for this show and these spaces. For White, it was important to remove the idea of a single definitive representation of any particular performance and to emphasise “repetition and failure”, the work's own inevitable inconsistencies and contradictions across its different iterations. Taking its cue from this approach, *Any frame is a thrown voice* re-presents White's works in various formats, including installations and stagings of comparative documentary materials, as well as live events with re-performances by other artists

Ian White (1971–2013) was an artist, curator and writer. His performances – both solo and collaborative – were staged at venues including Tate Britain and Tate Modern, London; the Chisenhale Gallery, London; Jeu de Paume, Paris, and the Museum of Modern Art, New York. White organised many influential screenings, events and exhibitions for venues including The Horse Hospital, LUX and the Whitechapel Gallery, London; Kino Arsenal, Berlin; and the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen. He taught extensively, holding positions at Goldsmiths' Department of Art and the Dutch Art Institute amongst others, and was leader of the LUX Associate Artists Programme (2007-13), an experimental post-graduate programme for artists working with the moving image.

Key words

performance

collaboration

documentation

legacy

boundaries

absence

representation

contradiction

audience

living archive

liveness

interpretation

installation

agency

Suggested tour

Gallery 1

The smaller artworks in Gallery 1 are hybrid images, composed of hand-drawn elements, spray paint, photographs and other found images. Each of the layers are bound together with transparent resin, which give the works their shiny appearance and heightens the sense of depth in the work. Benning has described these pieces as 'cerebral works', referring to the fact that they reference ideas to do with memory, imagination and dream states. The works are also around the same size as a human head.

Conversation points:

- Choose one work and look at it closely. Why do you think Benning has brought the separate layers together to create this work? Does the title of the work provide any further information or ideas?
- Think of your earliest memory or a dream you've had. How would you try and physically represent this if you could?

Gallery 2

The works in Gallery Two focus particularly on the idea of being a teenager and the notion of rebellion. Look at the work entitled *Swan*. This larger work includes many different layers of images, superimposed onto one another. This piece serves as a memorial or monument to Brandon Teena, a young trans man who was murdered in 1993. Directly opposite *Swan* is another work called *Bridal et.*, a highly abstracted work in which Benning uses still images from an educational etiquette film as a base to the artwork. These etiquette films were made during the 1950s and 60s, and were used right up until the 90s, when Benning was at school, to educate students about gender roles and expectations.

Conversation points:

- What does rebellion mean to you today?
- What are the different expectations of boys and girls today?
- How do you feel about these expectations? Are there any expectations that you try to resist?



Central Space

In the Central Space are four screens, each displaying a filmed version of the work *Democracy*. These screens have been synchronised with a display of a PowerPoint slideshow and a live broadcast of the BBC World Service, both of which accompanied the original performances. This layering of different media produces what White described as an “excess of content”.

Conversation points:

- Watch a section of *Democracy* on the three screens clustered together. Why do you think these different performances of the same work are shown here together?
- Look at the images from the PowerPoint slideshow displayed on the wall – what do you associate with the images that are displayed? Discuss your associations with a friend. How do your associations differ and why?

Gallery 3

White was keen to question the idea of a single reading or understanding of his work, and placed importance on the agency of the audience and the act of personal interpretation (or meaning making). These ideas are key to *The Neon Gainsborough*, an installation of work you can see upon entering Gallery 3.

Conversation points:

- What impact do the different cue cards displayed on the TV have to your understanding of the Gainsborough paintings being projected?

As part of his work and writing, White was keen to explore a notion he described as ‘liveness’; the idea that performance is a live work, and that this liveness can also be found in elements more traditionally thought of as ‘fixed’, such as the rehearsal and planning prior to an event, or the photography, film and other documentation produced during and following the live event. Further into Gallery 3 is an installation entitled *6 things we couldn't do, but can do now*.

Conversation points:

- What are you bringing to this experience?
- What are the differences (perhaps positive and negative), of watching or looking at documentation from a live performance, rather than the live performance itself?



Image: Installation view of Ian White: *Any frame is a thrown voice* at Camden Arts Centre, 2018.
Photo: Mark Blower

Activities

Living Archives

Each of us has a history or a life story – in what ways could you display or perform that history? Look around the exhibitions for inspiration. You could photograph a scar, or a part of your body that might communicate a part of an experience you have had. Write out a memory as if it were a dramatic script to be performed. Act out an experience from your life. Record your voice, giving an oral history of a story from your life. Gather these different elements together to create your own personal living archive.

Performing Gender

Wander around the galleries, looking at the different artworks. As you go around, try to exaggerate your gestures and movements first in a way that you think is particularly masculine, and then in a way you think is particularly feminine. You could also try and describe the works to a friend, thinking about the language you are using and the ways in which it might be gendered.

Interpretation and Association

Work in groups of three:

- Person one: Choose one word that you associate with the exhibitions or a particular work that you've seen in the galleries. Whisper this word to person two.
- Person two: Interpret this word by making a gesture or movement that you think illustrates the word.
- Person three: Try and guess the word that person two is interpreting, thus creating a re-interpretation.

Collage, Layers and Surface

Create your own Benning inspired collage using a range of materials such as magazines, newspapers and photos. To create a sense of depth, build up your images layer by layer. You can coat each image with PVA glue, to create a similar sheen to that achieved in Benning's work. While making your collage, think about the ways in which the different images might speak to each other, and the overall message you'd like to convey in your collage. When it's finished, give the work a title.

Planning your visit

Camden Arts Centre's schools programme has artists and process at its heart. Offering practical, experimental and fun entry points to the exhibitions, our offer includes a range of resources and activities for educators and school groups including tours, artist-led workshops, and self-led visits.

For further information on our education programme please visit our website or contact Livvy Murdoch: livvy.murdoch@camdenartscentre.org / +44 (0)20 7472 5500

Access

Parking is available for disabled visitors. Please telephone the bookshop on +44 (0)20 7472 5500 to book this space. Please contact us if you have any additional access requirements.

Keep in touch

Join the Educators' Information mailing list via our website for regular updates and resources. Photography of the exhibitions is permitted and we encourage you to share images of your activities using #CACeducation #sleeprock #anyframe

Please note that the Reading Room contains nude imagery.



Above image: Installation view of Ian White: *Any frame is a thrown voice* at Camden Arts Centre, 2018. Photo: Mark Blower

Cover image: Sadie Benning, *Out of the Bag*, 2018. Courtesy the artist and Susanne Vielmetter. Photo: Chris Austin