

## DIALOGUES WITH A COLLECTION

30 June – 16 September 2018

Private view – Friday 29 June, 6pm-8pm

*Dialogues with A Collection* presents a stage of relationships between artists and the collection of Laure Genillard. Eleven artists have been invited to engage with different works from the collection with either a newly constructed or an existing work, creating a trail of impromptu correspondences across the gallery space.

The collection on display is symptomatic of the gallery's thirty-year history and the artist-gallery kinships that ensued, along with other acquisitions independent of the gallery programme. Together the collection and their chosen correspondents represent the aesthetic and conceptual ethos of the Laure Genillard Gallery and readdress the desire to test art's ability to be both communicative and autonomous.

*Artists included from the collection* - Sebastian Diaz Morales | Dean Hughes | Elisa Sighicelli | Martin Creed | Frank Heath | Peter Downsbrough | Syvie Fleury | Stephen Willats | David Connearn | Yoko Ono | Tomma Abts

*Invited artists* - Fiona Banner aka The Vanity Press | David Connearn | Lucy Heyward | Dean Hughes | Gerhard Lang | Isabelle Lartault | George Henry Longly | Sarah Staton | Name Surname | Gavin Turk | Grace Weir

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**Elisa Sighicelli's** partially back-lit photograph *Santiago: Chair* (2000) was captured in a student flat when the artist visited Santiago de Compostela in Spain's Galicia region. Using photography to strike a balance between stillness and movement, and intentionally devoid of any narrative, her early works such as "Santiago: Chair" scrutinise ordinary domestic items such as furniture, curtains and architectural details by elevating their inherent characteristics to near-abstraction. The light and shadow contrasts are further amplified as she paints the reverse side of the photograph in black, while in other areas the back-light is enhanced to altogether create a disorientating sense of space.

**Lucy Heyward** has chosen to respond to Elisa Sighicelli's light box with her photographic sculpture *Face Up Face Down* (1998); a photograph of a plate-stand mounted onto aluminium and propped upside down on the stand which it depicts. Heyward's imagery and chosen objects are obtained directly from the world as opposed to a forged imagination, often using light as a means to draw out fortuitous readings. In the case of *Face Up Face Down*, seemingly introspective and possibly spectral connotations might be registered as the skeletal-like stand presents a picture of itself.

**Peter Downsbrough's** practice hinges on a highly minimised visual vocabulary which he employs to scrutinise the given space in personal and clear-cut ways. Composed primarily of letters, words, lines and planes, he uses adhesive letters to form conjunctions, prepositions, verbs and/or nouns and applies them to walls, floors and ceilings. *Here* (2012) consists of a metal pipe and black taped lines that accentuate particular interior architectural spaces. The adverb 'here' has been halved to reveal aspects of the space and simultaneously operates as an iconographic sign that prompts viewers to mindfully traverse from one thought to another.

Paris-based artist **Isabelle Lartault** is a French semiotic poet who uses generic texts to relate form and contents to a specific function. Since 2000 she has turned her texts into readings, installations, performances, sound works and videos. In *Watch the Walls* (2018) Lartault divides the gallery wall with the text 'wall to wall to wall to wall...' to expose alternative perspectives of the space much like Downsbrough's *Here*, only her texts are intentionally loaded with contemporary political matters from the anti-immigration walls currently being constructed in Calais. The text is accompanied with a quote from Canadian academic Elisabeth Vallet who testifies that the length of 'anti-intrusion walls' around the world is equal to the earth's circumference. The work seeks to reveal the double-standard of what is unspoken within a world where everyone wishes to speak.

**Frank Heath's** work scrutinises and develops upon the under-appreciated potential of "systems aesthetics," which aims to uncover the hidden correspondences that connect various social institutions within the world of art and the world at large. His practice is premised on penetrating and destabilising the social systems and interfaces that shape contemporary life, from the administrative corridors of authoritative corporations such as the US Postal Service to commonplace electronic and commercial communications. The left panel of *Live-Help Backup Plaque (Pencil Gif)* (2014)

shows the formulaic representation of a GIF file in its hexadecimal code, while the right panel reveals the story of how both came into being; through an online chat forum between the artist and Byron Melvin a customer-service representative for a metal engraving company. Part joke, part earnest study, Heath's etched aluminium panels question the frictions between the human and their technologies; communicative successes and failures, as well as contemporary systems of production more generally.

In response to Heath's panels **Gerhard Lang's** *Nubi Tempora I* (2017) has been chosen. For Lang, writing and drawing are two different forms of line plotting; the former 'encrypts' while the latter 'reveals'. This work was produced in two places, on the roof of the German National Meteorological Service in Offenbach and in the data offices below. On the left sits a drawing of clouds; the artist's eye was never taken off its subject as he drew. Lang refers to this old drawing method as 'Visus Signatus' - the drawn process of seeing, a method which exposes and brings closer the observer and the observed. The sequence of numbers to the right is a meteorological data sheet that represents all the meteorological information about the conditions generating the clouds that Lang was looking at. Altogether two alternative depictions of cloud formations are shown: the cloud as scientific formula which offers the prospect of control, and the cloud as a drawing which offers a subjective experience that subverts control.

**Sylvie Fleury's** *Concetto Spaziale* (1993) points to the volatile and impulsively seductive world of fashion. The meticulously torn denim follows the street fashion of the 1990's when teenage kids would cut their jeans in an act of defiance. The canvas-like approach to the work is a comment on Modernism or 'high-brow' art; referring here to Lucio Fontana's slit canvases and adopting his title "Concetto Spaziale."

In response to Fleury is a video recording of **George Henry Longly's** 2013 *GHL*, a specially commissioned performance evening for Park Nights on the concept and structure of the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2013, designed by Sou Fujimoto. Longly is concerned with both consumer fantasy and product design, and the performance borrows from the structure of a catwalk show. Sponsored by retail fashion brand COS, his cut garments are informed by a range of disparate references including classicism, minimalism and the aesthetics of postmodern design.

**Martin Creed's** 1994 sculptural piece *Work No.88* carries the same subversive humour and minimalism found throughout his practice. The work is part of the well-known 90's mail art project *Imprint* curated by Matthew Higgs, whereby a group of Londoners would open their post to find unexpected documents such as an exam paper for failed artists or, in this case, a crumpled piece of A4 paper. *Work No.88* was sent by Higgs and Creed to the Tate Gallery but was returned to them, flattened inside an envelope, 'rejected' as an unsolicited donation.

The exhibition includes two works by **Dean Hughes**. In response to Creed's crumpled paper ball Hughes has constructed a new work entitled *Drawing* (2018) while *Hole Punch Discs Slotted in Paper, No 5* (2000) is the point of departure for David Connearn's *Aporia no 1* (2018). Hughes often starts from objects that have a use and that possess seemingly perfunctory and unloved natures such as bus tickets, cardboard packaging or hole punch machines. Crucial to his practice is an effort to accentuate the potential of the incidental in the creative work — a sort of purposeful pointlessness. *Hole Punch Discs Slotted in Paper, No 5* depicts a selection of wasted hole punch disks that have been carefully slotted into incisions in an A4 sheet of paper. The semi-circle form is reiterated in *Drawing* (2018) through a series of coffee cup stains that have been thoughtfully composed on his kitchen table. The process of making small gestures, in a poetic balance of sorts, becomes potential material for a drawing (of itself) on a standard A4 sheet of paper.

**David Connearn's** *Four Days in May* (1983) carries the artist's signature gesture of parallel lines penciled freehand from top to bottom and usually left to right. As each line is drawn, some begin to stray and deviate from their planned path, either merging or veering away from the line above, and preparing a new course for the line to come. From afar onlookers see a closely-packed black unit with all its minimalist and conceptual connotations, but upon closer inspection one is left discomfited at the level of intricacy and epistemological questions of gesture, signature, and mark. Prompted by Dean Hughes' *Hole Punch Discs Slotted in Paper, No 5*, Connearn returns to a method of drawing that caused his own work to change direction. Asking the question: "What is this?" (What am I looking at?), Connearn attempts an equivalent work. Using a rule-based process to determine the placement of holes on a line, one that ultimately breaks down as contingency creeps as error into the process, Connearn's work probes the further question: "Is anything what it seems to be?" Do both things and our accounts of them have a dark side, another life that is occluded by our representation? Thoughts about Dean Hughes' work and his own attempt at equivalence appear as the "background" of the work.

**Name Surname's** practice oscillates between the authoritative artist and their observers, working under his self-prescribed pseudonym. Surname has often worked in collaboration with David Connearn and the invitation offered by this exhibition provided him the opportunity to respond playfully to Connearn's practice with *Four Days in April* (2018).

More mimicry than mockery, the work gestures towards the same minimal aesthetic of Connearn to such exactitude that his own identity becomes hard to locate. For instance the frame, the quality of paper, the black ink used and the time of production are all identical. The only anomaly remains the 35 year difference between the work dates.

*Add Colour Painting: I Love U (for London)* (1966-2006) by **Yoko Ono** was originally shown in London at Indica Gallery in 1966 for the artist's first solo UK exhibition *Unfinished Paintings and Objects*. The work was part of her on-going series of "INSTRUCTION PIECES" made in the 1960s, which invited viewers to participate and construct the work themselves. For this piece everyone was allowed to have a go, one-colour-per-person, until the picture was declared 'finished' the moment it was purchased.

**Gavin Turk's** practice often tackles issues of identity, authenticity and the 'authorship' of a work of art. Italian for "do it yourself tapestry", the work title *Arazzo Fan Da Te* (2012) is exactly what it says on the box. Embroidered by Laure Genillard over the course of several weeks, the DIY kit comes with a set of instructions to create a Gavin Turk tapestry in the form of a 'string-agram' of the artist's name in capital letters. The tapestry is a repeat of Turk's homage to Italian conceptual artist Alighiero Boetti, who using this typeface created poetic tapestries investigating identity through collaboration and multiplication.

The film and video works by Argentinian artist **Sebastian Diaz Morales** regularly return to an investigation into the linguistic and visual capabilities of narration. Wedged within a custom-built wooden frame, *The Way Between Two Points* (2008) is a 37 minute video of the artist continuously and impulsively writing down his thoughts and those of others onto paper for us to read. The provenance of one's ideas and their authenticity are brought into question as his stream of consciousness fills the pages, while the deconstructed aesthetic closely examines the relationship between writing and its image.

In recent years **Fiona Banner AKA Vanity Press** has been producing a number of one-off publications as part of a series concerning the way ideas are represented and circulated. In response to Sebastian Diaz Morales's film, the tattoo pictured in *Self-Portrait as a Book* (2018) is Banner's own personal ISBN (International Standard Book Number): the artist is officially registered as a publication – 'Fiona Banner'. Less about branding and more about how works of art act as mirrors, this work humorously attempts to capture the act of story-telling through her own biography, generating a self-portrait through the medium of the book.

*New Directions* (1991) by **Stephen Willats** is part of the series *Multiple Clothing* (1965-1999) and seeks to express the concept of self-organisation through design. Self-organisation is here equated with the creative capacity to organise and express one's personal identity and feelings within society. Consisting of 12 plastic panels with transparent pockets, *New Directions* can be zipped together in multiple combinations of colour and design. A set of printed cards — each with a word expressing a variety of psychological states and identities — are provided so the wearer can invent phrases or select words to express the message they want.

**Sarah Staton's** *Double Denim Queered Directions Cloth* (2018) is a new work made in direct response to Stephen Willats' *New Directions*. The denim embroidery considers the linguistic developments and the rise of identity politics since Willats first produced his piece in 1965. References are made to the multiple labels and identity positions that have emerged in recent years. Using a colour palette sourced from the emoticon options popular on mobile phones, this Gen X and Gen Z lexicon looks again at where *New Directions* has taken us.

At once unpredictable and meticulous, **Tomma Abts'** abstract painting *Zerke* (2015) demonstrates her habit for close-up scale and chromatic rhythm, features that transpire from her drawing practice. The work is constructed from multiple and often concealed layers of paint, building up the work's surface and solidifying its position in time. Attention is called to what lies outside and beyond the work as the simple and seemingly awkward geometry passes from one edge of the canvas to the other. The hyper-emphasised shadows appearing above and below some lines further heighten the artist's illusory capabilities as they are gently lifted from the canvas.

**Grace Weir** is concerned with space and time, and seeks to unite theoretical knowledge with a lived experience of the world. Her photographic works from the series *Future Perfect* (2015-) have been chosen as a response to Abts' painting. Each present a series of flat and overlapping colours made using photographic retouching inks with varying states of light-fastness — some a matter of years and others of decades. The works indicate the date of their inception, while the colours are to be dated in some future time as each slowly disappears at differing rates. These colour shades are consequently never fixed in a single moment, and instead extend freely from the conditions that hold them.