

bethlem
gallery

IN/DI/VISIBLE

7 April – 30 June 2018



Larry Achiampong and David Blandy, *Finding Fanon 3* (2017), ultra HD video still. Photo: Claire Barrett

Bethlem Gallery, Beckenham, presents *IN/DI/VISIBLE*, a group show featuring the work of seven artists: Larry Achiampong, David Blandy, Leon B, Esther Maxwell-Orumbie, John M, Daniel Regan and Mr. X.

The show takes as its starting point themes explored in Achiampong and Blandy's *Finding Fanon* trilogy (2015 – 2017), a series of three films that blend popular culture, personal history and post-colonial theory to explore ideas of race, identity and globalisation.

The *Finding Fanon* series is inspired by the lost plays of Frantz Fanon (1925 – 1961), a politically radical humanist whose practice dealt with the psychopathology of colonisation and the social and cultural consequences of decolonisation. Throughout the series, Achiampong and Blandy

negotiate Fanon's ideas, examining the politics of race, racism and decolonisation, and how these societal issues affect our relationship amidst an age of new technology, popular culture and globalisation. Achiampong and Blandy were invited to show the films at the Bethlem Gallery in recognition of Frantz Fanon's psychiatric training and practice.

Bethlem Gallery artists were asked to choose artworks that responded to the broader themes in the films. One artist, Esther Maxwell-Orumbie, has made new work for the exhibition; others have selected existing artworks that could take on new meanings in its context. Exploring themes of subjectivity and forms of (self) representation that resist the gaze, they represent highly individual enquiries into what the exhibition's curator, Michaela Ross, describes as *'art's potential to explore new ways of being and becoming'*.

Fragmentary is a series of black and white photographs by Daniel Regan. The works are self-portraits of the artist, disjointed and manipulated. They sit alongside extracts from his medical notes, with sections of the text redacted. In one sense the images deconstruct the subject, but in another they find ways of resisting and interrupting the pervasive gaze.

Says the artist: *'I have always turned to photography to express the feelings of a fragmented identity, of my mind splitting apart and into something destructive, something unknown. Working with self-portraits taken on or close to the date of the medical record I have disrupted the image by digitally inserting those texts that are too personal for the public into the photographic image. The result is a corrupted portrait of the broken self, a metaphor for the shattered identity.'*

Esther Maxwell-Orumbie's linocuts draw material from her experience of living between two worlds, having grown up in both Sierra Leone and the UK. The work she has made for this exhibition illustrates the imposition of colonisation in Africa. Although the artist grew up after the dissolution of the British colonial administration, she was witness to many of the social and cultural restrictions that still remained.

She says: *'English was the language taught in school and we were not allowed to speak our indigenous language, Krio, unless it was in the home. I also remember that in order to be accepted in the working environment Africans had to put on a white persona, the colonial masters' way of being. In the work, I show the mask as white to demonstrate the façade, but it is an African mask and an African identity that shows through.'*

Says the exhibition's curator, Michaela Ross: *'The works represent forms of resistance; some are obviously made in opposition to institutional structures, while others are more subtly subversive. Although Fanon is well-known for his contributions to the fields of post-colonialism and critical theory, with artists (such as Achiampong and Blandy) taking direct inspiration from his theories, his psychiatric writings are perhaps less well-known, with some key texts translated only recently.'*

'The Bethlem artists in the exhibition have used the Finding Fanon trilogy as a starting point for reflecting on the ways art can be used to resist the gaze of the other. Their work is hopeful and defiant, expanding the range of possible representations of self and other, countering how others see us and perhaps, also, how we have been taught to view ourselves.'

Alongside the main exhibition, the studio space, co-curated by Michaela Ross and Rebecca Olajide, showcases the work of selected London-based organisations and archives which challenge conventional notions of diversity and difference.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

About the artists:

Larry Achiampong and David Blandy

Larry Achiampong and David Blandy work collaboratively and share an interest in popular culture and the postcolonial position. They examine communal and personal heritage, using performance to investigate 'the self' as a fiction, devising alter-egos to point at their divided selves. Over four years, their research has evolved into a body of work including digital imagery, exhibitions, performance and video.

Larry Achiampong

Larry Achiampong (b. 1984) is a British-Ghanaian artist who has exhibited, performed and presented projects in various institutions within the UK and abroad including Tate Britain/Modern, London; Hauptbahnhof (Documenta 13), Kassel; Iniva, London; ICA, London; Yinka Shonibare's Guest Project Space, London; Westergasfabriek, Amsterdam; Ausland, Berlin and the Bokoor African Popular Music Archives Foundation, Accra. He lives and works in London.

David Blandy

David Blandy (b.1976) has exhibited at venues nationally and worldwide such as Bloomberg Space, London; Kiasma Contemporary Art Museum, Helsinki; The Baltic, Gateshead; Turner Contemporary, Margate; Spike Island, Bristol; Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, Germany; PS1, New York and Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai, China. He lives and works in Brighton and London.

Leon B.

Leon is a current patient of medium secure services at Bethlem Royal Hospital, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. He has exhibited extensively in group shows with the Bethlem Gallery and the Koestler Awards.

Esther Maxwell-Orumbie

Esther Maxwell-Orumbie grew up living between in Sierra Leone and the UK and has exhibited with the Bethlem Gallery in both group and solos shows. She primarily works with linocut, textiles and drawing often working with the subjects of memory and cultural identity. Maxwell-Orumbie lives and works in London.

John M.

John is a current patient of medium secure services at Bethlem Royal Hospital, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. He has exhibited extensively in group shows with the Bethlem Gallery and with Koestler Awards.

Daniel Regan

Daniel Regan (b. 1985) is a contemporary photographer currently based in London, UK. He completed a BA in Photography at University of Brighton in 2006 and subsequently an MA in Photography from London College of Communication, 2013. Regan is captivated by the human condition and complex emotions with his works focusing on themes of wellbeing and the processing of life's experiences. The thread of intimacy and the desire to connect with others and himself weaves its way throughout his practice.

Regan exhibits both nationally and internationally. He regularly runs arts workshops across both clinical and arts institutions, teaches photography, and is the Director of the Free Space Project, an arts and wellbeing charity based in Camden, London.

Mr. X

Mr. X is a current patient of medium secure services at Bethlem Royal Hospital, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. He has exhibited extensively in group shows with the Bethlem Gallery, and also with venues across the UK including Chelsea School of Art, Wellcome Collection, Southbank Centre, Gasworks and Pallant House Gallery. For this exhibition. Mr. X has co-curated the environment in which the *Finding Fanon* trilogy is displayed with Larry Achiampong and David Blandy.

About the curator:

Michaela Ross is an artist who lives and works in London. Ross took undergraduate degrees at the University of York (English and Related Literature), and at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze (Fine Art/Painting). In 1993 she was awarded an Italian Government Scholarship to study postgraduate printmaking at Il Bisonte Scuola di Arte Grafica. Returning to the UK, she completed an MA in Painting at Wimbledon School of Art. In 2005 she received an Arts and Humanities Research Council Scholarship to undertake research into fine-art pedagogy. She was awarded her PhD by Chelsea College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London, in 2012. She is a visiting lecturer King's College London (Dept. of Culture, Media and Creative Industries) and an associate lecturer at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

About Bethlem Gallery:

The Bethlem Gallery, established in 1997, is situated on the grounds of the Bethlem Royal Hospital.

The gallery provides a professional space for high-quality artwork and fosters a supportive artist-focused environment. Exhibitions and events are programmed throughout the year presenting a wide range of contemporary practice. The gallery is a platform for experimentation, collaboration, and skills exchange. It strives to develop the careers, experience and expertise of the gallery artists by creating opportunities for professional development. The successful artist-in-residence projects also work with patients and staff on site to improve people's experience of the hospital environment.

Working with partner organisations such as the Wellcome Collection, Goldsmiths University and Southbank Centre, the gallery has put itself on the map of charitable arts institutions in London and the wider area. They campaign for access to the arts in healthcare and engage audiences in learning and debate on the subject of mental health and artistic practice.

Bethlem Gallery
Bethlem Royal Hospital
Monks Orchard Road
Beckenham BR3 3BX

Gallery hours: 10am – 5pm
Pre-booked groups only: Monday – Tuesday
Open to public: Wednesday – Friday (except public holidays)
Saturday (first and last of the month)

For further information on opening hours and location, please visit the Bethlem Gallery website:
www.bethlemgallery.com