

Manifesto for Sustainable Experimentation 21 May-9 August 2025

Reading Groups for Sustainable Experimentation curated by Fran Painter-Fleming

Curated by writer and curator Fran Painter-Fleming in response to the exhibition Manifesto for Sustainable Experimentation, this reading group series draws on Beaconsfield Contemporary's 30 years of production. Each session is anchored by a particular exhibition or performance, with each signalling different strategies for thinking otherwise.

Working with film, performance and installation, each of the selected archival projects use these artistic mediums to challenge the often-hostile environments we find ourselves within, and to cultivate more compassionate ways of existing in the contemporary moment.

In opposition to dominant, capitalist or colonial constructions of time, each of these sessions also posits more elastic readings of time, bringing in scholars and artists who unpick how landscape, memory, language and gender each leave their own temporal markings.

Bringing together archival materials from the selected projects with critical texts, this series fosters dialogue between the recent history and the now, encouraging participants to continue to wield tools of rebellion against dogma or oppression.

Practical notes on each session:

*For those who want to read in advance, the selected extracts for each session will be made available to attendees ahead of each session. We will read the texts out loud together however, so no reading ahead is not compulsory. (Reading aloud is also not compulsory during the session).

Part Two: Language in Live Contexts, Acts of Public Memory Saturday 5th July 2:30-4:30pm.

This second session draws on two large-scale works from Beaconsfield's history, the late Monica Ross's performance rightsrepeated (2005) which developed into the ongoing project Acts of Memory (2008-) and Shane Cullen's The Agreement (2002). Both works pull at the threads of language, resituating quite lengthy, dense texts into performative, embodied, and sculptural contexts.

For Ross, the repositioned text was The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which was originally recited in its entirety by the artist as part of 'rights repeated' (2005) in the Beaconsfield exhibition Chronic Epoch, 14 September-20 November 2005, and went on to be collectively recited by different groups, across multiple languages 60 times as part of Acts of Memory (2008-) before the artist's death in 2013.

Commissioned by Beaconsfield in 2000: 'The Agreement' is a sculptural work by Dublin-based artist Shane Cullen, conceived to commemorate the signing of the Anglo-Irish Peace Agreement of 1998. The work presents the full text of the document known as the 'Good Friday' or 'Belfast' Agreement, in a clear and comprehensible manner: 11,500 words digitally routed into 55 HDU panels, each panel 3.5m x 1.22m, total length 67m. Beaconsfield. 2002. The Agreement. [Press Release].

For both projects language becomes a palpable, sculptural matter, to be shared collectively to oppose abuses of power. The selected texts for this session draw on the porous relationships between language, art, collective experience and memory, analysing how creatives concoct these elements together to create solid pathways for tackling the present moment.

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The selected readings mirror the layering and repurposing of language that runs throughout the work of Ross and Cullen. Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik's text introduces different performative approaches to cultural memory by various artists, filmmakers and authors. Yve Lomax's essay heralds the importance of 'now time' within Monica Ross's practice, bridging together correspondence from Monica, with Lomax's own reflections on narrative capsules and prose from Benjamin, The Bible and Giorgio Agamben. Short passages from Guillermo Gómez-Peña's 'In Defence of Performance' will also lay out the vigour of embodied knowledge and its capacity to transcend political borders, generating 'more inclusive systems of political thought and aesthetic praxis'.

Archival materials from *rightsrepeated* (2005) and *The Agreement* (2002) will be on display for participants to sift through and return to after collectively reading the texts.

TEXTS:

Extract from 'Introduction' Liedeke Plate, and Anneke Smelik. *Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 2013.

Yve Lomax "'Vocation" in Monica Ross'. *Ethical Actions : A Critical Fine Art Practice*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016.

Selected passages from Guillermo Gómez-Peña's 'In Defence of Performance', in Gómez-Peña, G. *Ethno-Techno : Writings on Performance, Activism and Pedagogy*. New York ; London: Routledge, 2005.

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BIO

This series has been conceived by Fran Painter-Fleming, a curator, writer and researcher based in London. Her curatorial research hinges on social memory, geopolitics, translation and myth, working primarily with live art and moving image. Her curatorial practice is grounded in slower methods of curating, working with artists or fields of research over extended periods of time.

BANNER IMAGE CREDIT

Part 2: Monica Ross, '*rightsrepeated*', performed in Hayley Newman's *WOODSHED* as part of *Chronic Epoch*, Beaconsfield, 2005.

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