

ZABLUDOWICZ COLLECTION INVITES:**GUY OLIVER*****AND YOU THOUGHT I WAS BAD?*****21 JUNE–12 AUGUST****Exhibition Preview: Thursday 21 June, 6–9pm**

And You Thought I Was Bad?, 2018. 24:33 mins. Video still

Continuing his exploration of the relationship between comedy and tragedy within contemporary popular culture, the exhibition *And You Thought I Was Bad?* finds Guy Oliver stepping back into the recent past. Central to the show is a new film that examines the peculiarities of individual and collective memory, the function of arts education, and the role of political protest within art.

Assuming the role of a television arts presenter, Oliver returns to an unrealised work from his time as an undergraduate student in the mid-2000s. The artist goes back to his former university to remake this long obsolete idea – a T-shirt bearing an image of Richard Nixon that aimed to satirise George W Bush and the events surrounding the Iraq war. Along the way Oliver ruminates on American Presidential figures, the cultural significance of Johnny Cash as both renegade radical and mainstream blue-collar hero, and how the narrative of his own life intertwines with recent socio-political global events. As Oliver's character states in the film, when there is something in the air, turbulent times call for 'archival video montages with contemporaneous music'.

While British culture has predominantly been the artist's focus in previous work, this exhibition addresses American culture, in particular it's positioning of masculine identity and the division of the world into 'good guys' and 'bad guys'. On the walls of the gallery Oliver presents a series of collaged relief 'paintings', some made with found floorboards and another piece shaped like a now-defunct VHS display unit. They present various sampled imagery including: George Bush's painted portrait of Vladimir Putin from 2014, a courtroom photograph of OJ Simpson learning he had escaped conviction in 1995, and a reproduction of Norman Rockwell's painting *The Connoisseur* of 1961, which gently lampooned the then cutting-edge drip work of Jackson Pollock. These images are physically disrupted and remixed by Oliver, charting surreal connections between visual culture and mainstream politics.

Specifically British elements do surface in the show however, in particular Oliver's fascination with football terrace culture. In his view chants and banners can be appraised as a unique folk art-form, demonstrating remarkable inventiveness and spontaneous humour – but a humour that often slides into poor taste and the highly offensive. But on occasion terraces can be the site of genuine and effective political protest. The OJ Simpson painting hangs on top of wall-sized print of Liverpool FC fans on The Kop holding up a banner reading 'Expose the lies before Thatcher dies' in reference to the Hillsborough disaster. Such provocative and seemingly incongruous layering is symptomatic of Oliver's approach of, as he describes it, 'mangled personal nostalgia'.

And You Thought I Was Bad? is concerned with the circular nature of time, and what it meant to be obsolescent and essentially out of date. The exhibition ironically reflects on the efficacy and value of political protest in art, with the central film piece having a self-important and perhaps self-righteous art student archetype at its centre. However, in a sincere way, Oliver is also trying to touch upon the expectations placed on artists to be conduits for cultural events, and the complex nature of political agency today.

Artist's Presentation Event: Sunday 5 August, 3pm.

Exploring the incongruous and often absurd intersection of politicians and pop culture, the artist presents a musical performance lecture, alongside a screening of his work *Songs Of Eternal Praise*, 2016–17.

Zabludowicz Collection Invites is a programme of solo presentations by UK-based artists who do not currently have representation by a UK commercial gallery.

Guy Oliver (b. 1982, Barnet, UK) lives and works in London. He graduated from The Royal College of Art (MA Painting) in 2015 and previously studied Fine Art BA at The University of East London. Recent solo and two-person shows include *Live From San Quentin*, Random Access Gallery, Syracuse, New York (2018); *Zona Mista* (with Robbie Howells), Westminster Waste, London (2017); *Did You Think I'd Leave You Dying?*, Chalton Gallery, London (2017) and *(I Wanna Give You) Devotion* (with Kate Mackeson), Hockney Gallery, London (2015). Recent group exhibitions and screenings include *Staging Series*, Jerwood Space, London (2017); *NAWKI*, East Bristol Contemporary, Bristol (2017); *LCN Showcase 2nd Edition*, SPACE, London (2017); *Edinburgh Artists' Moving Image Festival*, Filmhouse, Edinburgh (2016); *Outpost Members Show 2016*, OUTPOST, Norwich (2016); *Guilt Complex*, Bikini Wax, Mexico City, (2016); *Two Hundred Acres*, Pump House Gallery, London (2015) and *Heckle*, Bosse and Baum, London (2015).

NOTES FOR EDITORS

ZABLUDOWICZ COLLECTION

Zabludowicz Collection is a philanthropic organisation including a growing collection of contemporary art and a programme of international exhibitions, events and artists' residencies. Founded in 1994, the Collection is dedicated to fostering new audiences and a sustainable environment for contemporary art, offering a variety of opportunities and support for artists and art organisations. All of its activities are privately funded and free for the public to access.

The collection contains over 3000 works of art by more than 600 artists, spanning 40 years of art production. Its focus is on emerging art from the late 20th century to the present day and it is in constant development. The Collection has been directed since 2006 by Elizabeth Neilson.

In 2007 the Collection opened its main exhibition space in London, in a 19th Century former Methodist Chapel, where it has worked with artists, curators and the collection to produce exhibitions and events examining contemporary art practice in a public forum. The Collection now also runs an international programme of exhibitions, events, residencies and commissions across four permanent venues in the UK, USA and Finland. The programme is directed by Maitreyi Maheshwari.

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VISITOR INFORMATION

Admission: FREE

Thursday–Sunday, 12–6pm or by appointment

The **Café** serves tea, coffee, sandwiches and cakes during gallery opening hours.

The **Library** and meeting room can be booked for meetings, research, and to view film and video works in the Collection.

The **Shop** sells limited edition artworks, books and specially selected products. All books and editions are available online at: shop.zabludowiczcollection.com
Zabludowicz Collection is a not for profit organisation and 50% of the proceeds from editions goes directly to the artist, remaining funds support the future of the programme.

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