



# DOUBLE AGENT

The Mall  
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[www.ica.org.uk/doubleagent](http://www.ica.org.uk/doubleagent)

**Paweł Althamer/  
Nowolipie Group  
Phil Collins  
Dora García  
Christoph Schlingensief  
Barbara Visser  
Donelle Woolford  
Artur Zmijewski**

Curated by: Claire Bishop/Mark Sladen

*Double Agent* is an exhibition of art works and collaborative projects in which the artist uses other people as a medium. All of the works raise questions of performance and authorship, and in particular the issues of ethics and representation that ensue when the artist is no longer the central agent in his or her own work, but operates through a range of individuals, communities, and surrogates.

One of the starting points for the exhibition is recent and conspicuous rise of interest in performance and performative gestures among contemporary artists. But today's generation, unlike their precursors in the 1960s and 70s, do not necessarily privilege the live moment or their own body. Instead, they engage in strategies of mediation, delegation and collaboration.

Such strategies can work to undermine the idea of the authentic or authoritative artist, who is substituted instead by a variety of figures. Such strategies can also promote unpredictability and risk, as the artist's agents may prove to be partial or unreliable. In some instances the use of third parties can also raise ethical issues and questions of exploitation.

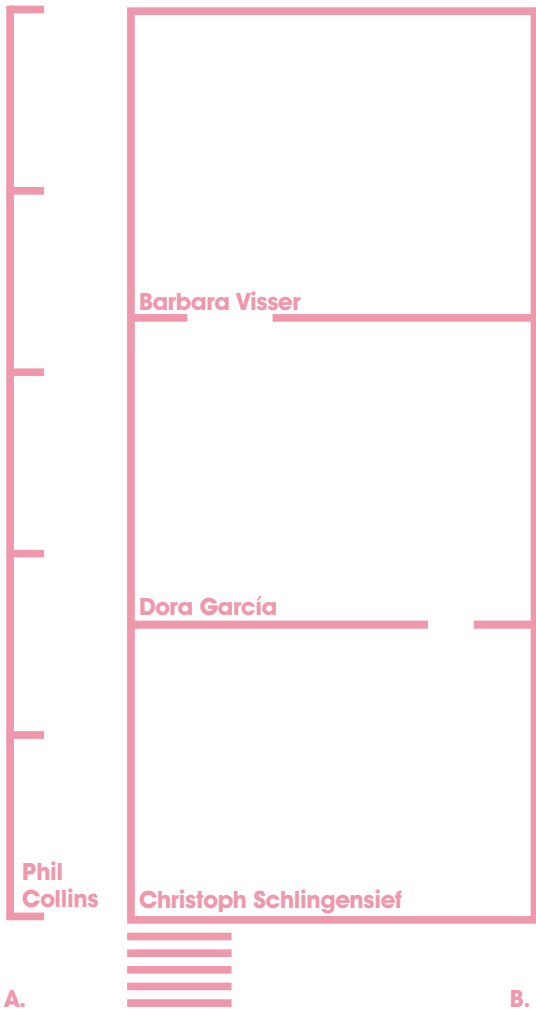
*Double Agent* includes seven artists, represented by a range of media including video and live performance. It includes the UK premieres of a number of significant works, as well as new commissions. After its showing at the ICA the exhibition will travel to Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre and BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, its content refreshed by new commissions at the respective venues.

**Claire Bishop**

Assistant Professor of History of Art, Warwick University

**Mark Sladen**

Director of Exhibitions, ICA



- A. Concourse
- B. Lower Gallery
- C. Upper Gallery



# Exhibition floorplan



Production still from the shoot for *The African Twin Towers*  
© Aino Laberenz

Artist, filmmaker and theatre director Christoph Schlingensiefel is represented by a video installation entitled *The African Twin Towers—Stairlift to Heaven* (2007). The main feature of this installation is an 80-minute film, telling the story of a megalomaniac theatre director who wants to stage a version of the 9-11 story in a former German colony in Namibia. The invocation of colonialism and terrorism are typical of Schlingensiefel's exploration of contemporary taboos, as is his use of myth and ritual—in this case drawing on Norse sagas and African shamanism—and the excessive and purgative manner in which he brings such elements together.

Equally characteristic of Schlingensiefel's work is its collaborative and participatory quality. In the aforementioned film the roles are played by the artist, by the Fassbinder actress Irm Hermann, by local people, as well as members of Schlingensiefel's regular troupe of non-professional performers—many of whom have physical or mental disabilities. Two of the artist's regular collaborators can be seen in another short film that features in the installation, and which requires viewers to literally incorporate themselves into the work, as it is visible at the top of a stairlift that cuts across the main projection.

### Biography

Born 1960 in Oberhausen, Germany, lives in Berlin.

Solo exhibitions include: Migros Museum, Zurich (2007), Haus der Kunst, Munich (2007), Vienna Burgtheater (2006), Volksbühne Berlin (2006), Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig (2006), Museum f. Moderne Kunst, Salzburg (2006), Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2005), Reykjavik Art Festival (2005), Biennale di Venezia (2003).

Group exhibitions include: *Into Me/Out of Me*, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2006), *AC/DC*, Museum Ludwig, Vienna (2006), *Church of Fear*, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice (2003).



Dora García began making performance works in 2000, using hired actors as a substitute for her own presence. Some of her performances take place inside exhibitions, as in *Proxy/Coma* (2001) in which a woman lounges around the gallery space, captured on surveillance cameras. Others blur into the outside world and can potentially last for years, as in *The Messenger* (2002), where a performer (The ‘messenger’) must deliver a message in a foreign language—but to do so must search for someone who can identify and understand that language. In all of the works, García strikes a fragile balance between scripted behaviour and the performer’s interpretation of her instructions.

*Instant Narrative (IN)* (2006—2008) comprises an observer positioned within the exhibition space who makes notes on visitors to the exhibition—notes which are simultaneously projected onto the wall of the gallery. The resultant text forms a real-time story in which the viewers are the protagonists, but the authorship of this narrative is a function of continual displacement—from the artist to the writer to the visitor.

### **Biography**

Born in 1965 in Valladolid, lives and works in Brussels.

Solo exhibitions include: Centro de Arte Santa Monica (2007), GfZK, Leipzig (2007), SMAK, Gent (2006), FRAC, Bourgogne, Dijon (2005), Museo Nacional de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (2005), MUSAC, León (2005).

Group exhibitions include: Skulpture Projekte, Münster (2007), *Actions and Interruptions*, performance programme, Tate Modern, London (2007), *Whenever it starts it is the right time, strategies for a discontinuous future*, Frankfurter Kunstverein (2007).



*Last Lecture*, 2007  
Courtesy Annet Gelink Gallery

Barbara Visser explores issues of authority and authenticity, often taking an apparently untouchable icon as her starting point, and then proceeding to dismantle it through processes that include translation, copying and re-enactment. Visser's works include photographs in which pieces of modernist furniture are literally falling apart; a recorded performance referring to the Lennon-Ono 'Bed In for Peace' at the Amsterdam Hilton in 1969; and—in the case of the work shown here—a series of performances in which the authenticity of the artist's own persona is brought into question.

In 1997 Visser staged a lecture in which—unknown to the audience—an actress stood in for the artist, receiving instructions from the latter via an earpiece. In 2004 Visser staged a second lecture, using a new actress (this time one who actually looked like the artist) to comment on footage of the first lecture. In 2007 Visser staged a third performance, presenting herself as a silhouette cast onto a screen on which a video of the previous event was projected, while dubbing the second actress' voice. This latter performance is the basis of a video, *Last Lecture* (2007, 20 mins), which is screened here.

### **Biography**

Born 1966 Haarlem, Netherlands, lives in Amsterdam.

Solo exhibitions include: De Paviljoens, Almere (2006), Villa Arson, Nice (2002), Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam (2003), Underground Gallery, Athens (2002).

Group exhibitions include: *Space for your Future*, MOT Tokyo, Japan (2007), 27th Biennial of Sao Paulo, Brazil (2006), *I (Ich) Performative Ontology*, Wiener Secession, Vienna (2006), *Mediascapes*, Fundacio "La Caixa", Tarragona (2005), *Wunderland Unframed*, Stedelijk Museum Bureau, Amsterdam (2004), *Surfacing*, Ludwig Museum, Budapest (2004).



Phil Collins' work frequently invites people to perform for a camera: to strip in a hotel room, to participate in a disco-dancing marathon, to recount their experience of appearing on reality television. The complicity that results between the artist and his performers is complex, since payment is rarely involved and both parties hope to gain something from the exchange. The five photographs in *Double Agent* continue the artist's interest in using the camera as the premise for a performative situation.

The five images on show are from *you'll never work in this town again* (2004—ongoing), a series of photographic portraits of curators, critics, dealers, collectors and other figures in the art world—photographed on the understanding that the image would be taken immediately after the artist had slapped each sitter hard around the face. The work can be seen both as a pre-emptive strike by the artist towards those who have the capacity to make or break his career, and as a shared moment of intimacy, while also revealing the narcissism of those who want to be in a work of art—even if it means physical pain. The photographs on show were all taken in London in 2006, and include the two curators of the current exhibition.

### Biography

Born 1970 Runcorn, lives in Glasgow.

Solo exhibitions include: Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas (2007), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (2007), Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent (2006), and Milton Keynes Gallery (2005).

Group exhibitions include: *Turner Prize 2006*, Tate Britain, London (2006), *British Art Show 6*, various venues (2005—06), 9th International Istanbul Biennial (2005), *Universal Experience: Art, Life and the Tourist's Eye*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and tour (2005).

*you'll never work in this town again*  
(mark), 2006  
Courtesy the artist

*you'll never work in this town again*  
(claire), 2006  
Courtesy the artist



Paweł Althamer was one of the first artists to produce events with non-professional performers in the early 1990s; his early works involved collaborations with homeless men and women, gallery invigilators, and children. Much of Althamer's practice stems from an identification with marginal subjects, and comes to constitute an oblique form of self-portraiture.

For over a decade, Althamer has led a ceramics class for the Nowolipie Group, an organisation in Warsaw for adults with multiple sclerosis and other disabilities. The experience provides a rich source of ideas for Althamer, for whom the educational process cuts two ways ('they teach me to be more mad!'). Each class revolves around a given theme—such as castles, or portraits of the Pope—but one of the participants, Rafal, prefers always to make clay biplanes. This exhibition includes a display of ceramics by the group, and the video *Do It Yourself* (2004, 9.20 mins). Made in collaboration with Artur Zmijewski, the latter shows Rafal's fluctuating emotions—from enthusiasm to frustration—during the course of a class.

### Biography/Paweł Althamer

Born 1967 Warsaw, lives in Warsaw.

Solo exhibitions include: Centre Pompidou, Paris (2006), Zacheta, National Gallery of Art, Warsaw (2006), Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht (2004).

Group exhibitions include: *Kontakt*, MUMOK, Vienna, Austria (2006), *The New Reality of Europe*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2006), Carnegie International, Pittsburgh (2004), La Biennale di Venezia (2003), Manifesta 3, Ljubljana (2000).





Artur Zmijewski's work frequently raises ethical questions of representation, particularly in relation to his constructed events and activities in which specific groups of people are invited to perform. One of his most controversial and potent videos shows a group of deaf teenagers attempting to sing Maklakiewicz's 1944 Polish Mass; another shows the Polish army marching naked in a dance studio.

The video *Them* (2007, 27 minutes) documents a series of painting workshops organized by the artist. These events feature groups of Christians, Jews, Young Socialists, and Polish nationalists, who are encouraged to respond to each group's symbolic depiction of its values. Over the course of the workshops, tensions build between the groups and culminate in an explosive *impasse*. As in many of Zmijewski's videos, the artist adopts an ambiguous role and it is never clear to what degree his participants are acting with their own agency, or being manipulated to fulfill the requirements of his pre-planned narrative.

### **Biography**

Born 1966 Warsaw, lives in Warsaw.

Solo exhibitions include: Neuer Berlin Kunstverein (2007), CCA Wattis Institute of Contemporary Arts, San Francisco (2006), Kunsthalle, Basel (2005), MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA (2004).

Group exhibitions include: Documenta 12, Kassel (2007), Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (2007), The Polish Pavilion, 51 Biennale di Venezia, Venice (2005).



Donelle Woolford in the studio  
Photograph by Namik Minter and Frank Heath, courtesy Wallspace

As his contribution to the exhibition, Joe Scanlan presents the up-and-coming artist Donelle Woolford, who is using one of the ICA's upper galleries as a studio to construct her own sculptures. Woolford is a young Afro-American artist and former studio assistant of Scanlan. She makes wooden assemblages that reference Cubism and which are designed to coincide with (and challenge) the 100th anniversary of that movement.

Scanlan has previously collaborated with Woolford on *The Massachusetts Wedding Bed* (2005), a press conference in which Woolford, Scanlan and his brother lay in queen-sized bed in an Amsterdam gallery, answering questions about America. This work, as well as his presentation of Donelle Woolford in the ICA, brings together several of Scanlan's interests: the fine line between work of art and commercial product (on his website [www.thingsthatfall.com](http://www.thingsthatfall.com), you can purchase artist-designed coffins), the role of word-of-mouth and fabrication, and the relationship between myth-making and salesmanship.

Donelle Woolford will be working in the gallery on selected Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

### **Biography/Donelle Woolford**

Born 1977 Detroit, MI, lives in Harlem, NY.

Solo exhibitions: Wallspace, New York (2008);  
Galerie Chez Valentin, Paris (2007).

Group exhibitions include: *New Economy*, Artist's Space, New York (2007); 8th Sharjah Biennial, United Arab Emirates (2007); *Data Mining*, Wallspace, New York (2006); *BMW*, IX Baltic Triennial, Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius (2005).

## Gallery talks

Meet in Lower Gallery. Day admission applies.

### Claire Bishop

Saturday 16 February, 3pm

Claire Bishop, co-curator of *Double Agent*, gives a talk on the exhibition.

### Dora García

Saturday 5 April, 3pm

Dora García gives a gallery talk, discussing her practice and her work in *Double Agent*.

## Other events

### Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefel's Container

Thursday 6 March, 6.30pm, Cinema 1

£8/£7 concessions/£6 members

In the summer of 2000, Christoph Schlingensiefel set up a *Big Brother* style camp for asylum seekers in a shipping container outside the Viennese Opera House. Twelve applicants for Austrian nationality lived in the container, their lives streamed over the web, with the audience invited to vote their least favorite players out of the camp—and out of the country. Crowned by a banner with the phrase *Ausländer Raus!* ('foreigners out'), the container became a flashpoint in Austria's national and racial debate. Paul Poet's documentary covers the event and offers valuable insights into Schlingensiefel's complex practice. [Paul Poet, Austria 2002, video, 90 mins]

### Artist's presentation and curators' discussion

Sunday, 16 March, 3pm, Nash Room. Day admission applies.

Donelle Woolford will give a short talk about her practice, her participation in *Double Agent*, and her 'double life' in London—where she is staying for the duration of the exhibition. This will be followed by a discussion between the two curators, Claire Bishop and Mark Sladen, who will talk about the exhibition and its engagement with questions of authorship and performance.

## Conference and catalogue

An interdisciplinary conference, focusing on the issue of delegated performance explored in the exhibition *Double Agent*, will be held at the ICA in September 2008. Speakers will address the ethics, aesthetics and economics of this tendency in film, performance and visual art. The conference papers will be published in book form, which will double as the catalogue for the exhibition. For further information see the ICA website.

## Limited edition

To accompany *Double Agent*, Phil Collins has made a limited edition photographic print for the ICA, featuring two of the images from his series *you'll never work in this town again*. This is the series by which Collins is represented in the exhibition, and for the limited edition he has chosen the two images illustrated in this booklet—presented as a diptych on a single sheet, in a signed and numbered edition of 100 (plus five artist's proofs). On sale in the ICA Bookshop and via the ICA website for the special launch price of £150 (including VAT, unframed). [www.ica.org.uk](http://www.ica.org.uk)

Produced on the occasion of the *Double Agent* exhibition:

**Institute of Contemporary Arts**

14 February—6 April 2008

The exhibition will tour to:

**Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre**

26 April—28 June 2008

**BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead**

21 May—17 August 2008

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The ICA would like to thank all of the artists for their help in the preparation of this project. We would also like to thank the artist's representatives, including Foksal Gallery Foundation, Hauser and Wirth, Victoria Miro Gallery and Galerie Micheline Szwajcer. In addition, we would like to thank the following for their help and advice: Annick Kleizen, Sinisa Mitrovic, Julian Pörksen, Elena Crippa, Davina Drummond, Annie Fletcher, Raphael Gygas, Lois Keidan & Daniel Brine, Anders Kreuger, David Kulhanek, Lars Bang Larsen, Raimundas Malasaukis, Becca Marston, Chus Martinez, Viktor Misiano, Francesco Manacorda, Cristina Ricupero, Joshua Sofaer, Adam Szymczyk and Eva Wittcox.

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