

with Sinéad & Hugh O'Donnell's *Gravity*, 2014, where the playful or ritualistic qualities of their sibling activities in the woods feels lost in short video form.

In contrast, certain works speculate on that which is yet to come. Like the pages of the alchemical tract *Mutus Liber* featured in the exhibition, these works often communicate using diagrammatic imagery rather than through words. Kate Mahoney's *Collage Works*, 2014, are photo-diagrams, step-by-step guides for a set of domestic experiments using objects at hand. While Williamson's own *Tin Eaters: One Hour Drawings Made Whilst Listening to Tinnitus*, 2014, combines dry-transfer letters, shapes, lines, planes and punctuation, which tumble out and jumble up on the page as he listens to the noise that he has learned to tune out. Referencing concrete poetry, these bounded drawing are like scores waiting to be performed.

In Simon Raven's *Headspinners*, 2014, body parts from shop mannequins occupy the three large windows and perform to the shopping street outside. With their motorised rotating heads, they look out at passers-by (turning heads as they do) and then look back into the gallery. Perhaps, in a way most responsive to the idea of a continually evolving work, Raven will return to the space at intervals to re-dress the mannequins. This wonky, wobbling shop-window display combines dysfunctional consumerism – the option to perform a different version of yourself (if you buy into this particular window style) – with an improvised physical comedy routine.

The main body of the exhibition, where the majority of these artists coalesce, appears bookended by two smaller galleries. The first, just after you enter – described as the Ignition Room – contains a curious collection of historical artefacts that provides an esoteric diagram for the exhibition. At the other end, Brian Catling's performance-cum-installation *Antix 2*, 2014, appears to

enact his own experiment among the apparatus he has created.

Within the Ignition Room, objects and documents provide small revelations about an eclectic set of individuals: an acoustic throne that allowed King João VI of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves to hear his subjects' petitions; a Pathé News clip of American Gothic writer Flannery O'Connor's first brush with fame as a six-year-old training her chicken to walk backwards; or photographs documenting private performances by Stephen Cripps, whose art – notoriously setting off explosions among Jackson Pollock's paintings at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford – was the epitome of a 'lived experiment'.

Catling operates his beautifully handcrafted objects, moving them in cycles between various stations that he has set up in the gallery comprising three low wooden platforms and a fourth made of items hung together on the wall. His presence and the shifting states that it moves through provide some of the most absorbing moments of the exhibition. The objects, his body and the bodies of others undergo continual transmutation, affecting each other.

As I enter Catling's performance, he rummages through the stomach of (what I assume to be) a dummy on a chair, pulling out bones and wooden organs. In fact, I am deceived: a real person is pulled from the wooden slatted overcoat and returned to the audience. His performance moves through several characters, from torturer to performance-magician to oversized baby rolling his body along the wall, wooden dunce-cone covering his head and comically clattering against the surface with each rotation. After the performance, the work is described as comprising its 'haunted remains'. However, once the full gallery lights are on and bleach out the space, the earlier stagecraft vanishes and the objects lose something of their mystery.

The exhibition feels generous to those involved, encouraging further creative exploration. But how does constant experiment translate to the exhibition context, particularly on this large group scale? Although certain works tackle this idea through live presence, or through more speculative or propositional acts, there remains the nagging feeling that the exhibition itself is not experiencing continuous transformation since much of the work is now in a fixed state. Could the exhibition framework have been modified further, by, for instance, reversing the process of lengthy development prior to display and instead focusing all the resources into an explosion of a truly 'lived experiment' taking place in the gallery and by enacting it live in the space, rather than presenting it as having happened? ■

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Glenn Ligon: Call and Response

Camden Art Centre London 10 October to 11 January

'Call and Response', presented at Camden Art Centre, is New York-based artist Glenn Ligon's first solo presentation in a public space in the UK. The title refers to musical and religious practices that create a dialogue between artist/preacher and audience. These are steeped in African-American culture, from the lively churches of the American South to Hip Hop and New Orleans's current 'Bounce' scene. The exhibition title also brings together three somewhat monumental pieces, and



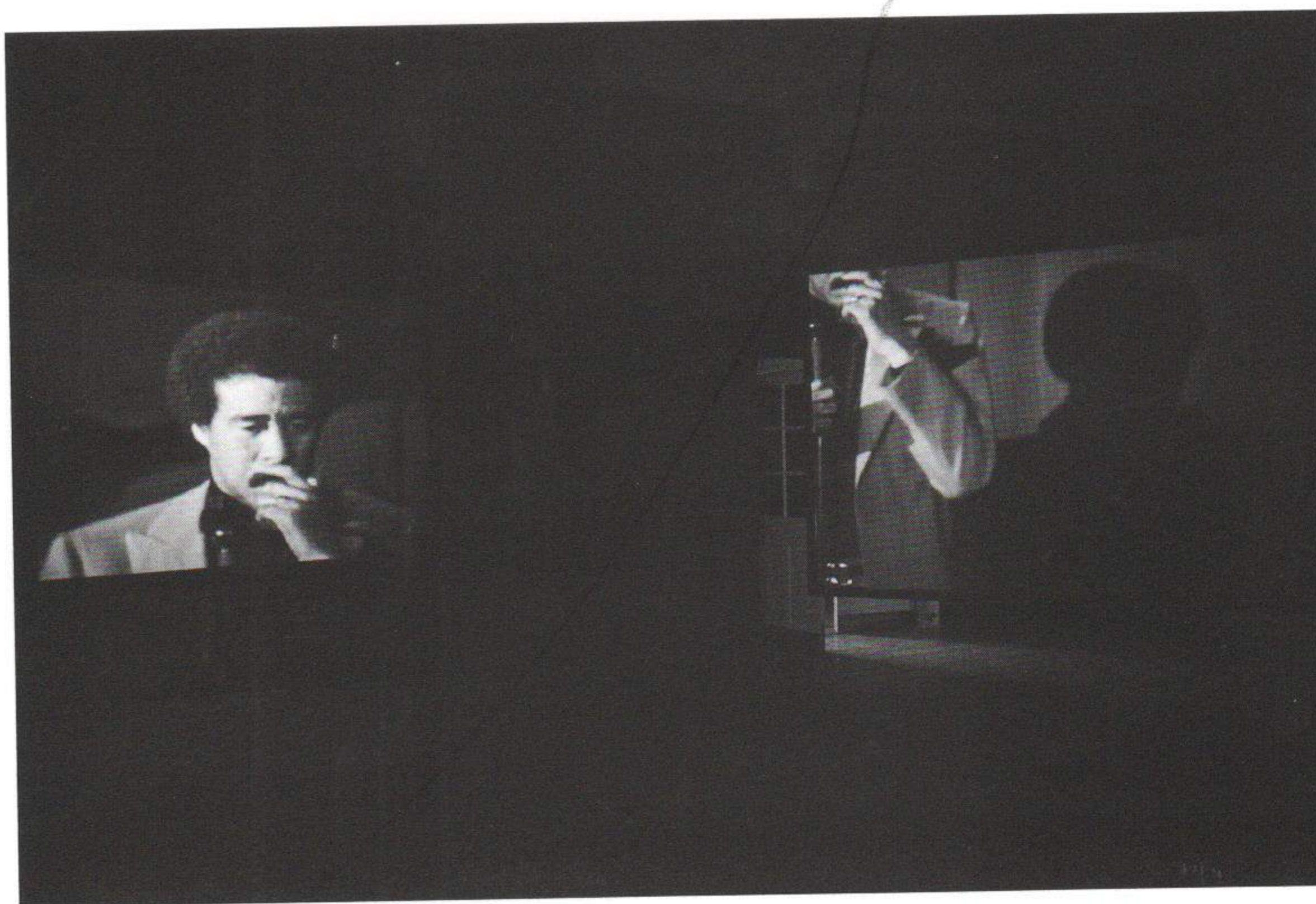
Brian Catling
Antix 2 2014
performance

the characters that underpin them, under the premise of being called upon to testify: Daniel Hamm, whose witness statement inspires both *Untitled Bruise/Blues* and *Come Out*; comedian Richard Pryor's astute social commentary in *Live on the Sunset Strip* from 1982; and Steve Reich's role in a campaign closely linked to the civil rights movement.

The exhibition opens with *Come Out #4* and *#5*, 2014, two huge silkscreen prints with the words 'come out to show them' printed in black on a white background in a series of blocks. The words are taken from Steve Reich's 1966 track *Come Out*, a 13-minute song that took an interview recording of Daniel Hamm, a 19-year-old African-American, describing how he had to 'open the bruise up, and let some of the bruise blood come out, to show the police' that he was grievously injured, so that he would be provided with medical assistance. Hamm was one of the Harlem Six – young men who were falsely accused of murder during the 1964 Harlem Riots, an uprising caused in part by racial and class tensions, police brutality, and Stop and Frisk (the US equivalent of our Stop and Search police powers). Reich was asked to create a piece of music to support a benefit to raise funds for the accused's legal defence and chose to heighten the errors that appeared in his analogue reel-to-reel tape players; the dual recordings quickly falling out of sync. It is the power of the voice, combined with the idiosyncrasies of the technology used, which is of interest to both Reich and Ligon. Ligon provides a visual parallel to Reich's recording, with the layering of text creating different densities in paint, legibility and obscurity; the slippages of sound become the slippages of text in Ligon's screenprints.

In the second gallery, the pace shifts dramatically. From an installation indebted to minimalist and monumental tendencies, we are dropped into the darkness of *Live*, 2014, with only Pryor on a constellation of eight, beautifully installed, floating screens to guide us. Here, Pryor's body is dismembered and divorced from his voice; a close-up of his hand, mouth, crotch and shadow bring the viewer's attention to the physicality of his stand-up performance, how his body communicates the humour and melancholia of his seminal and wildly popular routines. Their sculptural presence also forces the viewer to move around the space. Pryor is a continuing source for Ligon (the words of Pryor, James Baldwin and Jean Genet have populated Ligon's earlier screenprints) but this time he appears as an image rather than through text. Pryor's 1982 performance from which *Live* takes its footage was his first public appearance following his infamous crack-cocaine incident where he inadvertently set fire to himself. His routine is self-deprecating, but also forms a searing analysis of US society, of which his addiction and behaviour was a product. Lamentably, the sharpness and wit of Pryor is lost through this work, yet it is another lens through which to view Pryor, as pop cultural and African-American icon, and as a figure whose self-awareness and critique is sadly lacking in culture today.

The final work, *Untitled (Bruise/Blues)*, 2014, is inspired again by Reich's *Come Out*, where the speaker makes a Freudian slip in pronouncing bruise as blues (one hears him say 'I had to, like, open the bruise up and let some of the blues blood come out to show them'), and is presented as two large neon pieces that flash 'blues' and 'bruise'. The neons are positioned facing away from each other so the viewer sees the words lit up, in a sequence that matches the length of the original Reich phrase, one at a time. With this work, as with *Live* and *Come Out* to some extent, the viewer is denied an overarching view, through obfuscation,



Glenn Ligon
Live 2014
video installation

repetition and deconstruction. Fragments of text, image and suggested sound become symbols of a broader context which is simultaneously fixed in history and yet highly relevant to the present. Ligon is elliptical in his use and treatment of sources that speak to art and society while transcending the – Atlantic – ocean between them. ■

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Yorkshire Round-up

Leeds Arts Gallery • The Hepworth Wakefield •

S1 Artspace

'I sing the body electric,' Walt Whitman wrote in his untitled 1855 poem, revelling in the wonders and glories of the human form. He lists all the parts of the body, calling on each in turn before concluding enthusiastically, 'I say now these are the soul!' What's interesting is the way in which he talks of the 'meat of the body' before making this claim, that it needs his somewhat distanced stock-taking list of our physical lives before nominating it as 'sacred'. His florid language almost hides the *Frankenstein*-like idea that lurks behind the poem, which casts us as flesh puppets animated by some sort of divine projection. The argument could be made that a projection of this order takes place any time we engage with a work of art, investing and imbuing it with our own schemes, and three shows in Leeds, Sheffield and Wakefield share a preoccupation with mapping out what happens when we try, as it were, to make bodies sing.

In Elín Jakobsdóttir's 'Crude Thoughts' series of collage drawings at the Leeds Art Gallery, paper silhouettes of heads, intestines and kidneys float among strands of bright red and splotches of bilious orange. In *Body Chop*, 2014, a lower intestine spouts from the mouth of an outlined head, while a dark yellow stain sits like a brooding thought cloud for what might be a pair of red ovaries. In these whimsical and light drawings, our body parts are all thinking, speaking and spewing. Her accompanying silent Super 8 film, *Eyes Cast*, 2014, reaches into the city's collection to reanimate two bronze busts by Jacob Epstein. She sets up a slow, stop-motion waltz between the stern, cross-armed *Bust of George Black*, 1942, facing off and slowly dancing around the brighter, more vivacious *First Portrait of Deirdre*, 1941, her hands