

Philip Ewe

To be, or not to be

6 October - 21 November, 2026

Private view and performance 6 October, 6 - 8pm

Further performance dates: 12 October 5.30pm & 21 November 6.30pm

TINA is pleased to present *To be, or not to be*, a new exhibition by Philip Ewe comprising a live performance, an installation of found theatrical objects, light fittings retrieved from Ewe's father's lighting business in the 80s & 90s, non-human collaborators and new photographic works. Together, the exhibition is obliquely framed within a paternal reading of Hamlet, centred on ideas of mortality, presence and closeness. In this light, the work examines speech as both an act of self-realisation and a mechanism through which power is exercised, asking how public discourse is staged, witnessed and ultimately instrumentalised.

Borrowing its title from Shakespeare's most recognisable line, the exhibition does not revisit Hamlet as literature so much as the unresolved question that has long surrounded its most famous speech. Is 'To be or not to be' an interior soliloquy, granting the audience privileged access to Hamlet's private thoughts? Or is it spoken aloud, unknowingly overheard by two characters already watching him? The distinction fundamentally reshapes the speech's meaning. In one reading, language becomes a space of existential introspection, where thought and identity are formed. In the other, speech is already implicated within systems of observation, where confession becomes evidence and vulnerability is exposed to surveillance.

This ambiguity forms the conceptual framework for Ewe's new performance. Lasting approximately thirty minutes, it unfolds as a stream of shifting voices, unstable narratives and rhetorical positions. Expanding his ongoing interest in site-responsive intervention, Ewe turns theatre itself into an object of enquiry. The gallery, populated by familiar theatrical props, functions less as a setting than as an apparatus. Rather than illustrating Hamlet, these objects invoke the inherited conventions of theatre; scripts, protagonists, audiences, cues and stages. The performance dismantles these conventions from within, questioning who speaks, who listens, and the authority that theatrical structures quietly confer.

Photography extends these concerns into contemporary public space. *Speakers Corner* (2026) presents photographs of speakers addressing weekly crowds in Hyde Park. As the images are enlarged, their grain intensifies until figures oscillate between recognition and abstraction. Once imagined as a forum for civic debate, Speakers Corner, as well as an arena for liveness, increasingly operates as a stage for digital visibility, where speech is performed not only for those gathered, but also for dispersed online audiences. In doing so, the photographs trace a broader transition from speech as dialogue to speech as spectacle, asking how authenticity is reshaped within contemporary economies of influence. By photographing these performances, Ewe shifts his own position from speaker to active observer, audience member and surveillant, producing images in which voices are conspicuously absent while the act of speaking remains on display.

Working across performance, sculpture, photography and installation, Ewe frequently examines the relationship between language, public space and contemporary systems of power. His projects have transformed post-industrial landscapes, domestic interiors and urban environments into temporary stages through which questions of labour, bureaucracy, surveillance and collective behaviour are rehearsed. *To be, or not to be* continues this enquiry by treating theatre itself as a microcosm of public life, asking not simply what speech communicates, but how discourse is shaped by the conditions under which it is heard.

Philip Ewe (b. 1983, lives and works in London, UK), recent solo exhibitions and performances include *Confessions / what is in this room and why do you want it?*, St Giles Cripplegate, Barbican, London (2026); *The Fourth Wall*, Strange Field, Glasgow (2024); *Understudy*, Studio 3 Arts, London (2021); and *Capital T*, Bede House, London (2018); Sainsbury Centre, Norfolk (2026), *The Residents: Gerry's Pompeii*, London (2025), *The Participatory Clinic*, Glasgow Women's Library (2024), *A to Z*; Strange Field, Glasgow; *Highs & Lows*, the Royal Academy of Arts, London (2023), *In Search of the Repulsive Object*, South London Gallery (2023) and *Go Big or Go Home*; Peak Gallery, Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre, London, UK.

TINA is located on the first floor of 191 Wardour Street, London, W1F 8ZE. Unfortunately, there is no lift. Parking is a little tricky around Wardour Street so if you require parking assistance or if you have any other access requirements not listed here please be in touch Hana Noorali at the gallery; hana@tinaofficial.co.uk.