



Tariq Alvi, *Poster for a Library* (detail), 1995

## Press Release

### **'duh? Art & Stupidity'**

**Curated by Paul Clinton and Anna Gritz**

**10 November 2015 to 26 March 2016**

Tariq Alvi, BANK, Michael Bracewell, Archie & Edith Bunker, Werner Büttner & Albert Oehlen, Bonnie Camplin, Marc Camille Chaimowicz, Cecelia Condit, The Cockettes, Claude Faraldo, Gaylen Gerber, Ryan Gander, Isa Genzken, Judith Hopf, Larry Johnson, Erik van Lieshout, Kalup Linzy, Clunie Reid, Kim Schoen, Lily van der Stokker, Sturtevant, Annika Ström, Mario Garcia Torres, Rosemarie Trockel, Tomi Ungerer, Andy Warhol.

'duh?' looks at stupidity as a subject and a tactic of art making, with a particular focus on its relationship to the politics and performance of identity. High culture is meant to keep its audience from being stupid, but artists have repeatedly drawn upon stupidity, or playing stupid, as a form of dissidence, irreverence or as a means to cast off received thinking.

To work from a position of stupidity would appear to be a good way to counter knowingness and intellectual superiority, but how can artists adopt stupidity as a strategy without turning it into cleverness? Even if you don't play stupid, how do you make art about stupidity without declaring yourself to be smart? If certain forms of intellectualism, through being inflexible and unresponsive, appear stupid, and stupidity is therefore not opposed to intelligence; then what exactly is stupidity anyway?

The theme of stupidity readily invokes matters of intellectual superiority, class and sophistication, judgment and understanding, insult and exclusion, legitimate and illegitimate knowledge. In addition, this exhibition also explores less obvious aspects of stupidity in relation to language and representation, critique and appreciation, cliché and repetition, recognition and unintelligibility, certitude and selfhood and the very nature of thought.

*Developed from Paul Clinton's research into stupidity, art and identity. Paul is assistant editor of *frieze* and *Frieze Masters* magazines. Anna Gritz is Curator for Film and Performance at South London Gallery.*

## About Paul Clinton

Paul Clinton is a writer and is the assistant editor of *Frieze* and *Frieze Masters* magazines. He has taught on art, stupidity and queer theory at Goldsmiths College and the University of Manchester. In 2013 he edited a special issue of the philosophy and critical theory journal *parallax* on stupidity, and in 2014 the South London Gallery staged a day-long event around his research on this subject. In the same year he organised the conference *Shimmering World*, which featured presentations by artists Ed Atkins, David Panos and Hannah Sawtell. His catalogue essays include on the work of artists Bonnie Camplin, and Jacopo Miliani. Previous speaking engagements have taken place at the Frieze Art Fair, ICA, Tate Modern, Whitstable Biennale and Whitechapel Gallery, amongst other venues. He was also a founding member of the band No Bra, co-writing several songs on the album *Dance and Walk*, and with Patrick Wolf he formed the band Maison Crimenaux.

## About Anna Gritz

Anna Gritz is Curator for Film & Performance at the South London Gallery (SLG). She worked previously as the Associate Curator at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London; Assistant Curator at the Hayward Gallery, London; and Programs Director at apexart, New York. Recent curatorial projects include 'Sand in the Vaseline', Material Art Fair, Mexico City 2015; 'Kapwani Kiwanga', SLG 2014; 'Last Seen Entering the Biltmore', SLG 2014; 'Bonnie Camplin: The Military Industrial Complex', SLG 2014; 'Soundworks', ICA 2012; 'Lis Rhodes: Dissonance and Disturbance', ICA 2012. Forthcoming projects include Michael Smith, Juliette Blightman and Danai Anesiadou and a group show looking at acting and gender entitled 'The Making of Husbands'. Her writing has been included in *Art Monthly*; *Art Agenda*; *Frieze*; *Frieze d/e*; *Mousse* and *Cura*, exhibition catalogues and books. She is an Attaché for the 20th Biennale of Sydney.

## About Focal Point Gallery

Focal Point Gallery is south Essex's only publicly funded gallery for contemporary visual art. It currently produces up to seven major gallery exhibitions a year. Each programme includes a series of learning activities and aims to establish ongoing collaborations with international arts institutions and a wide range of local community groups.

The gallery is located on the ground floor of The Forum building in Elmer Square, a hundred yards from Southend Central Station. (Trains every fifteen minutes from London Fenchurch Street. Journey time fifty minutes.)

Focal Point Gallery is funded by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Arts Council England. The gallery also receives regular support from both organisations and additional funding from other trusts and foundations. This project has been made possible with the generous support of C2C, Park Inn Southend and LUX.