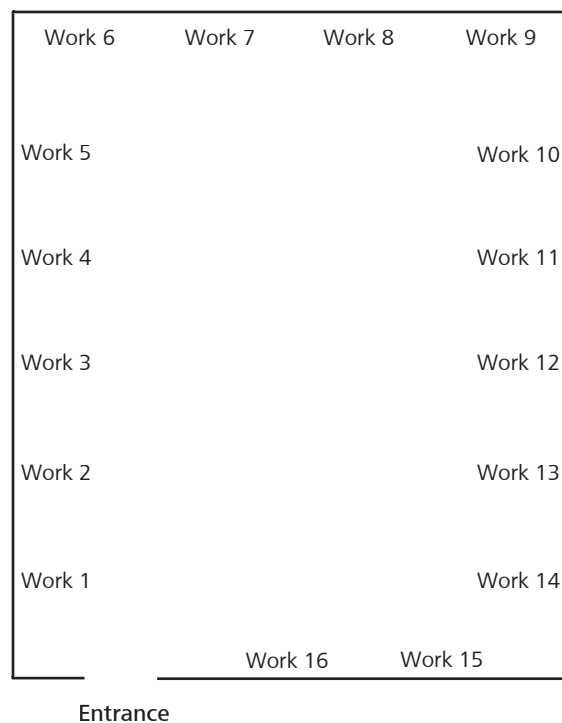


Gallery 1 Plan



1. Anne Seagrave & Manuel Vason, Collaboration #7, London, 2005
2. Marcela Levi & Manuel Vason, Collaboration #1, Birmingham, 2006
3. Francesca Steele & Manuel Vason, Collaboration #3, Newcastle, 2007
4. Paul Hurley and Manuel Vason, Collaboration #2, Bristol, 2006
5. Kira O'Reilly and Manuel Vason, Collaboration #5, London, 2005
6. Steven Cohen and Manuel Vason, Collaboration #8, La Rochelle, 2006
7. Alastair MacLennan and Manuel Vason, Collaboration #1, Belfast, 2006
8. Ernst Fischer and Manuel Vason, Collaboration #8, London, 2004
9. Ron Athey and Manuel Vason, Collaboration #3, Glasgow, 2006
10. Franko B and Manuel Vason, Collaboration #8, London, 2003
11. Miguel Pereira and Manuel Vason, Collaboration #2, Bristol, 2006
12. Veenus Vortex and Manuel Vason, Collaboration #5, London, 2006
13. Stuart Brisley and Manuel Vason, Collaboration #1, London, 2006
14. Monika Tichacek and Manuel Vason, Collaboration #1, Bristol, 2006
15. Alex Bradley and Manuel Vason, Collaboration #1, Bristol, 2006
16. Luiz de Abreu and Manuel Vason, Collaboration #2, Birmingham, 2006

Introduction to the exhibition

MANUEL VASON ENCOUNTERS

9 JUNE - 1 JULY 2007

Gallery 1

Manuel Vason's photographs result from collaborations between himself and other artists. The artists with whom Manuel Vason collaborates all share an interest in using their own bodies as their means of expression. Such work often challenges society's ideas, attitudes and representations of bodies. Vason's collaborative images reflect these extremes.

Performance events are developed to be experienced first hand. As the phrase goes, 'You had to be there'. Documenting such performances can be difficult. A photograph of a public performance may record some of what the event looked like, but it cannot represent the feelings or experience of being there.

Live art practices have often raised

questions about recording what happens: How can any document give a sense of the live experience? Can a performance be saved, recorded, documented or represented in any way? As soon as it is, it becomes something else: a photograph, a text or a memory.

Manuel Vason is interested in these difficulties of representation. Although photography is always seen as the most accurate way of recording an event, Vason shows how photography is also a tool of creation. Vason does not simply capture an image of a performance, he is involved with the artist in creating the ideas and then staging the image. In his images, Vason does not attempt to sum up a whole performance, but rather works closely with each artist to devise a new event; one staged specifically for the camera.

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The range of types of image in this exhibition is a reflection of the different collaborators. Each work suggests very different ideas and feelings about the body. In some cases the artists have stretched the edges of how we understand the body by performing extreme, sometimes painful, actions. As Manuel Vason tries to view the artist's work and ideas through their eyes, the audience can perhaps imagine what it is like to feel, look and be different from oneself.

In Vason's photographs, gesture, props and locations are all used to suggest ideas and feelings. The image of **LUIS DE ABREU (16)** is a powerful image of a naked man on top of a piano. De Abreu is a dancer. Here, he is gesturing as though proud and confident of his body, although his contortions also make him appear like an animal, or perhaps disabled. **ANNE SEAGRAVE's** gesture, **(1)** playing with both the fragility and the strength of an egg, appears melancholic, but the reason for her sadness is not clear.

Many of Manuel's collaborators also use theatrical devices and references within these images. The log in **MONIKA TICHACHEK (14)**, giraffe in **STEVEN COHEN (6)** and pig in **KIRA O'REILLY (5)** can be seen as props or perhaps even other performers within the image. What do these different objects say about the person in the image?

The place where the photograph is taken is very important in Vason's work, and says a lot about where the

artist in the picture sees their place in the world. Some are taken in enclosed spaces where the body seems large and dominating. Other are taken outside where the performer seems fragile in the natural landscape.

None of the performers have been photographed in darkened theatre settings, where performance normally takes place. Instead, each location has been carefully chosen. Some locations are celebrated such as the landfill site in **ALAISTAIR MACLENNAN (7)**, the cold, windswept beach in **PAUL HURLEY (4)** and the grandeur of the colonial style windows and piano in **LUIS DE ABREU (16)**. Other places are part-hidden or it is less obvious where they are such as in **MIGUEL PEREIRA (11)**, **ERNST FISCHER (8)** and **ANNE SEAGRAVE (1)**. Whatever the location in the pictures it is clear these are not intended as documents of the everyday, but are staged events where the location can have a new meaning.

The artists in Vason's photographs use these methods to explore a wide range of ideas: some are personal, some are political, some are religious. **FRANKO B (10)** stares out at us, his body painted white. The sadness in his eyes seems to remind us of what it is like to be just one person, immersed between love and pain. The photograph of **LUIS DE ABREU (16)** mixes up many preconceptions about race, beauty and sexuality. In the image of **RON ATHEY (9)**, the artist is displayed in a state of suffering. Is he a sacrifice or is he undergoing some form of ordeal in order to view the world in a new way?

Whilst the images Vason creates are often challenging, they sometimes refer to traditional artforms. The pose of the naked body in the image of **FRANCESCA STEELE (3)** is very similar to paintings of the goddess Venus produced throughout the history of painting. **STUART BRISLEY (13)** is pictured in his studio as many romantic painters were, surrounded by the tools and clutter of his trade. **MIGUEL PEREIRA (11)**, covered in black feathers against a white wall looks like a living abstract painting. All of the images have a sense of rich colour and composition that link them to painted images created in the past.

In Manuel Vason's images, the viewer can see a number of performances. There is the initial performance that was the inspiration for the collaboration. There is also the performance undertaken by the photographer and the artist. In many of the images it is clear that this is a moment in time – a fragment of a much longer event. **RON ATHEY (9)** reveals a moment as a performance reaches a climactic conclusion. In **ERNST FISCHER (8)** the artist is covered in sawdust, captured just as his cigarette is almost burnt out. It's as though a moment has been selected and a frame put around it.

Vason is also interested in the performance that viewers imagine as they look at these photographs; how viewing the images itself becomes a performance. What led up to this moment? What happened afterwards? At these moments, the artist says, the

photographs become performances. In this exhibition, the arrangement of triggered, theatrical-style lighting and a red carpet walkway around the gallery emphasises the experience of looking at these works as a performance in itself.

The sound helps to define the area. Creating vibration that circulates through the walls of the gallery as if to eliminate the source. It is present but is not invasive.

See the reverse of this guide for information on artwork titles and collaborators

This guide is intended as an introduction to the exhibition. Please feel free to ask a Steward any questions you have.

There is more information in the Reading Room on the Second Floor which is open everyday 12.00 - 6.00pm.

A discussion between Manuel Vason and Helen Cole, Arnolfini's Producer (Live Art and Dance) can be found on Arnolfini's website.

More information about Manuel Vason can be found at www.artcollaboration.co.uk