

SPREEUFER

Anticolonial Exhibition and Action Space
Spreeufer 6, 10178 Berlin-Nikolaiviertel

PRESS RELEASE

Sonia Boyce

How (not) to present a collection: A re-presentation of One of Six Acts - Ain't Misbehavin' (2018/2022) curated by Ina Wudtke

EXHIBITION: October 29 - November 27, 2022

OPENING: Friday, October 28, 2022, 7 p.m.

OPENING HOURS: Fri, Sa, Su 2-7 p.m.

& by appointment: studio@inawudtke.com or cell: +491734383194



Photo credit: Sonia Boyce, *Six Acts* - Lasana Shabazz in front of a Shakespeare portrait in whiteface, 2018

For her 2018 project *Six Acts*, British artist Sonia Boyce organized a takeover of the Manchester Art Gallery. Like many of her works, it was unknown to the artist, the film crew and the hosting institution what shape the evening would take. Boyce invited performer* Lasana Shabazz, along with the drag collective Family Gorgeous, the Manchester Art Gallery staff and an invited audience to comment on the paintings. She then developed a six-channel video work with the title *Six Acts* from the documentation of the event for a solo exhibition at Manchester Art Gallery.

For her Berlin exhibition *How (not) to present a collection: A re-presentation of One of Six Acts - Ain't Misbehavin' (2018/2022)* at Spreeufer, Sonia Boyce extracted Lasana Shabazz's performance from the larger video work, re-edited it, and created a two-channel video work

titled *Ain't Misbehavin'*, now on view in Berlin for the first time. *Ain't Misbehavin'* switches between three moving image modes: the surveillance camera (often positioned high up and detached from view); the hand-held camera (the aesthetics of which shrinks the distance between the viewer and the action unfolding); and animation (where a suspension of realism is generally understood). Images from the animations are extended by Boyce into a wallpaper repeat pattern in front of which the two videos run. The wallpaper is one out of a series of conceptual wallpapers that Sonia Boyce has designed in recent years.

Lasana Shabazz begins the performance in front of a portrait of a black man, the first work of art to enter the collection of the Manchester Art Gallery. The painting by James Northcote *Othello, The Moor of Venice* (1826) was originally titled 'The Moor' meaning 'The Black'. Its title was changed after museum curators discovered that it was a portrait of the celebrated 19th-century Shakespearean actor Ira Aldridge, who had a prolific career first in the US where he was born, and then in the UK. Shabazz appears in drag, a performative form that is often associated with Shakespearean theatre when females were forbidden to publicly appear on stage and, instead, males played female roles. Aldridge, as a performer, was also known to appear as a black-face minstrel – a racist caricature of African Americans typically performed by white actors – as well as deliver white-face performances when he played white characters on stage. Shabazz interacts with the invited audience, who are coerced to respond to his familiar gendered and racist quotes of British conventions over the course of the performance.

Sonia Boyce OBE RA was born in London in 1962, where she continues to live and work. In 2019, the artist received an OBE for services to art in the Queen's New Year Honours List, as well as an Honorary Doctorate from the Royal College of Art. In 2016, Boyce was elected a Royal Academician, and received a Paul Hamlyn Artist Award. Between 2012 and 2017, Boyce was Professor of Fine Art at Middlesex University, and since 2014 she has been Professor at the University of the Arts London as the inaugural Chair of Black Art & Design, where she directed a three-year research project into Black Artists and Modernism, which resulted in the BBC documentary *Whoever Heard of a Black Artist? Britain's Hidden Art History* (2018). Recent solo exhibitions include: *Feeling Her Way*, British Pavilion, 59th International Art Exhibition-La Biennale di Venezia 2022 - winner of the Golden Lion for Best National Participation (2022); *In the Castle of My Skin*, Eastside Projects, Birmingham (2020) and Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA), Middlesbrough (2021); *Sonia Boyce*, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester (2018); *Sonia Boyce – We move in her way*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (2017); and, *Paper Tiger Whisky Soap Theatre (Dada Nice)*, Villa Arson, Nice, France (2016).

Ina Wudtke (*1968) lives in Berlin. Her research-based work questions hegemonic political-social discourses and strengthens counter-discourses on topics such as gender, labor, city and colonialism. She has (co-)curated exhibitions at Kunstraum Niederösterreich (Vienna), Kunsthalle (Hamburg), Radialsystem (Berlin), Beursschouwburg (Brussels) among others.

A program by **BARAZANI.berlin – Forum Kolonialismus und Widerstand**, an initiative that emerged from the coalition **Decolonize Berlin e.V.**

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