

TINTYPE

BENCH

Assemble | Helen Barff | Adam Clarke | Anna Lucas | Michael Simpson |
Richard Wentworth | Joby Williamson | Madalina Zaharia

21 January – 13 February 2016

A bench offers a place of temporary privacy in the public sphere – on a street, in a park, at a railway or bus station, in an art gallery or museum. There is something democratic and generous about a bench – they're free to use, they're utilitarian. You don't particularly notice benches, but you notice if they're not there.

Sitting on a bench is a transient stop. On the way somewhere, in between here and there, a place to pause. You can be private on a bench – to eat a sandwich, to rest or wait, or to just sit and watch.

Sitting on a bench also presents social possibilities, the chance to strike up a conversation with a stranger or interact with passing people. A bench is an inherently shared or shareable space, an encounter waiting to happen.

BENCH features two actual benches – one by ASSEMBLE made for Tintype's **Essex Road II** screenings that immediately preceded this show; and a flat-pack bench by Adam Clarke. Assemble's bench had to be made cheaply, quickly and needed to be robust – so is based on an RSJ, a common industrial staple of the building trade, but customised to echo details from the nearby art deco ex-Carlton Cinema on Essex Road.

HELEN BARFF's work explores how materials are shaped by temporality, and ways in which memory become embedded in matter; "I am interested in the weight associated with sitting on a bench. The bodily weight. To stop at that place and be weighted down to earth. The pull down to the earth." She has made a series of sculptural casts that negotiate the imprint of body and bench: "a sculptural bodily seat, made from negative space of the bench."

ADAM CLARKE's bench is part of his initiative to reinvigorate the Boosbeck scheme from the 1920s when artist William Franks taught unemployed miners in the North East to make Bauhaus style furniture. New Boosbeck Industries is a long-term public commission supported by Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art and uses new technologies to work with the public to design and produce furniture. Like Assemble, Clarke is interested in linking craft, art, design and integrating them into pragmatic social projects.

ANNA LUCAS works with film and photography. For **Bench** she has created a storyboard of still images. Although there are very few people in these scenarios, they hint at forms of collective activity recently undertaken, perhaps abandoned. The images are elusive and unsettling; rural benches not urban – benches as places to view nature – sometimes carefully, sometimes casually placed in a pastoral setting.

MICHAEL SIMPSON's monumental series of Bench paintings (1989 – 2009) offer a sombre, meditative interpretation of the bench as a place of waiting; waiting for judgment, waiting for death. The Bench series, like most of Simpson's work, is a critique of the cruelty of organised religion. His preparatory drawings – nine of which are in this show – have a light, intuitive touch and show the artist experimenting with significant details of placing, symmetry, and repetition.

Improvised placement is a leitmotif RICHARD WENTWORTH's work. His recent book **Making Do and Getting By** is a record of his observations of human actions, the marks and traces left on the urban landscape. Happenstance, the public and the private, exchange and sharing, fuel his curiosity; "So these pictures record a moment of my inquisitiveness, if you like, they're a trace of something. They're encounters; they're not sought out."

The flotsam and jetsam of everyday life is also the source for many of JOBY WILLIAMSON's artworks and installations, raising questions about the significance of things we choose to keep and to cast off. His approach to **Bench** is akin to an archeologist's, investigating the structural elements of old, abandoned benches.

MADALINA ZAHARIA focuses on theatrical moments in time: memories and gestures that illuminate the effect of politics on everyday life. Zaharia's piece for **Bench** references the familiar art-historical image of a reclining Venus, and a prop designed by Robert Wilson for his 1989 staging of Doctor Faustus (Manzoni's opera version). This red lacquered day-bed is used by Esmeralda as a platform for both resting and pursuing her bodily passions.

Anna Lucas's work is distributed by LUX
Michael Simpson is represented by David Risley Gallery
Richard Wentworth is represented by Lisson Gallery

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