

Karen Finley

09 September - 30 October 2021



INSTALLATION SHOT, COLLECTION OF FINLEY WORKS, 2021

Karen Finley and New Art Projects director Fred Mann were introduced by Lyall Hakaria, when Finley took part in *Punish the Streets*, an exhibition he curated at New Art Projects that celebrated a decade of vFd in Dalston and highlighted the influences that flow between club culture, performance, art and fashion. The title '*Punish the Streets*' referred to transgressive bodies and cultures that challenge societies norms.

During the recent series of lockdowns, Karen Finley and Fred Mann have held online discussions. These talks have covered a series of topics, been wide-ranging and explored the places where they meet and often concur. Since the late 1980s there have been personal and cultural moments and events and movements to which they have both responded, and that have activated them both. In Finley's case as an artist and in Mann's case as a gallerist and curator. Both Mann and Finley also work as arts educators and have found common ground and on-going connections across these disturbing and fluctuating contemporary times.

Their discussions have resulted in a series of projects between Karen Finley and Fred Mann at New Art Projects, the first of which is a September-October pop up project of her newest works on paper that debate the here and now. During the lockdown(s) while based in Provincetown, Finley has created a series of text-based works on paper that she has painted on found materials. Her words, observations, and tributes appear on historical printed pages that show everything from Alice in Wonderland to card tricks and flowers.

For this initial show, her works cover primary themes: War and Conflict, Covid, vaccines and pandemic illness, personal and global mental well being, healing, love and loss. In 'War on Terror' her painted writing covers pages from 'stunts with cards'. In 'The Overwhelmingness' the pages of a floral calendar mark time. In a series of single sheet works on paper, the inner emotional turmoil of loss, and political despair is represented in works like 'Toxic Unmaskulinity', 'Spiralling Out of Control' and 'Increasingly Anxious'.

Karen Finley observes "This work responds to the events and conditions of the world while navigating the pandemic. The emotional uprising, the fatigue and contemplation express the internal struggles, the absurdity and policy of a world in chaos. There is the war, climate change, and the mask politics.

Painting words and phrases with black ink on found images act as an exclamation as resistance. My words perform as graffiti, as protest by altering over the subtext of the underlying message. This alteration of messing up the information is inspired by the playwright Joe Orton who would remove books from the library and then scrawl messages on covers and pages. In my work at times the words bleed into the background, or the cursive design handwriting gives an emotional urgency and absurdity to the statements."

Karen Finley (born 1956) is an American performance artist, musician and poet. She has employed her performances, visual art works, recordings, and books to express her activism and to comment on social and political issues of our time. Her work has intellectually employed both nudity and profanity incorporating depictions of sexuality, abuse, and has represented her AIDS and HIV activism. She is currently professor at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University.

Her publications include: Shock Treatment, Enough Is Enough: Weekly Meditations for Living Dysfunctionally, the Martha Stewart satire Living It Up: Humorous Adventures in Hyperdomesticity, Pooh Unplugged (detailing the eating and psychological disorders of Winnie the Pooh and his friends), and A Different Kind of Intimacy – a latter collection of her works. Her poem "The Black Sheep" is among her best-known works.

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