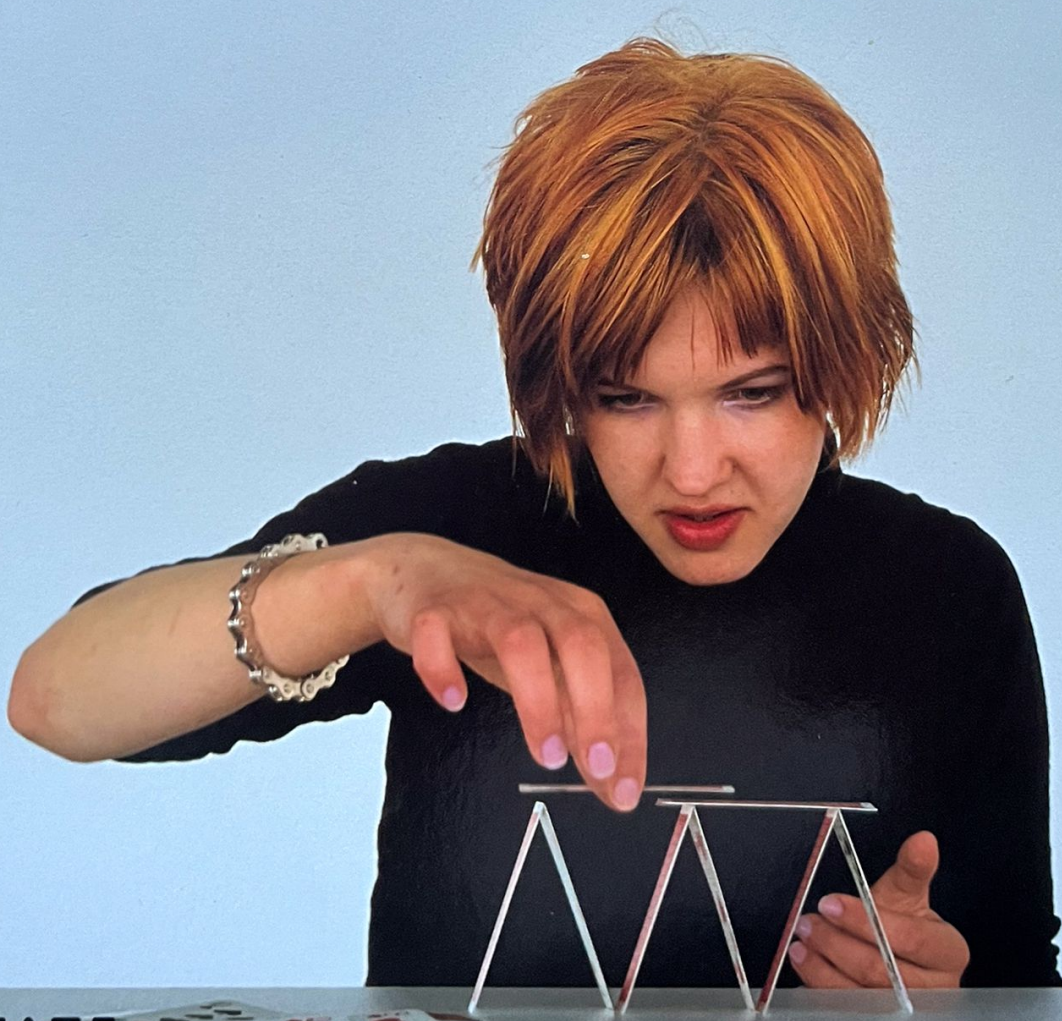


# Intelligence New British Art 2000

Virginia Button and Charles Esche



TATE

cover: Hilary Lloyd,  
*Monika* 2000, production still  
(detail). Courtesy the artist

frontispiece (fig.1):  
Graham Gussin, *Spill* 1999,  
16mm film still (detail).  
Artist's collection

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fig.47 'Dani and Diego', *The Hottest Sun, The Darkest Hour* 1999, 16mm film still. Courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London



fig.48 'Portrait of Daniela', *The Hottest Sun, The Darkest Hour* 1999, 16mm film still. Courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London



'Afternoon', *The Hottest Sun, The Darkest Hour* 1999, 16mm film still. Courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London

The text flirts outrageously with the viewer as the woman's eyelashes are compared, for instance, to 'a small carefully constructed crowd scene that has two or three spies concealed in it'. Music and text pile on charm from which the imagery at first seems guilelessly free. What initially presents itself as an analysis of seductiveness, gradually becomes an act of seduction'.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years, Irvine has begun to group films together, creating more complex narrative possibilities and interconnections. For example, *The Hottest Sun, The Darkest Hour: A Romance* shown in 1999 at the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, comprises five loosely related black and white films. These were made over a two-year period, between London and Italy, where the artist is now mostly resident, and can be read as meditations on the nature of intimacy, memory and the seductions – and estrangements – of language. Typically, they are redolent of another time and other places. However, Irvine's preferred distancing devices of the accented voice-over and worn black and white image are here offset by a cumulative sense of raw emotion and sensuality.

<sup>1</sup> Jaki Irvine quoted in *IMMA/Glen Dimplex Artists Award*, exh. cat., Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 1996, p.10.  
<sup>2</sup> Caoimhin Mac Giolla Léith, 'Jaki Irvine: The Project Arts Centre', *Flash Art*, Nov.-Dec. 1996, p.109.

## OLADÉLÉ AJIBOYÉ BAMGBOYÉ

For those of us who dare to desire differently ... the issue of race and representation ... is about transforming the image, creating alternatives, asking ourselves questions about what types of images subvert, pose critical alternatives, and transform our worldviews and move us away from dualistic thinking about good and bad.<sup>1</sup>

Oladélé Ajiboyé Bamgboyé is one of a number of British artists of Nigerian origin or descent to have emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, including the late Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Yinka Shonibare, Chris Ofili and Olu Oguibe. The latter has described how these artists have embraced their dual identity as a positive condition:

These artists do not perceive themselves as cultural ambassadors any more than do their Western contemporaries. They reject the burden of ancestry and ethnicity as a matter of fact. Having come through multiple circumstances, they lay claim to the entirety of their experiences and consider themselves as much part of their societies of relocation as any others. Among their contemporaries, they suffer the affliction of never being discussed without some reference, no matter how benign, to their 'stranger status' ... To contend with such circumstances, these artists carry with them a pronounced sense of self-awareness and clarity, and determination to ensure that they are at home in the world.<sup>2</sup>

This appears to be true of Bamgboyé, whose work is informed by a subtle and idiosyn-

cratic spirit of enquiry. Using himself as a subject, in his early photographs he attempted to convey a sense of disjuncture between his body and its surroundings, his contorted figure at odds with the reassuring normality of a domestic environment. He began making films in 1993 and during the mid-1990s produced a number of short films that investigate the nature of subjectivity within society. *Spells for Beginners*, made in 1994 but shown for the first time in *Intelligence*, is a quietly affecting 16mm film featuring himself and Scottish artist Anne Rome Elliot, with whom he had a long relationship. The couple appear separately in a sequence of shots – she in a domestic space, head in hands, or outside against a blank white background of snow; he seated on a sofa, then naked and taking a bath. These images are viewed in conjunction with their tense and painful (unscripted) conversation, which gropes towards some understanding of why their relationship ought to be familiar, forming as it does the staple content of women's magazines, TV chat shows and docu-soaps. But *Spells For Beginners* is altogether more poignant, exposing the complex meshing of individual experience with the strictures and prejudices circulating