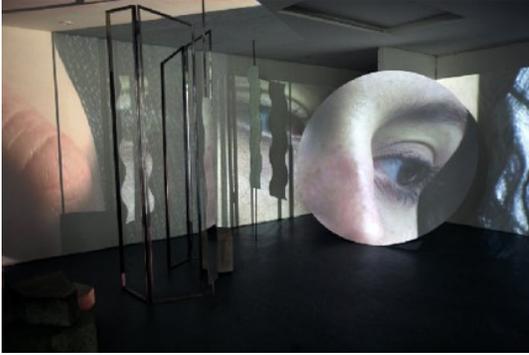


## Converse Highlight of the Week: Ilona Sagar



ARTS+CULTURE - INCOMING

**The RCA graduate and Converse Emerging Artists Award entrant dissects how people interact in public and private spaces**

13th July 2012

Text Susanna Davies-Crook

**PRADA**

### Converse Highlight of the Week: Ilona Sagar

9 IMAGES



Our final submission for the [Converse Emerging Artists Award](#) comes from Ilona Sagar, freshly graduated from Richard Wentworth's Sculpture MA at the Royal College of Art. Moving to London for her BA at Goldsmiths, Sagar initially wanted to go into theatre or directing but in art found a more 'fluid' way to communicate, working with language abstractly and employing 'the notion of theatre as a material'. She collaborates with dancers, choreographers, writers and architects 'trespassing' on other disciplines in her expanded sculptural practice. In the three screen installation 'Unsound House', she explores 'sensory saturation' in an exploration of the language of the mediocre and 'the semiotics present in the architecture and design of a show home'.

**The shared codes of the museum, gallery, civic space, church and theatre and virtual realm have become the foundations of my practice because they demonstrate a clarity of spatial and social structure which can be universally understood**

**Dazed Digital: What would you say your work is about?**

**Ilona Sagar:** My work explores our shared interactions in both public and private space. I often use the processes involved in making to construct a sense of fractured narrative. The shared codes of the museum, gallery, civic space, church and theatre and virtual realm have become the foundations of my practice because they demonstrate a clarity of spatial and social structure which can be universally understood. Illusion and material [dis]honesty set the stage for works which seek to seduce...

**DD: Describe your process...**

**Ilona Sagar:** I always approach making new work, first through thinking intuitively about space I'm considering and its context. I'm fascinated by the bond between the physical, sculptural form and the less tangible effects of video, photography and performance. Audio acts as both a dislocation and a connecting element which has a profound impact on our physical and cognitive experience of the world.

**DD: Your influences?**

**Ilona Sagar:** Alvar Aalto, *Gottfried Semper*, Ikea, Bauhaus, Anna Minton, 'London nobody knows' - Norman Cohen, Cathedrals and Show homes

**DD: Best artist of all time?**

**Ilona Sagar:** I couldn't possibly choose one. I admire many artists who and are legendary in different ways; Dan Graham, Yvonne Rainer, John Smith, Roni Horn, Ryan Trecartin, Paul McCarthy, Andrea Fraser to name a few greats...

**DD: Best show you've seen in the last six months?**

**Ilona Sagar:** Christina Mackie 'Painting the Weights' at *The Chisenhale has stuck with me*. Mackie used the interface between scientific arguments and their virtual illustration as a way of inhabiting a number of artistic strategies.

**DD: If you could be represented by any gallery?**

**Ilona Sagar:** There are galleries who I really admire curatorially, who support interesting artists and put on shows which are challenging rather than being purely commercially driven. Galleries like Matt's Gallery, Chisenhale and even *Hauser & Wirth*.

**DD: Your dream show?**

**Ilona Sagar:** My impossible dream show would be to make something inside the Villa Savoye near Paris when it was abandoned 1940's. Back to the present, I'd like to return to the Barbican Estate, as I feel I have unfinished business there.

**DD: Your next project?**

**Ilona Sagar:** I am in the initial stages of a commission for the Architectural Association in London. The film will be screened as a part of their research and arts programme and is supported by the Architecture Journal (AJ). In November I will be doing a residency and publication launch at the Villa Arson in Nice, I'm also working toward a project at Frieze Art Fair.

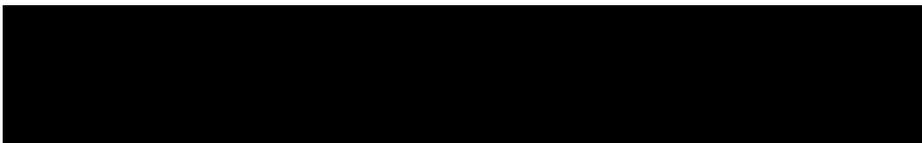
**DD: If money was no object?**

**Ilona Sagar:** That would be nice! I would buy a 1930's art deco garage and turn it into an amazing studio/ house and exhibition space. I found one... I just don't have the pennies to buy it!

**DD: Why you get up in the morning?**

**Ilona Sagar:** Because I really enjoy what I do. Even when things get difficult, I can't really imagine doing anything else.

**More info on the Converse Emerging Artists Award [HERE](#)**



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## The unashamedly queer, feminist, and intersectional play you need to see





A promotional image for *Collective Rage* by Jen Silverman

ARTS+CULTURE - FEATURE

## Jen Silverman's *Collective Rage* explores what can happen when women of all kinds reject the categorisations so often thrust upon them

29th January 2018

Text Tom Rasmussen

### Collective Rage

25 IMAGES



"Let me just put it this way: there are a lot more plays about straight men trying to figure out how to be happy than there are plays about queer women trying to do anything. I wrote *Collective Rage* because I was tired of waiting for someone else to write the thing I needed to see."

Jen Silverman's play, fully entitled *Collective Rage: A Play in 5 Betties; in essence, a queer and occasionally hazardous exploration; do you remember when you were in Middle School and you read about Shackleton and how he explored the Antarctic?; imagine the Antarctic as a Pussy and it's sort of like that*, is about to be staged in London for the first time, at the Southwark Playhouse.

It's a queer epic of sorts, and that epic is led by five totally different women – each with the same name, a reference to a classical femme persona such as Betty Boop – on a mission to get in touch with "the source of their power". Whether that's their own vagina, their somewhat hidden queerness, their understanding of love, their class and self-worth, or their physical strength – as played out by a wealthy upper-side woman beating the shit out of a punch bag – *Collective Rage* explores what can happen when women of all kinds reject the categorisations so often thrust upon them.

**"Living in the US right now, it's clear to me that we can't afford to be invisible when our civil rights are at stake" – Jen Silverman**

It's unashamedly queer, feminist, and intersectional: viewpoints which mainstream theatre so obliquely lacks. "I think it's crucial to have queer female stories onstage and onscreen," Silverman tells us. "We are so often erased. A space has been carved out (to a degree) for the gay male experience, aided by brilliant plays like *Angels in America* or TV like the seminal *Queer As Folk* – but queer women have for so long been folded into other people's stories, if we get stage or screen-time at all. I think we've

reached a moment in which visibility is key to justice – for protagonists of colour as well as queer female protagonists, and all the many intersections of queerness, femaleness, and colour.”

But the characters in Silverman’s play don’t just perform expected notions of rejected femininity. The whole point – from the casting, which very specifically asks for women of different ethnicities and gender presentations, to the journey each character goes on – takes the audience from the macro stereotypes we are all guilty of applying to different women, eventually exposing the nuance of each woman’s experience, revealing totally new aspects of each one along the way. *Collective Rage* destroys our world and sets out to reimagine a new one, one in which these five women are at the centre, and are allowed space to totally blow open their roles within society.

Genesis Lynea – a queer butch woman of colour – who plays Bettie 5 – a genderqueer, masculine of centre, black lesbian who owns a boxing gym – explains how rare it is for a role to even exist which is any bit like her. “I love it. I love it. It’s what I wish I could be like – I wish I could have tattoos and be so cool, and I wish I could be a boxer and have this cool boxing gym, I wish I could identify as a gender-nonconforming female-bodied masculine individual. But she’s close to me really, and it’s so rare to feel like you can be celebrated for playing a part who is just like you.”

The radically queer play is being set in a mainstream space for a purpose. “Living in the US right now, it’s clear to me that we can’t afford to be invisible when our civil rights are at stake,” Silverman adds. “If the mainstream doesn’t see us, how can it care about our rights being taken away? People care about injustice when they have seen and acknowledged the people it’s happening to. There are so many reasons for queer artists to make queer work right now, but this is one.”



*Collective Rage* is not necessarily just for the consumption of queer people – something which Silverman, the cast and Antic Face – the theatre company who are staging the run – are quick to assure. “This is a play about female-bodied experience written by a queer woman – and it’s for everyone to engage with. This should not be a radical statement, and the two are *not* mutually exclusive,” Emma Hall, the producer bringing the play to this side of the Atlantic, explains.

While, like so many industries, theatre is having somewhat of an upheaval in the wake of Weinstein, it’s often the case that people pay lip service to the idea of diversity, with very little action materialising. *Collective Rage* takes everything you know about classic theatre, fucks it up and flips the table.

**“Every woman I know has had a box checked for her by someone else: ‘This is who you are based on what you look like.’ Myself included” – Jen Silverman**

While so much mainstream theatre is so often afraid to tread near the lines of work that is outwardly feminist or queer, *Collective Rage* refuses to shrink – asking more of its audience rather than less of the material. On the production side of things, the cast mirror the Betties – with queer people, people of colour, and women of different body types and ages embodying these manifold characters and their experiences. As a queer person it's so uncommon to see respect for casting characters who are supposed to reflect a queer experience – look at Timothee Chalamet and Armie Hammer, or any other film or play featuring a gay or queer lead and you'll most often find a heterosexual person playing your experience (not so) bravely.

But Silverman, her Betties, and Antic Face are asking their audience to see past their categories and into the nuance and subtext of these queer women from five wildly different vantage points.

"Every woman I know has had a box checked for her by someone else: 'This is who you are based on what you look like.' Myself included," Silverman finishes. "The play is about what happens when we started questioning the boxes into which we've been put – boxes we've perhaps complicitly (or naively) operated within."

[See \*Collective Rage\* at the Southwark Playhouse Large from 24th January – 17th February 2018](#)



Collective Rage Images courtesy of Antic Face

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