

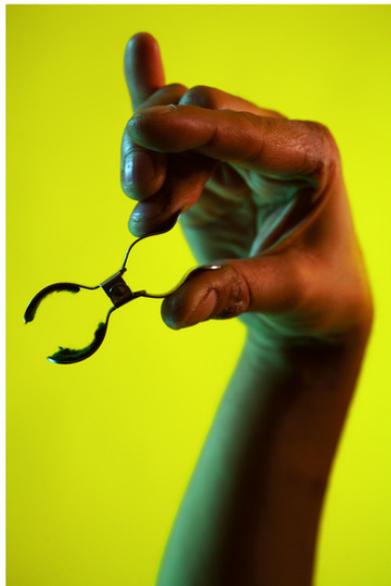


Artist-led writing and dialogue.

SEARCH

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## 071. Ilona Sagar



Ilona Sagar, Constant Object (Series).

Ilona Sagar's work spans performance, film, and assemblage and responds to the social, historical and cultural contexts that dictate the spaces we inhabit, both private and public. *Traction* meets the London-based artist to hear about her latest projects.

You recently teamed up with SPUR Leeds to present work as part of Tate Britain's Radio City. This is rather a unique platform - can you tell us a little about your approach to it?

Yeah, it was a really interesting invitation. Radio City was a programme of participatory radio, sound art, performance and broadcast at Tate Britain. SPUR took over all of the internal intercom systems to broadcast artist's text works. They selected my text 'Soft Addictions'\* and it was read over the gallery attendance radios. Normally when I am working with spoken word, I record professional actors and alter the spatial and rhythmic dynamics of the recording in post-production. It was the first time that I have given over control of the delivery of a text I have written. It was a liberating experience, hearing the crackly speakers echoing through the galleries was really inspiring and gave a fresh reading to the work.



Ilona Sagar, I fell back and you were there, Hayward Gallery, London.

In pieces such as 'I fell back and you were there\*\*', at Hayward Gallery's iconic Waterloo Sunset Pavilion, your work responds directly to the setting in which it is realised. To what degree is a performance or happening such as this site specific? Could it be restaged elsewhere?

The piece that was commissioned by the Hayward Gallery this summer was possibly the most site-specific work that I have made to date. It was a challenging performance to produce and I was lucky to work with a really supportive curatorial team. The piece responded to the presence of Dan Graham's Waterloo Sunset Pavilion as well as Simone Forti's choreographic movements and writings. In the 60s and 70s, they both collaborated on a number of live works. I was struck by the idea that the site resonated with such heavyweights in the history of performance and I wanted to address that in some way. Because of the very specific history and context that the work dealt with, it would be a difficult work to perform elsewhere.



Ilona Sagar, I fell back and you were there, Hayward Gallery, London.

When I am making work, whether it's a performance, film or installation, I tend to draw from the context in which the work will be on show. I am interested in how a place frames the body. The history, design and social role that architecture plays is an important aspect of my practice, but this doesn't necessarily make the work always site-specific. A good example of this is my recent show at Assembly Passage. Working with a group of participants untrained in dance, the piece scaled the choreography to the specific proportions implicit in a domestic space and was a departure from my work with professional dancers. *Prosopopeia:Manual:Hand:Book\*\*\** used gestures and body movement to examine our multi-faceted relationship to design syntaxes, as an instance of technology and flesh. I have since performed the work at Firstsite Gallery, Essex which is the antithesis of where the work was originally performed. It is a large contemporary art centre designed by architect Rafael Vinoly and a cavernous, bombastic space. *P:MHB* resonated with it is a very different way to the human scale of the house but was equally powerful.



Ilona Sagar, *Prosopopeia:Manual:Hand:Book*, Assembly Passage Project, London.

Is there a particular work, book or text that has been key to the development of your practice?

I wouldn't say there are any specific, but there are writers that have stuck with me such as Howard Barker and Samuel Beckett. I've just started reading 'Shopping in Jail' by Douglas Coupland. I remember reading 'Generation X' as a teenager and his writing still feels very relevant to me. I have also recently been reading a lot around Heidegger's physiology of the Tool Body which features in *Being and Time*. We have an increasing complex relationship to the designed objects and technologies that we rely on and absorb into our interactions and social bodies. It's a hard topic to cover without falling into cliché or science fiction, and I enjoy the challenge of trying to address these conditions within my practice.

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