

LUKE FOWLER

The Nine Monads of David Bell

Living and working in Glasgow, Luke has become known for his portraits of marginalised figures and radical, social experiments. The installation "The Nine Monads of David Bell" consists of a new body of work that departs from Luke Fowler's earlier film "What you see is where you're at" (2001), a portrait of the Kingsley Hall community (1965-69) set up by maverick psychiatrist; RD Laing and the Philadelphia Association to offer a place of refuge for those who were disturbed, distressed or mad. This beacon of the anti-psychiatry movement provided a counter model to the mental institution, breaking down notions of treatment and the doctor/patient hierarchy. The film is a collage of new and 'found' archived sound/films, providing an insight into the experiences of the residents of Kingsley Hall, re-appraising its relevance in our contemporary society, characterised by our predominant use of the medical model as a form of social control.

"The Nine Monads Of David Bell" is a further investigation into the world of David Bell, one of Kingsley Hall's most poetic and verbose residents. David Bell was a mathematician who moved to London in the 1950's to work as a computer programmer. After being rejected by his girlfriend Bell's eccentric behaviour became alarming and he was sectioned. This led to his move to Kingsley Hall and befriending of Dr. Leon Redler, a young American Psychiatrist who came to London to work with Laing. Despite the local mental hospital's characterization of Bell's language as pure "schizophrenese", at Kingsley Hall his words were valued and documented. Further documents of David Bell, who died in the ninties, were preserved by Dr. Leon Redler, material on which the present installation is based.

The central component of this installation is a sound installation lasting fifty minutes. This material has been edited from tapes recorded between 1965 and 1976 at Kingsley Hall and later at Leon Redler's private practice. Luke Fowler structured the material in order to highlight a linear representation of the changing states of David Bell. While the first

part documents David in various social situations around Kingsley Hall, the second half focuses on internal struggles between his three distinct personages, "he", "she", and "boy". The last section offers a stark contrast to this; here we find him under strong medication and in therapy with Redler, offering a lucid, yet lackluster self-reflection of his behaviour over the years.

The transferred Super 8 film displayed on a monitor shows a recent film which Fowler made with amateur actors re-enacting the dreams of David Bell. Memories of these dreams were also recorded on tape. Fowler has depicted four dream sequences. In the first one David describes how he encounters a man while he is swimming. In the next scene, he takes tea and biscuits to a ship's engineer, who appears to be the same man he saw whilst swimming. In the second dream, David and "boy", one of his personages, are standing on a bridge, later on "boy" is found tormenting a fish he has just caught. David attempts to vow the fish back into the water by means of telekinesis. The third is a cyclic journey in which David is found digging a ditch, upon meeting "boy" a journey begins, from an empty house to a building site and then returning to the ditch, which upon arrival fills with water. In the last dream depicted, the pair are seen in a gallery, "boy" demands David to take paintings off the wall. That night David witnesses "boy" following a rabbi, forcing him to ingest a poisonous plant, the cactus Euphorbia.

The photographic documentation is comprised of three series. The first shows a series of newspapers which David Bell has used as writing paper and on which appears juxtapositions between the articles, advertisements and David's own notes. The second series shows extracts from a loose leaf notebook of David's. The final series are photographs taken at Archways Community, the Philadelphia Association's successor to Kingsley Hall. The photographs depict David and his fellow residents in various social situations. These photographs were taken by Mike Yokum, resident and caretaker at Archways Community. The exhibition also features two miscellaenous handwritten cards and a passport which David has defaced.

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Installation of sound, film and archive materials, 2006-2007