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#MARKWALLINGERMARK #fruitmarketgallery



The
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MARK WALLINGER MARK

Until 4 June

Mon–Sat 11am–6pm, Sun 11am–5pm. **Free entry**

British artist Mark Wallinger (b.1959, Chigwell) has been making art since the early 1980s. This exhibition focuses on the part of his practice that scrutinises ideas around individual, social and political identity. In his work, such matters come into focus as he asks what it means to put one's name to something, to stand up and say 'I'. *MARK WALLINGER MARK* includes work made from 2003 to the present, and presents the artist's most recent exploration of identity as it is both affected by, and expressed through, gesture, symbol, creed and nation. In keeping with the artist's interest in puns and dead end linguistic games, the exhibition title asserts the idea of the artist's mark, and it reflects the symmetry of the exhibition's staging in two parts, one here at The Fruitmarket Gallery and one at Dundee Contemporary Arts.

Wallinger's *Self Portraits* (2007–14), ten of which are shown here, take the form of capital letter 'I's in different fonts, styles and sizes. These canvases are not an exercise in narcissism, and are not self portraits in any traditional sense, since they neither look like nor tell us anything more about the man. Rather, they reveal the symbols that we all use to represent ourselves as individuals. One says 'I' to proceed a verb, to announce a self-performed action.

MARK WALLINGER MARK is a collaboration between Serlachius Museums, Mänttä, The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh and Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee.

The other part of *MARK WALLINGER MARK* is on display at Dundee Contemporary Arts until 4 June 2017.

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Self-assertion becomes collective in **According to Mark** (2010) which, with its one hundred chairs, suggests a congregation or audience either united or being indoctrinated in a belief or cause. The threads tying each chair to a central eye bolt in the wall create a focal point, whilst also seeming to radiate outwards. The work is a three-dimensional reconstruction of a perspectival drawing, the bolt taking the place of the vanishing point. On the back of each chair the word MARK is simultaneously the artist's name and signature and a reference to the way that, in making a drawing or painting of an object, artists personalise it with their attention. The work's title alludes to one of the four gospels of the Bible. Often referring to himself as a 'Christian atheist', Wallinger draws on Christian imagery throughout his practice, using it to work through, and test, the relation between identity and the cultural inheritance of religion.

Religious allusions emerge again in **I am Innocent** (2010), a double-sided reproduction of Diego Velázquez's 1656 portrait of Pope Innocent X. On one side the portrait is reproduced as it actually is (facing right), and on the other it is mirrored (facing left). The work spins continuously from a wire attached to the ceiling, and as it does so, the gaze of the sitter seems to remain uncannily locked on the viewer. The Pope is summoned as a figurehead, as one who has shed his personal identity in the name of his office as the head of the Catholic Church. Wallinger uses a facsimile of Velázquez's painting, allowing the altered context to shift the power of the original, destabilise it, perhaps.

Upstairs, Wallinger continues to appropriate the work of others, reassigning meaning as he does so. **Adam** (2003) is a poem made up of first lines that all begin with 'I' taken from *Palgrave's Golden Treasury* (1861) and listed in alphabetical order. Lines by Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Wordsworth and Robert Burns jostle for attention. What could be an emotionless act of appropriation creates a poem full of apparent Romantic exuberance. A constructed, but yearning, 'I' (Adam, the original first person) emerges. This work harks back to the *Self Portraits* downstairs, to the role of the letter 'I' as a herald of action or creation.

Ego (2016) is another act of appropriation, as the hands imitate those seen in *The Creation of Adam* from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel Ceiling (1508–12). Wallinger's hands play both parts – the left and the right, the created and the creator – casually photographed on an iPhone and printed on A4 paper. This work teeters between the solipsistic – the artist in a god-like act of creation – and the diffident, in its almost flippant filmsiness. With *Ego*, Wallinger also acknowledges the importance for an artist of the human hand, especially for him, and especially in the context of the **id Paintings**, for which they are the 'tools of the trade'.

The exhibition pivots around this series of *id Paintings*, four of which are shown here. Moving from painting 'I's to 'I paint', as Wallinger has said, he made sixty-six of these works over an intense period from late summer 2015 to early 2016. Rather than the doubled imprint of the psychoanalytical Rorschach inkblot test which he imitates, in these paintings the artist manually creates symmetry. Wallinger's

dark, vigorous, painterly marks aptly capture the basest part of the Freudian psyche, the *id*, after which the series is named. In Freud's model of the mind (consisting of the ego, the id and the superego) the id is the most instinctual part of the mind, and, according to Freud 'is the dark, inaccessible part of our personality, ... a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations'. The paintings are both image and the record of an almost dance-like action. At their centre, their line of symmetry, was once the 'I', the standing figure of their creator, arms outstretched like Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian man, making his mark.

Another lone figure stands at the centre of the film **Sleeper** (2004), yet this one is not proud and assertive, but seemingly lost and incongruous. The film records a performance that Wallinger made over ten consecutive nights: wearing a brown bear costume he wanders the empty spaces of Berlin's Neue Nationalgalerie, a modernist glass building designed by Mies Van Der Rohe in the 1960s. Passers-by watch him from outside: he is both exposed to them by the transparency of the architecture, and hidden inside the costume. This dynamic of surveillance and concealment echoes the history of Berlin during the Cold War, a city divided and paranoid. This theme is also referenced in the title, since a 'sleeper' is a double agent, an individual who fabricates his or her identity for the purpose of espionage. Folded into this mix is the figure of the bear as a symbol of national identity linked both to Berlin and to Russia, key players in Cold War politics. *Sleeper* is also haunted by Wallinger's memory of a children's television programme called *The Singing Ringing Tree*, which was filmed in East Germany in 1957 and aired on the BBC in the 1960s. It is the fable of a prince whose arrogance leads him to be turned into a bear, a tale Wallinger says 'traumatised my entire generation', both in Britain and in East Germany, a poignant, and dark, 'psychic connection across the Iron Curtain'. *Sleeper* leaves us with a sense of an unsure identity, a disintegrating 'I' trying to find his place in the world.

At Dundee Contemporary Arts, twelve more *id Paintings* take centre stage, while the themes of the exhibition expand with works that explore reflection, shadows and illusion (*Time And Relative Dimensions In Space*, 2001; *Shadow Walker*, 2011), symmetry, circling and looping (*Construction Site*, 2011; *Ever Since*, 2012; *Orrery*, 2016); and, of course, identity (*MARK*, 2010; *Self (Symbol)*, 2017). **MARK WALLINGER MARK** is on display at DCA until 4 June. To find out more visit dca.org.uk

A new publication accompanies the exhibition, £20.

Mark Wallinger has created a new edition artwork on the occasion of the exhibition. More information available from the bookshop.