

## PRESS RELEASE

Simon Bedwell

Stephen Sutcliffe

Memories of the Five Administrations

**EXTENDED UNTIL 6 JULY 2024**

Beaconsfield, 22 Newport Street, London SE11 6AY.

15 May - 6 July 2024 | Wednesday - Saturday, 12-5pm | Admission free.

**Finnisage Saturday 6 July, 3-6pm.**



Simon Bedwell, Stephen Sutcliffe, *Memories of the Five Administrations*, 2024. Installation detail. Photo Ellis Parkinson.

British artists Simon Bedwell and Stephen Sutcliffe collaborate in a new exhibition of ceramics, video and painting. *Memories of the Five Administrations* has been in the making since pre-lockdown, and brings together two very distinct bodies of work, reflecting an unlikely coupling: the earthy materiality of clay and its ephemeral antithesis.

Bedwell's new ceramics portray mainstream political figures from the last decade as slugs, inspired by satirists James Gillray and Steve Bell. These amorphous forms become the support for video works by Sutcliffe, which draw on an extensive archive of British television, film sound, broadcast images and spoken word recordings. Bedwell and Sutcliffe are of the generation and social class for whom mass, state-funded education, TV and the music press, served as introductions to experimental art and European philosophy, as well as pop music and fashion. They suggest that recent British governments have dedicated themselves to narrowing these possibilities.

What brings and holds the two artists together is not only their politics, but an approach to their respective mediums. Both employ satirical figuration to tell stories about the current socio-political climate in Britain. Bedwell's effigies of living politicians are reminiscent of 18th century Toby Jugs modelled on charismatic drinkers, developed by the Staffordshire potteries in the early days of the industrial revolution. Sutcliffe applies the versatility of collaging techniques, conflating, in a hand-painted frieze, the louche graphics of Queen's Jazz album (1978) with London's first rented bikes, self-attributed to its disreputable ex-Mayor, and Britain's onetime Prime Minister. The juxtaposition of Sutcliffe's videos on expanded e-readers within Bedwell's ceramic tableaux, create a *mise en scène* reminiscent of the early BANK installations of which Bedwell was an instigator in the 1990s.

This new collaboration responds to Beaconsfield's unique gallery environment, where sculptural and painterly installation is understood as the critical process of trying things out.

With thanks to Goldsmiths College and The Elephant Trust

### Notes for editors

[Simon Bedwell](#) is best known for his collaborative, interdisciplinary practice, and over the past eight years he has developed a committed solo sculptural practice, involving technically ambitious fired ceramic. Bedwell applies this 'informe' medium to political satire: rendering caricature in baked mud, returning to grotesqueries he first explored in BANK.

Bedwell's most recent solo shows were *The Entertaining Mr Bone* (DePimlico Projects 2019), London, Society (Hospitalfield House, Arbroath, 2017) and *No* (Piper Keys, London 2016). He was part of London art group BANK (1991-2003), whose recent shows include *British Conceptual Art 1998-99* (Ordet, Milan 2022) and *Status Quo: We wanted to paint the walls pink and blue and have a golf buggy in the gallery but all we got was this white cube graveyard* (Galerie Neu, Berlin).

Bedwell's collaborative practice, began as a founder of BANK 1991–2003. Over twelve years, BANK invited 180 artists (including Hilary Lloyd, Peter Doig, Ingrid Pollard, John Stezaker, Martin Creed, Adam Chodzko, Art & Language, Bethan Huws, Rebecca Warren, Chris Ofili, Sonia Boyce, Jake & Dinos Chapman, Terry Atkinson) to participate in more than 30 intensely collaborative exhibitions, focussing on the aesthetic and political implications of non-individualised artistic production. Since BANK disbanded Bedwell has continued to work collaboratively. The Arts Council funded project *The Hole*, 2011, featured Katrina Palmer, Laure Prouvost, Tom Benson, Merve Kaptan, Gail Pickering, Rehana Zaman, Alice Channer, Leah Capaldi, Phillip Lai. He has also exhibited with curators who emphasise a collaborative approach: Matthew Higgs (White Columns); Joe Scotland & Sarah McCrory (Studio Voltaire); Helen Simpson/Lucy Byatt (Hospitalfield); Padraic Moore (Damien the Love God, Brussels); and Andrew Mezzvinsky (depimlico). A book with curators Galilean Dejean & Tenzing Barshee, concentrating upon BANK's *Fax-back* work, was published by Lens Press in 2021, and Black Dog Publishing produced the monograph, BANK, in 2001.



[Stephen Sutcliffe](#) (b.1968, Harrogate) is an artist who lives and works in Yorkshire. Recent solo exhibitions include, *You Can Come in But You Won't Like it*, Rob Tufnell 2023, *High Windows, Dead Birds*, Künstlerhaus Stuttgart (2019). *Sex Symbols in Sandwich Signs*, Talbot Rice Edinburgh, *Twixt Cup and Lip*, Hepworth Wakefield (2017), *Going Over*, Rob Tufnell, London (2015), *Outwork and Workings Out*, Tramway, Glasgow (2013). In 2018 he participated in the Manchester International Festival in collaboration with Graham Eatough on a film for the Whitworth Gallery *No End to Enderby*, for which they won the Contemporary Arts Society Award. He has been shortlisted for the Jarman Award twice and in 2012 he won the Margaret Tait Award. In 2019 he had two books published, *at Fifty* (Sternberg Press) a monograph and *Much Obligated* (Book Works) – a kind of autobiography. He has recently curated an exhibition of items from the Herbert Read Archive at the Brotherton Library in Leeds University with the arts group Pavillion, which was accompanied by a new video, *City of Dreadful Something*.

Since 1994 [Beaconsfield](#) has been a laboratory dedicated to the exploration and evolution of experimental art. It is an uncompromising space where open-minded artists and audiences come to challenge themselves and their understanding of what art can be, and supportive space for taking risks and exploring new ideas. The organisation encourages artists to express a range of views without necessarily sharing them.

Beaconsfield | 22 Newport Street | Vauxhall | London | SE11 6AY

+44 (0)20 7582 6465 | [admin@beaconsfield.ltd.uk](mailto:admin@beaconsfield.ltd.uk)

[www.beaconsfield.ltd.uk](http://www.beaconsfield.ltd.uk) | @beaconsfield\_gallery\_vauxhall

Memories of the Five Administrations | 15 May - 6 July 2024 | Weds - Sat | 12.00 - 17.00



Simon Bedwell, Stephen Sutcliffe, *Memories of the Five Administrations*, 2024. Installation details Beaconsfield. Photos Tamsyn Challenger.