

the vacuum cleaner. CV.

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*“the vacuum cleaner is one of the most significant and exciting artists working in the UK today. Blurring the boundaries between art and audiences and between performance and politics, the vacuum cleaner's work not only gets people thinking about things, but actually doing things to effect social, cultural and political change.”*

Lois Keidan, Director, Live Art Development Agency

### **Statement.**

the vacuum cleaner is an art and activism collective of one.

Working across forms including performance, installation and film, the vacuum cleaner addresses challenging and taboo issues such as consumerism and mental health. From one man shows to large scale participatory actions, his approach is both subtle and extreme, but always candid, provocative and playful.

the vacuum cleaner's work has been exhibited throughout the UK, recent major commissions include Wellcome Collection, Broadmoor Hospital and FACT. International commissions include Festspiele/Gessnerallee (Zurich) and Vooruit/Dr Guislain Hospital Museum (Ghent). His films have been commissioned by BBC4 and Channel 4. He cofounded the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination (2004 - 2009) and is an Artsadmin Artist.

### **Initiatives.**

**The art of a culture of hope.** Multidisciplinary project exploring the future, hope and fear. Gessnerallee Zurich, Sudpol Luzern, Roxy Theater Basel, B – Sides Music Festival. [2015+]

**Madlove: A Designer Asylum.** A project exploring architecture for madness. Commissions including FACT, Wellcome Collection, Broadmoor Hospital. [2013+]

**Mental** An autobiographical performance told through psychiatric records, police intelligence files and corporate injunctions collected through the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts. Including performances at The Barbican, SpielArt Munich, Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Tramway, Homo Novus and international tour over 4 years. [2013+]

**Ship of Fools** 28-day anti-Section action in the vacuum cleaner's home. To support the vacuum cleaner in dealing with an intense period of suicidal ideation, 12 artists visited him at home to create dialogue and artworks about mental health and suicide. A film diary of Ship of Fools has

been exhibited at Bluecoat Liverpool, Projects Space London and Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts, Michigan [2011+]

**Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination** Co-founder of this artist-activist collective, making large-scale sculptural and performance pieces. Including a UK tour of performance intervention training for the public and a European festival for activists to share their practice through action [2004 to 2009]

**Prayers to Products/The Church of the Immaculate Consumption** An attempt to create or define the religion of shopping. Ten large-scale interventions were undertaken in department stores around the UK, with between 10 and 70 people praying evangelically to the shop and its products. Featured on BBC 4 and Channel 4 [2003-5]

**The UK Stop Shopping Tour** An art and activist tour of five UK cities, comprising of presentations and actions. In collaboration with My Dad's Strip Club, Richard DeDomenici, Whirlmart and Reverend Billy [2003]

#### **Selected Films.**

**Channel 4 Random Acts** 8 short films on UK artist-activists, exploring themes such as privatisation, capitalism, the environment and street art. Made with Leah Borrromeo [2011 to 2012]

**Just Do It - A tale of modern-day outlaws** Editor, narrator and key collaborator of this feature documentary about the secretive world of environmental direct action in the UK. Cinema, Broadcast and DVD release. Directed by Emily James [2011]

**Fences** Montage of archive footage of fences being removed, destroyed or pulled down by activist groups, as a metaphor for the possibility of overcoming barriers through mass action. Made for and Climate Camp and The Great Climate Swoop [2008/9]

**The Ultimate Television Commercial** A subvertised porn advertisement, incorporating explicit and uncensored corporate branding. Commissioned by SWG3 [2007]

#### **Selected Interventions.**

**A Bench Mark in Post-Capitalism** Working with 16-25 year olds to create their own artist-activist group called Quantative Teasing. The young people installed a series of guerrilla bench plaques, such as "In loving memory of cheap credit" and "In memory of the gender pay gap". Commissioned by Artsadmin / 2 Degrees Festival [2010]

**Kick The Crack** Re-politicising the meaning of Doris Salcedo's installation by bandaging the crack to look like a steri strip, referencing self-harm. Commissioned by Tate Modern [2008]

**100,000 Pieces of Possibility** One Thousand Euros worth of one cent pieces were given away

free in a bank. The piece intended to ask, “At what point does money become worthless?”  
Commissioned by Anti Festival, Finland. [2008]

**The Cardboard Ark** Life size model of an ark made out of cardboard, presented to the public as a viable solution to climate change. Commissioned by Peacock Visual Arts, Aberdeen [2008]

**Free Music For Suckers** A large-scale, guerrilla marketing prank on a Virgin Megastore, claiming that one thousand CDs were to be given away free on Buy Nothing Day [2006]

**Re-Call, Logo Fault** Logo brandalism via [www.starbuckscoffee.co.uk](http://www.starbuckscoffee.co.uk) and at Starbucks stores internationally. Modified logos and merchandise were distributed to disrupt the chain coffee shop’s public image [2005]

**Operation T.A.K.E.** (Toys Against Killing Everyone) Planning meeting and installation around how to take over the G8 at Gleneagles Golf Course, Scotland. At CCA, Glasgow [2005]

**Getting your Brazilian** Performance intervention in response to Selfridges’ Brazil-themed promotional campaign. Guided tours of the Birmingham store compared the themed merchandise to the reality of poverty in Brazil. Commissioned by Fierce Festival [2004]

**Virgin on the Ridiculous/Cleaning Up After Capitalism** Intervention with a vacuum cleaner. Cleaning up Virgin Megastores, Houses of Parliament, the Museum of Contemporary Arts in Chicago and Wall St in New York [2003]

### **Performance lectures.**

**Capitalism. Full Stop.** A manifesto for art’s separation from capitalism, exploring ownership, originality, ego, celebrity, money and language. Presented at Forest Fringe in Edinburgh, and the Showroom Gallery in London. Reviewed in a-n [2011]

**The Problem Is The Solution** Presenting a series of artworks exploring economic barriers to art. Presented at National Review of Live Arts in Glasgow, Rational Rec in London and Tanztrendenz in Munich [2008]

**Morsels to Suck On** An evening of films and storytelling around the vacuum cleaner’s favourites works of art and activism. Presented internationally including at CASA in Amsterdam, Liverpool Biennial and Performing Rights in Vienna [2006]

**An A to Z of Exits** Talk based on a randomized alphabet, where each letter represents a powerful experience of existing within the capitalist system. Commissioned by the ICA, London [2005]

**Everything You Wanted To Know About Linda McCartney Frozen Foods But Were Afraid To Ask** A performance lecture in which the vacuum cleaner compares himself to Linda McCartney. Commissioned by East End Collaborations and performed at Queen Mary’s University, London

[2004]

**Lecturer** for Performance and Aesthetics Royal Conservatoire of Scotland [2006-8]

**Visiting Artist Lecturer** Nationally: Manchester University, Queen Mary's, Cambridge, Nottingham Trent, London School of Economics, London College of Communication, Glasgow School of Art, Goldsmiths. Internationally: University of Amsterdam, University of Helsinki, Parson's College, New York University, School of the Art Institute Chicago

### **Residency**

**Tate Modern and Britain Artist in Residence – 2016/17.** Making work with young people with a broad range of abilities and from a broad range of economic backgrounds.

### **Publications.**

**CAPITALISM. FULL STOP.** How can we stop making capitalism in a time of austerity? Chapter for A Guidebook of Alternative Nows. Edited by Amber Hickey [The Journal of Aesthetics and Protest Press, California: 2012]

**Dam Mad: Instructions for the Neuro-Normal** An instructional text to challenge mental health discrimination through joke telling. Chapter for Paper Stages / Jerwood Charitable Foundation free booklet available at Edinburgh Forest Fringe [2012]

**How to prank, play and subvert the system** Chapter for Do It Yourself: A handbook for changing our world. Edited by The Trapeze Collective [Pluto Press, London: 2007]

**Free Music For Suckers** Chapter for Los Piratas son Los Padres: Historias en los albores de la era digital / Parents are the Pirates: History at the dawn of the digital age [Self-published by eXgae & Conservas, Barcelona: 2008]

### **Press.**

the vacuum cleaner's work has featured internationally in printed and broadcast media, including: The Guardian, The Independent, The Telegraph, BBC Television, Channel Four, Arte, BBC World Service, a-n, The Herald, New York Times, Resonance fm, MTV Europe.