



ZABLUDOWICZ  
COLLECTION  
20 YEARS

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FOREWORD

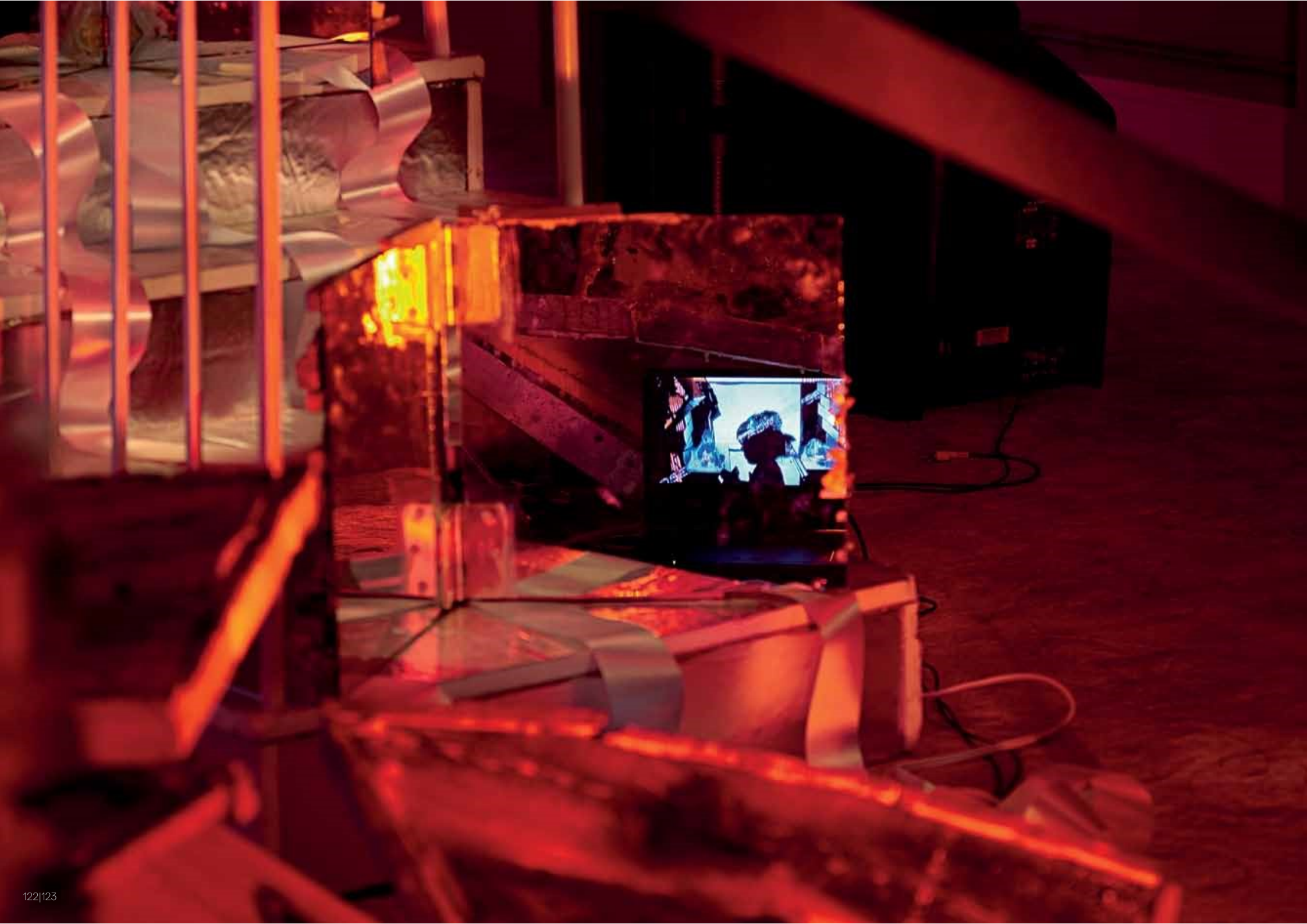
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INTRODUCTION

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## Samara Golden on *Bad Brains*, 2012

*Bad Brains* was made for the first Frieze Art Fair on Randall's Island, New York in 2012. When I first talked about doing the project with the curator, Cecilia Alemani, she mentioned that it could be interesting to make something that was in some way related to the island, which was the site of a massive potters' grave and also housed a huge old insane asylum. So, I started doing research, which is something I didn't do much of at that time, I'm not really that kind of artist (laughs). Anyway, I read a book about the island, and I even tried to meditate and 'wind back in time', I met a woman (in my mind) called Anne who wore a yellow dress ... etc. I got a lot of info in all that 'researching', but I realised that that wasn't how I work really, so I stopped the whole process, and started to think about how all the information that I learned about the island led to it being a place of deep sadness. So instead of making the piece directly about that I thought that it would be more powerful and relevant if I made it more personal ... and more about the sadness in my own life, kind of like a parallel ... I hate to overdescribe the thing, but to simplify things the work ultimately became about suicide and people I had known earlier in my life.

The installation was built up over the course of a few months in my really small studio in LA. It felt like the piece sort of built itself one step at a time, it filled the whole space, with no room to walk or move at all by the end. At some point, I started to feel the presence of these people that I was thinking about. Like I said I think the piece sort of built up its own momentum. To me it was kind of a breakthrough because I felt real emotion in the room; sometimes I was scared in there, and I wanted to leave. And I started to feel there were shadows that would come in the space

and I wasn't sure if they were mine or not, it was confusing. It felt like it had its own spirit and life ... so I tried to bring that to the art fair (laughs). I was pretty naive and didn't realise quite what the art fair context was, and that it's unusual to make a complex installation there, it was an interesting and challenging situation.

To describe how the work is constructed: there is a live feed from a video camera that captures the whole installation and broadcasts it to the two monitors on either side of the main sculpture. There's another video which is being colour keyed via a video mixer into the live image, and it has two parts that are keyed in: one is a scrolling text which appears superimposed in the monitor on the black ribbon that runs across the front of the installation (the text was taken from insanity self-tests that you can take online, I called it the *insanity script*). The other thing keyed into the live image were two 'ghosts' that appear to be under the stairways, it was footage I shot in the original studio installation of myself and my partner John holding the suicide mask paintings over our faces. You can see these two things only in the monitor; I guess the piece was really meant to be seen through the mediation of the monitor. It was all a huge experiment, I didn't know if I could even do it. It all has to lock together perfectly in order to work in terms of the sculpture interacting with the video.

There are also subliminal messages that flash across the water projection on the back wall. The messages come in the form of millisecond flashes, they are anything from close-ups of the masks I made, to pictures of the thing in the studio in process, to pictures at home, to written messages. The written messages were directed towards telling you that somebody loves you or

somebody cares and they were also meant for the people that are not with us anymore; it ended up being a place for them to go and be. I was trying to make a space that felt as layered as possible. Looking back at the work now, I see it as a concentration of paranoia, and an attempt to build up a high emotional tone or pitch.

In trying to explain myself, or what I was trying to do, I started to use the phrase the 'sixth dimension', I've inflicted my misinterpretation of it on the world! (laughs) I'm not really talking about physics, more it's just my loose interpretation of things I've read – my understanding is that in the

fifth dimension there is a linear past, present and future, and you can time travel between them. And in my feeble way of thinking about it I imagined that the sixth dimension would be a place that could be a million places, and a million times, all at once. In that way it links back to the research I was doing about Randall's Island ... the woman in the yellow dress, the insane asylum, the potters' grave, it seemed like maybe the installation turned into a place for all kinds of lost souls, piled up on top of each other, infinitely.

*Excerpt from conversation between Samara Golden, Kelly Large and Paul Luckraft, 30 April 2015*

