

Zoe Beloff: A History of Dreams Remains to be Written

How do dreams and beliefs manifest in reality? This question runs throughout Zoe Beloff's diverse projects, her approach to filmmaking, political re-enactment and installation, exploring the liminal aspects of the human psyche as it enters into the world.

This exhibition includes two distinct installations linked by Beloff's interest in what might be described as utopian societies. They are curious spaces to explore and decipher; the artist is less concerned with documentary accuracy than with thinking about these societies' potential as a catalyst for change. The title of this exhibition is derived from the critic Walter Benjamin (1892 – 1940), who suggested that even dreams are a product of particular social and cultural environments and, moreover, that there is so much to learn.

Dreamland – Main Gallery:

Zoe Beloff sees herself as the archivist for the *Coney Island Psychoanalytic Society and its Circle*, which some might think of as an urban myth. Since 2009 she has used it as a form to explore the unconscious of one of world's great amusement parks.

Coney Island in Brooklyn is best known as a holiday resort; it included *Dreamland*, the first enclosed amusement park and by the early 20th century claimed to be a repository for American desires, including both family entertainment and lurid fantasies (and clandestine sexual activity).

Albert Grass, founder of the Psychoanalytic Society, was influenced by the writings of Sigmund Freud, who visited Coney Island in 1909. Grass led the society to make and analyse 'dream films', recreations of member's dreams.

Grass also campaigned to have the theme park rebuilt after it was destroyed by fire in 1911 and put forward designs based upon his own interests. In the words of the owner of the attractions, the designs were too "prurient" to be realised: one of the main pavilions, *Libido*, is shaped like a young girl.

The Days of the Commune – upstairs:

For a three month period in 1871 Paris was governed independently; a unique historic moment where working class people took over the government of the city.

Bertolt Brecht (1898 – 1956) wrote a play about this significant event called *The Days of the Commune* (circa 1948). As is typical of Brecht, being a long term believer that theatre should activate its audience, the play was written to encourage people to relate to the actions of the main protagonists, who were depicted as 'everyday' people rather than abstract heroic types.

From spring 2012, Beloff restaged Brecht's play in Zuccotti Park, New York. The performers, some drawn from Occupy Wall Street supporters who were based there, came from a range of professions and backgrounds, just like the original revolutionaries. Significant historical events were portrayed, day by day, according to the timescale of the real 1871 commune, with hand drawn props made by the artist.

Beloff's project is a reminder that idealistic aspirations can be realised, even if for a short amount of time, and she encourages us to think about the nature and possibility of our own hopes for a fairer world.

Zoe Beloff was born in Edinburgh, studied at Edinburgh College of Art and then moved to New York in 1980 where she continues to live and work.

If you require a large print version of this exhibitions guide, or have other specific requirements, please let us know. Our Volunteer Information assistants are on hand to help.



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Education and Events

All events run by the gallery are free and unless stated otherwise should be booked by: **Email:** info.talbotrice@ed.ac.uk
Tel: 0131 650 2210 or **In person:** Reception Desk, Talbot Rice Gallery, Old College, South Bridge, Edinburgh, EH8 9YL

Talks

Artist's Talk / Zoe Beloff in conversation with Peter Kravitz / Saturday 17 November / 3pm

Zoe Beloff will be joined by Peter Kravitz, a psychotherapist working in Edinburgh to discuss the themes in her work with particular reference to *Dreamland* and *In the Days of the Commune*, the two major bodies of work in the Talbot Rice exhibition.

Curator's Talk / Charchoune's trans-modernism / Wednesday 21 November / 5.15pm

Organised by the Princess Dashkova Russian Centre at the University of Edinburgh, this discussion by Merlin James, curator of the exhibition, will offer an opportunity to consider Charchoune's very individual work as a painter and author, in particular in the context of the Russian cultural diaspora.

Talk / Serge Charchoune: a low profile / Wednesday 28 November / 6pm

Artist Merlin James will introduce the exhibition and give an overview of the unique achievements of artist and writer Serge Charchoune. Reserved by nature and often overlooked by mainstream art history, Charchoune was nevertheless an associate of Picabia, Schwitters, Léger, Tzara, Breton, Ernst, de Staël and many others. From post-modern perspectives his significance is increasingly emerging.

Symposium / Word & Image in Russian Contexts - The Legacy of the Russian Avant Garde / Friday 1 February

Organised by University of Edinburgh's Dr Alexandra Smith and sponsored by the Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies, University of Glasgow, this daylong symposium (9am – 7pm) will examine the Russian Avant Garde in Exile with reference to the Serge Charchoune exhibition.

Tours

Artlink Tours / In the Loop / Tuesday 4 December / 11am

Artlink Tours / In the Frame / Wednesday 30 January / 11am

In the Loop is an audio assisted tour for visitors with hearing loss, *In the Frame* is a verbal description tour for visitors with a visual impairment. Join us for an introduction to the exhibitions with Zoë Fothergill, Curator, Education & Development and Rachel Thibbotumunuwe, Assistant Curator (Equality & Diversity). For booking please contact Susan at Artlink 0131 229 3555 option 1 or email susan@artlinkedinburgh.co.uk.

Regular Tours / Wednesday Walkabout & Saturday Social / 1.15pm and 3pm

An informal half-hour tour of the exhibitions, presented by members of the gallery's team. Free to attend, no booking required.

Workshops

Workshops / Families / Dreamwork / Saturday 1 December and 19 January / 11am, 1pm and 3pm

Looking at the current Zoe Beloff exhibition, artist Ailsa Lochhead will lead short workshops throughout the day for children and families focusing on dreams, hopes and fantasies through drawing, signs and 2D props. For more information contact Ailsa.Lochhead@ed.ac.uk.

Workshop / Young People / Scenes shift / Please contact the gallery if you are interested for dates and times

This performance and installation workshop lead by artist Ailsa Lochhead for young people will begin with Beloff's *Days of the Commune* work. The group will work together to rewrite a script and develop scenes with props, which will then be acted out and documented. For more information contact Ailsa.Lochhead@ed.ac.uk.

Workshop / Occupy The Future: The Prospect of a Utopian Scotland / Saturday 12 January / from 10am

Using Zoe Beloff's theatrical interventions at last year's *Occupy* protests and Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* as starting points, this workshop and collaborative presentation led by artist Anthony Schrag, explores current debates of an Independent (or not) Scotland, and sees participants perform the various conflicts and possible futures as a creative pre-living of our destiny.

Screenings

Saturday Screenings / Mirrors of the Mind / 8 December 2012, 26 January 2013, 16 February 2013 / 5-6pm

Talbot Rice Gallery will open late on three Saturday evenings for a programmed series of surreal short films. The first two will bring together a selection of artist's films from archive. The final event on 16 February will consist of the pick of new works submitted for the Mirrors of the Mind project. For more information see the project blog Talbotrice.blogspot.com.

At our events a portable FM hearing loop is available for visitors who are hard of hearing - please contact the gallery in advance to book the equipment.

A large print version of this guide is available at the reception desk and if you require this document in an alternative format please contact the gallery.