

SANTIAGO

SIERRA

BLACK

FLAG

Exhibition Notes

Sat 8 September — Sun 25 November 2018

DCA

Dundee Contemporary Arts

152 Nethergate
Dundee, DD1 4DY

01382 432444

Scottish Charity No. SC026631

Open daily 10:00-18:00
Open late Thu 20:00

Admission free

www.dca.org.uk

INTRODUCTION

For the past two decades, Spanish artist Santiago Sierra has carried out provocative actions around the world. Influenced by the formal language of the minimal and conceptual art movements of the 1960s and 70s, Sierra's work addresses the hierarchies of power and class that operate in our modern society and everyday existence.

Sierra's work often takes the form of ephemeral performances or moments which are documented and subsequently presented to the viewer in a gallery context, creating a tension between the temporary and the permanent. In speaking of his approach to artmaking, he says, "It is a way of telling a story. I like the document and the 'relic' that results from a performance. They are the tangible remainders that speak of something that happened in a place and time different from ours."

This exhibition is the UK premiere of one of the artist's most ambitious undertakings to date. It takes the form of an immersive photographic and sound installation documenting the process and performance of planting the universal symbol of the anarchist movement - the black flag - at the two most extreme points on earth: the North and South Poles.

On 14 April 2015, Sierra completed the first part of *Black Flag* at the geographic North Pole, latitude 90° N. An expedition travelled from the remote Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard to the kinetic Russian ice base Barneo, using a network of private tourism and logistical support companies to complete the journey. From the base, several trips were undertaken to document the planting of the flag and the surrounding landscape.

Eight months later, on 14 December 2015 – exactly 104 years after Roald Amundsen's successful Norwegian expedition to the South Pole and the tragedy of Robert Falcon Scott's failed attempt – the final instalment of *Black Flag* was completed, using the substantial and permanent infrastructure of Antarctica. The flag was planted and documented at the geographic South Pole, latitude 90° S. The flags were both left in situ.

The exhibition comprises 40 photographs that document each expedition: a series of 20 on the north-facing wall of the gallery correspond to the journey to the North Pole, and opposite these are 20 depicting the journey south. Between are two large photographs of each flag in situ: a representation of our entire planet squashed into just a few metres, the pinnacle of the northern hemisphere atop an inverted image of the south.

Field recordings of 'silent moments' from both poles are also present in the space: visually in the display of pressed vinyl records and aurally by way of headphones for visitors to listen with. Lastly, there is a replica black flag on display, materially representing the two flags left behind by Sierra upon completion of each expedition.

The black flag and the colour black in general have been associated with anarchism since the 1880s. The uniform blackness of the flag stands in stark contrast to the colourful flags typical of most nation states across the world. Additionally, where a white flag has historically been used to request parley or surrender, the black flag has often symbolised defiance and opposition to submission. In his book *Reinventing Anarchy*, sociologist and anarchist Howard Ehrlich describes the values imbued in this radical symbol as follows:

“Black is a shade of negation. The black flag is the negation of all flags. It is a negation of nationhood which puts the human race against itself and denies the unity of all humankind. Black is a mood of anger and outrage at all the hideous crimes against humanity perpetrated in the name of allegiance to one state or another. It is anger and outrage at the insult to human intelligence implied in the pretences, hypocrisies, and cheap chicaneries of governments.

Black is also a colour of mourning; the black flag which cancels out the nation also mourns its victims, the countless millions murdered in wars, external and internal, to the greater glory and stability of some bloody state. It mourns for those whose labour is robbed (taxed) to pay for the slaughter and oppression of other human beings. It mourns not only the death of the body but the crippling of the spirit under authoritarian and hierarchic systems; it mourns the millions of brain cells blacked out with never a chance to light up the world. It is a colour of inconsolable grief.

But black is also beautiful. It is a colour of determination, of resolve, of strength, a colour by which all others are clarified and defined. Black is the mysterious surrounding of germination, of fertility, the breeding ground of new life which always evolves, renews, refreshes, and reproduces itself in darkness. The seed hidden in the earth, the strange journey of the sperm, the secret growth of the embryo in the womb all these the blackness surrounds and protects.

So black is negation, is anger, is outrage, is mourning, is beauty, is hope, is the fostering and sheltering of new forms of human life and relationship on and with this earth. The black flag means all these things. We are proud to carry it, sorry we have to, and look forward to the day when such a symbol will no longer be necessary.”

Many of these sentiments are reflected in Sierra's employment of this charged object at either end of the planet. This epic performative gesture stands resolutely in opposition to recent resurges in right-wing nationalism across Europe and the USA. Sierra has commented that "the black flag is the flag of all of us who don't identify with a flag or don't want to have a flag; it's something to visually set against the multiple colours of the patriotic cloths."

Marking Sierra's first solo exhibition of work in Scotland, this project makes an acute critique of concepts of territory and the practices of nationalism imbued in the simple act of planting a flag. In Dundee specifically, this undertaking asks us to perhaps rethink our own city's history of polar exploration and conquest. *Black Flag* is a refusal of ownership and a call to rethink how we understand, value and relate to some of the most remote landscapes in the known world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Black Flag is a collaboration between Santiago Sierra Studio and a/political with special thanks to Lutz Henke.

a/political is a nonprofit organisation, collaborating with artists who work within a socio-political framework.

POLAR EXPLORATION IN DUNDEE

Dundee has many strong links with polar exploration in the form of the RRS Discovery, which was built in the city and is permanently docked at the waterfront. The last traditional three-masted wooden ship to be built in the UK, it set sail in 1901 on its successful 'Discovery Expedition' to the Antarctic with Robert Falcon Scott and Ernest Shackleton on board. The award-winning museum Discovery Point is situated right next to the ship, just a five minute walk from DCA.

rrsdiscovery.com

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Santiago Sierra (b. Madrid, 1966) studied Fine Arts at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid and at the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg (HFBK) between 1989 and 1991, as well as at the Academy of San Carlos in Mexico City between 1995 and 1997.

Recent solo shows include El Bebedero, Prometeo gallery, Milan, Italy (2016); Laboratory, Mexico (2015); Helga de Alvear, Madrid, Spain (2016); Kunsthalle Tübingen, Germany (2013); Te Tuhi Centre, New Zealand (2013); Reykjavik Art Museum, Iceland (2012); MARCO, Spain (2009); Museu Madre, Italy (2009); CAC Malaga, Spain (2006), Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Belgium (2004).

Sierra has also been featured in numerous group exhibitions including the Museum of Modern Art, Poland (2016); National Gallery of Art, Poland (2015); Kunsthalle Dusseldorf (2014); Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2014) and the 55th Venice Biennale. Sierra represented Spain at the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003.

INFORMATION SPACE

Visit the Information Space next to the galleries to learn more about the exhibition. Here you'll find a video interview with Eoin Dara, DCA Head of Exhibitions, alongside a selection of books relating to Sierra's practice.

GALLERY 2 – MIKE KELLEY: MOBILE HOMESTEAD

Alongside Sierra's *Black Flag*, we are showing an exhibition of the remarkable film trilogy, *Mobile Homestead*, by the late American artist Mike Kelley in Gallery 2.

TALKS AND EVENTS

For more information visit
www.dca.org.uk

Santiago Sierra in Conversation with Uri Gordon

Fri 7 September, 18:00 – 19:00

Cinema 1

Free, but please book in advance

Join us before the launch of *Black Flag* for a conversation between artist Santiago Sierra and anarchist theorist and activist Uri Gordon.

Gordon teaches Political Theory at Durham University and is co-convenor of the PSA Anarchist Studies Network. He has been active in environmental and peace movements in the UK and in Israel/Palestine for two decades. His most recent work includes an appraisal of anarchist engagements with nationalism and national liberation (in *The Brill Companion to Anarchism and Philosophy*) and a conceptual genealogy of prefigurative politics (in *Political Studies*). His work has been translated into thirteen languages.

Exhibition Tours

Daily at 11:00 and 15:00

Gallery 1 entrance

Free, drop-in

Interested in knowing more about the exhibition? Join our friendly Visitor Assistants for daily guided tours.

Senior Citizen Kane Gallery Tour and Workshop

Tue 2 October, 10:30 – 12:30

Gallery 1 and Create Space

Free, no need to book, just meet us at DCA Reception to start

Aged 60+? Come along to our Senior Citizen Kane Gallery Tour in our Activity Room. We will explore the exhibition with one of our friendly Visitor Assistants, then there's the chance to take part in a creative workshop making work inspired by *Black Flag*. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be on hand to fuel your creativity and chat.

A Performative Deconstruction of Black Flag

Nine Yamamoto–Masson

Thu 11 October, 18:00 – 19:00

Gallery 1

Free, but please book in advance

Join us for a live deconstruction of some of the ideas raised by *Black Flag* by Nine Yamamoto–Masson, a French-Japanese artist, theorist, researcher, translator, activist, and community organiser based in Berlin. Yamamoto–Masson worked as copy editor of the major publication accompanying *Black Flag* and will be developing this talk from within a decolonialist and intersectional feminist framework.

**The White Flag of Antarctica:
The Fabric of a Nation
Dr Claire Warrior**

Thu 18 October, 18:00 – 19:00

Gallery 1

Free, but please book in advance

As Santiago Sierra's work at DCA challenges and reconfigures typical understandings of how we use flags to demarcate territory, join us for a lecture by Dr Claire Warrior which will look at the act of planting flags at certain moments in history, particularly considering the use of these emblems in relation to the exploration (and conquest) of both the north and south poles.

Warrior is Senior Exhibitions Curator at Royal Museums Greenwich, where she has worked since 2001. Her current project, a new permanent gallery on the Polar Regions, opens at the National Maritime Museum in September 2018. An anthropologist and historian, her research looks at remembrance and commemoration, particularly in the context of British polar exploration, with a focus on the role of families in sustaining histories over time. She has written widely on museums, material culture and the history of exploration, and is a Trustee at the Charles Dickens Museum in Bloomsbury.

Curator's Tour

Wed 21 November, 18:00 – 19:00

Galleries

Free, but please book in advance

On the last week of both *Black Flag* and *Mobile Homestead*, join our Head of Exhibitions, Eoin Dara, for a tour through the galleries where he'll talk about the development of both these projects as part of DCA's exhibitions programme, considering how they might link to both the past, present and future of a city like Dundee.

**The Centre for Remote
Environments**

Elaine Shemilt

Thu 22 November, 18:00 – 19:00

Gallery 1

Free, but please book in advance

Join us for a talk with artist and researcher Professor Elaine Shemilt where she will discuss the hugely exciting potential of the Centre for Remote Environments in South Georgia.

This ambitious project developed by the South Georgia Trust and the University of Dundee proposes to rejuvenate former whaling station structures on this small island in the southern Atlantic Ocean to create space for innovative art projects and research in what would be the most remote cultural institution on the planet.

FOR YOUNGER VISITORS AND FAMILIES

Family Art Lab

Sat 29 September, 13:00 – 15:00

Create Space

Suitable for ages 5+. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

Free, drop in activity

Join our artists to explore the exhibition in the gallery. There's time to chat about what you see and then to create your own art together. For inspiration we will be looking at colours, symbols and meanings in flags; and different kinds of homes and streets and who lives and work there. We'll be making wee animated scenes and designing flags for the future. Each session lasts two hours but you don't have to stay the whole time.

Family Art Lab for Under 5s

Sat 10 November, 13:00 – 15:00

Create Space

Suitable for ages 0 – 5. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

Free, no need to book but please arrive for the start time

Join us for an experimental, sensory play session especially for wee ones based around flags. We'll explore colours, shapes, patterns, materials and movement. We'll have lots of different materials on hand, from paints to sticky vinyl, fabric and fans to make a breeze. This is a joint workshop with the Division of Psychology, University of Dundee, where you can learn about their child development research into '*What happens when we make together?*'

Create Space

Open daily unless being used for a workshop – *do phone ahead to check if you are making a special trip.*

Free, drop in.

Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

DCA Create Space is a wee gem; a comfortable and imaginative space right next to the gallery designed for younger visitors and family groups to pop in and enjoy on a visit. You can have a go at DIY art activities, browse our excellent children's art library and make connections with the artists' work in the exhibition. Take your artwork home, leave it on display or photograph and share it online using #hellodca or #dcamakes – we love seeing what you've made!

JUST ASK

Our friendly Visitor Assistants are always happy to help with your questions.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Keep up to date with the very latest from DCA by visiting www.dca.org.uk or by following us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. Tweet us your thoughts on the exhibition using #helloDCA.

Interested to know what's coming up in DCA Galleries? Pick up one of our Exhibitions brochures to find out what's happening in our future programme.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

Margaret Salmon

Hole

Sat 8 December 2018 – Sun 24
February 2019
Gallery 1

Might it be possible for film to transcribe something as ephemeral as human warmth? Human affection? Human presence, trust and submission? What about love? Can film bear witness to love? Teach us about love? Express love? How can a lens invoke these very personal, subjective experiences? These are some of the questions posed by Margaret Salmon in her newly commissioned work for Gallery 1 at DCA.

Margaret Salmon (b. 1975, New York) lives and works in Glasgow. She completed undergraduate studies at the School of Visual Arts, New York (1998), before going on to graduate from the MFA programme at the Royal College of Art, London (2003). Solo exhibitions of her work have been held at institutions including Staatsgalerie Stuttgart (2015); Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, USA (2011); Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam (2007); Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (2007) and Collective Gallery, Edinburgh (2006). Her work has been featured in film festivals and major international survey exhibitions, including the Berlin Biennale (2010) and Venice Biennale (2007). In 2006 Salmon won the inaugural MaxMara Art Prize for Women. She is represented by Office Baroque, Brussels.

Lorna Macintyre

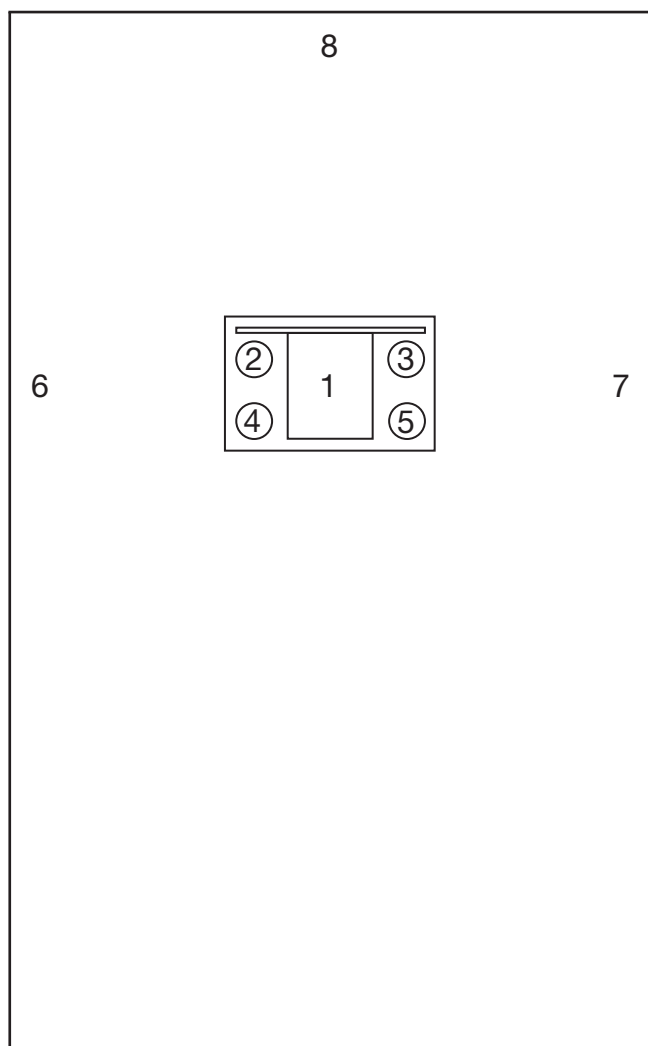
Pieces of You Are Here

Sat 8 December 2018 – Sun 24
February 2019
Gallery 2

Scottish artist Lorna Macintyre uses a broad spectrum of influential touchstones in her work, from poetry and literature to archaeology and symbolism. These references often create an oblique structure underlying her photographic and sculptural artworks, lending a form for a composition or providing the impetus behind her choice of materials. This exhibition will mark Macintyre's first solo exhibition in a major UK institution, debuting a new body of work commissioned for Gallery 2 at DCA.

Lorna Macintyre (b. 1977 Glasgow) is an artist based in Glasgow. Having studied for both a BA (1999) and MFA (2007) at the Glasgow School of Art, she now also works there as a visiting lecturer in Fine Art. Macintyre's recent solo exhibitions include: *Spolia*, Cample Line, Dumfriesshire (2017); *Much Marcle*, Chapter, Cardiff (2016); *Material Language or All Truths Wait in All Things*, Mary Mary, Glasgow (2015); *Solid Objects*, Glasgow Project Room (2015); and *Four Paper Fugues*, Mount Stuart, Isle of Bute, part of GENERATION, 25 Years of Contemporary Art in Scotland, (2014). She is represented by Mary Mary, Glasgow.

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION



Gallery 1

Santiago Sierra
Black Flag
2016

1. Black flag reproduction according to flags used at the poles
Custom flag pole, flag

2. Vinyl-LP edition of recorded 'silence' at 90° South
Cut steel

3. Vinyl-LP edition of recorded 'silence' at 90° North
Cut steel

4. Map of southern hemisphere
Paper on board

5. Map of northern hemisphere
Paper on board

6. South-facing gallery wall:
Documentation photographs of expedition to the South Pole
20 giclee prints

7. North-facing gallery wall:
Documentation photographs of expedition to the North Pole
20 giclee prints

8. Large format framed photographic prints of the black flags
(1 North Pole, 1 South Pole)
Ditone archival pigment print