

MIT List Visual Arts Center  
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[ LIST PROJECTS ]

Adam Pendleton

January 3 – February 11, 2018



ALL IMAGES *Just Back from Los Angeles: A Portrait of Yvonne Rainer* (still), 2016–17  
Single-channel black-and-white video with sound, 13:51 min.  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy the artist



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Two birthdates, 1934 and 1984, mark the beginning of Adam Pendleton's video *Just Back from Los Angeles: A Portrait of Yvonne Rainer* (2016–17). Over a meal at Ridgeway Diner—one of Yvonne Rainer's favorite spots in New York City—the two artists meet and get to know one another in earnest for the very first time.

"I'm going to be eighty-two in two weeks," Rainer tells Pendleton. "How old are you?"

"I am...thirty-two. So I'm fifty...fifty years younger than you. That's a...that's a lot," Pendleton acknowledges.

"Oh, it sure is," confirms Rainer.

The timespan they draw is a deceptively simple glimpse into the nature of their meeting, an exchange across multiple lines of difference: generational, sexual, racial, and artistic. What unfolds is a poignant portrayal that combines unscripted and scripted dialogue, scenes of the pair talking and moving together, and historical footage of Rainer's landmark dance *Trio A*. The video portrait's evocative juxtapositions transform an ordinary encounter into a powerful meditation on the two artists' shared questions of poetics and politics.

A central passage of the video layers Rainer's voice over a succession of cuts that alternate between her reading in the diner and her younger self performing *Trio A* in 1978. She first choreographed this foundational work in the history of postmodern dance in 1966, disrupting what were then conventional dance tenets such as narrative, expressiveness, and virtuosity. Her choreography, instead, did away with music, emphasized everyday movement, and imagined each movement phrase or gesture as important (or unimportant) as the next. Rainer's careful reading of found texts Pendleton compiled before their meeting sonically frames the video's cross-cutting of present and past. His script stitches together multiple voices and contexts: theoretical tracts by Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael, a 1969 letter written to Rainer by her friend Barbara Dille, Keeanga-Yahmahtta Taylor's descriptions of contemporary anti-black police brutality, and lines of Ron Silliman's poetry. As we hear Rainer read successive names of black people killed at the hands of the police, gestures from *Trio A* converge with these tragic accounts and uncannily inscribe the past with the present, dance with black lives.

Such conjunctures of disparate histories, figures, and ideas through appropriation and fragmentation are central to Adam Pendleton's work. Pendleton's recurring visual and textual extracts often come from his wide-ranging personal library, extending across such subjects as the historical avant-garde, poetry, experimental dance, film, and philosophy. Moving archive against archive, Pendleton's radical juxtapositions undo discursive boundaries and give rise to new aesthetic, cultural, and political possibilities. Since 2008, his work has been driven by a manifesto titled "Black Dada." Doubly inspired by Hugo Ball's 1916 "Dada Manifesto" and Amiri Baraka's 1964 "Black Dada Nihilismus," Pendleton's manifesto is a conceptual and historical paradigm. As the artist defines it, "Black Dada is a way to talk about the future while talking about the past; it is our present moment." *List Projects: Adam Pendleton* features *Just Back from Los Angeles: A Portrait of Yvonne Rainer* alongside an arrangement of silkscreened mirror and glass works from his ongoing series *System of Display* (2008–), providing an intimate view of the artist's widely celebrated practice.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Adam Pendleton (b. 1984, Richmond, VA) lives and works in New York.

*Just Back from Los Angeles: A Portrait of Yvonne Rainer* was a Performa Commission curated by Adrienne Edwards.

*List Projects: Adam Pendleton* is curated by Paul C. Ha, Director, MIT List Visual Arts Center, with Jamin An, Curatorial Fellow, MIT List Visual Arts Center.

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