

Media Information: Friday 21 November 2008

# BALTIC

**DUNCAN CAMPBELL**

**BERNADETTE**

**Monday 1 December 2008 – Sunday 18 January 2009**

**Bernadette**, a film by Irish born artist **Duncan Campbell** will be presented in **BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art's** ground floor cinema from **Monday 1 December 2008 – Sunday 18 January 2009**.

**Campbell** has a deep interest in the seductive power of stories; his work juxtaposes the inherent promise of storytelling with the breakdown of narrative and the inevitable disintegration of meaning. His preoccupation with human truth and his refusal to adhere to formal or narrative conventions resonate in this, his latest project, a documentary film about **Northern Irish Republican Bernadette Devlin**.

**Devlin** became a street activist in the late 1960s and was heavily involved in the **Battle of the Bogside** in **1969**. She represented the local residents at a moment in history which is widely acknowledged as the beginning of Northern Ireland's 30 year 'troubles'. She subsequently, at the age of only 21, became the youngest woman ever to be elected to the House of Commons, Westminster; with her campaign slogan "I will take my seat and fight for your rights" Devlin signalled her rejection of the traditional Irish Republican tactic of abstentionism.

**Bernadette** is composed of a combination of elements including archival material, new footage, animation and scripted voiceover. The film opens with black and white footage of Bernadette's bare skin: her toes, her feet, her arms, her eyes. This extolling of the parts of the body is a cinematic version of the **blason**, an adoration of 'the beloved' which has migrated from its origins in French poetry to film (Jean Luc Godard's **Le Mépris** also opens with a scene of this sort, dedicated to Brigitte Bardot). This portrayal of the beloved is subsequently overturned and then almost forgotten in the rest of the film, which shows a firebrand of a woman, one who, after

being prohibited from speaking in Parliament after Bloody Sunday, punched the Home Secretary (and later said her only regret was that she "didn't get him by the throat").

As the footage progresses it becomes clear that these excerpts are not given to the viewer so that a story might be learnt in the manner of a historical documentary. Rather, the viewer is confronted with simply more and more representations of **Devlin**, as an object of irrational attention; these images no longer appear to be under Campbell's control, but rule over him illustrating the limitations of historical memory. **Campbell** adds: 'I wanted to faithfully represent **Devlin**, to do justice to her legacy. Yet I worked with mediated images of her and writings about her. What I produced can only ever be a selection of these representations, via my own obsessions and my desire to make winning art of her.'

End

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

### DUNCAN CAMPBELL

Duncan Campbell completed his MFA at Glasgow School of Art in 1998 and BA Fine Art at the University of Ulster, 1996. He lives and works in Glasgow and is represented by Hotel, London. Solo exhibitions include **Bernadette**, Hotel, London (2008); **Sigmar, 0-60**, ICA London, (2008); **The Unnamable**, Lux, London (2006); **Falls Burns Malone Fiddles**, Galerie Luis Campana, Cologne (2004) and **Falls Burns Malone Fiddles**, Transmission Gallery, Glasgow (2003).

Campbell has featured in a **recent acquisitions exhibition** at SNGMA Edinburgh (2008). He has shown in group exhibitions including **A Rictus Grin**, Broadway 1602, New York, (2008); **After October**, Elizabeth Dee, New York, (2008); **You have not been honest**, Museo D'Arte Contemporanea Donna Regina, Naples (2007) curated by Polly Staple and Colin Ledwith; **Art Now Lightbox**, Tate Britain, London (2006); **Archaeology of Today**, Els Hanappe Underground, Athens (2005); **Revolution is Not What it Used to Be**, S1 Artspace Sheffield (2004); **Manifesta 5**, European Biennial of Contemporary Art, San Sebastian (2004); **Emotion Eins**, Frankfurter Kunstverin, Frankfurt am Main (2004); **Fresh and Upcoming**, a project with Luke Fowler at Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt am Main (2003) and **Old Habits Die Hard**, Sparwasser HQ Berlin and Norwich Gallery (2003).

**BALTIC** is a major international centre for contemporary art situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, England. BALTIC presents a constantly changing, distinctive and ambitious programme of exhibitions and events, and is a world leader in the presentation, commissioning and communication of contemporary visual art. BALTIC has welcomed over 3 million visitors since opening to the public in July 2002.

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**OPENING HOURS:**

Monday - Sunday 10.00 - 18.00 (excluding Tuesday)

Tuesday 10.30 – 18.00

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