out of Djuna Barnes' novel *Nightwood* in its powerful evocation of love? At any rate, there is no trace of hazy animal rights talk. And that last work was maybe a one-off in the extraordinariness of its impact.

Ivana's Answers is more removed. It has an effect comparable to paintings by Chardin in which persons are never traduced into social types but retain something that will never be understood in their distance from the viewer. It uses close-ups that bring us no closer to the mystery. We don't see the whole shape of the lady. Is there something dogmatic in Irvine's enigmatical approach? I think there is, but that it is being admitted and welcomed as a worthwhile subject in itself; it is not a sign of evasiveness before meaning. In those very suspicions of dogma could be traced what the works need to exclude: for example, narratives in which characters are pre-classified, in just the way large parts of our experience are indeed pre-classified and managed. The floor in the consultation room is littered with entomological specimens in apparent disorder which signals one aspect of classification (science that fixes wriggling specimens on a pin, discarded but also acknowledged as an imperative) as an issue in this work. And at least one line, in which Ivana expresses her calmly alienated self-experiencing, could be straight from a classic 1940s mystery (the kind of film where great lines and clichés have a generic vitality outside that of the characters and the actors who deliver them). That is another kind of classification, and one that makes you aware of your narrative expectations and how they alter moments as they pass. Which is not to say Irvine's work must be thought of as a surrender to such moments, an abandonment of the hope for worthwhile orderings.

The lingering awkwardnesses about how the moving image fits into galleries reveals doubts that we should be allowed to feel about what art demands from us. Such contractual dilemmas remain more palpable in moving image work (also in performance) and that is part of what makes these areas so pertinent. Irvine's work continues to make delightful and effective contribution to their uncertainties. ▮

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■ Wendy Ewald

Stills Edinburgh January 30 to March 17

A girl reaches to an imaginary red sky and a boy ducks from toy planes crashing around his head. A black child depicts himself as a white rock star, while his white classmate imagines being the first black president of the USA. These photographs are from two series of projects that make up 'Secret Games', an international touring show that spans 30 years of the work of Wendy Ewald. The results of her collaborative practice with children

Wendy Ewald
'Black Self/White Self' 1994-97: *Black Karina* by Heather Rose

from cultural backgrounds as diverse as the USA, Saudi Arabia and South Africa are startling. In addition, the work raises a number of questions that are, in the first instance, suggested to and explored with the child and which are then in turn finally posed to the viewer.

This thought-provoking show arrives in the UK at a fortuitous time, particularly as there has been a renewed interest in forms of documentary practices. Ewald herself has encapsulated this situation: 'I think documentary has been freed up since I began – mostly because the literal narrative is not the only means to tell a story. The recognition of the relative truth of the documentary has been instrumental, as well as the fact that the form itself can be the subject of investigation.' It is not surprising that the preface of the accompanying high quality monograph to 'Secret Games' makes a direct comparison with the British artist Gillian Wearing. However, this show represents an entire body of work, which has consistently questioned documentary practices and traditions since the 1970s.

An early example of this is the project 'Kentucky', 1974-82, in which children living in a remote rural community photograph themselves or each other in their everyday surroundings. In this series, photographs of farm animals and parents appear alongside other images in which a fear, fantasy or a dream is re-enacted within a familiar setting; the real world and dream world of these children are not divided. This is indicated not only through the visual image but also by the child's caption. 'Philip and Jamie are creatures from outer space in their spaceship' is the title of Denise Dixon's photograph of twin boys sitting in an armchair with stockings over their heads. In another image, Denise may appear to be posing for the camera in a backyard, but the caption asserts: 'I am Dolly Parton.' Denise might be in her familiar surroundings but through play she is somewhere and someone else. In more ways than one, her grainy monochrome photograph is obviously a world away from the glossy PR celebrity portrait. Social documentary photography is also kept at a distance through the snapshot aesthetic and by child-as-author of each image, which includes directing the viewer to look for the not-so-apparent meaning of the photograph. This is sophisticated stuff. The adult viewer is caught between the child's unaffected spontaneity with the camera, while deciphering the multiple narratives that are being conveyed.

This doesn't even begin to address the other provocative question that is raised by Ewald's work: the status of the child as artist in a collaborative practice with an adult in which the issues of power and knowledge can be loaded. In the accompanying introductory panel to 'Secret Games' the artist states, 'I had learned to recognise what they were seeing and what kind of questions their visions were asking of the world.' This suggests that in projects such as 'Kentucky' the artist is acting as a kind of translator, which may be just one of a number of roles she will play in a project, artist/educator, author/collaborator/curator being the others.

Throughout 'Secret Games', this artistic strategy of adopting multiple positions, and blurring the boundaries between them, is extended even further in other projects, particularly those which explore the subject of identity. In two projects based in North Carolina schools, 'Black Self/White Self', 1994-1997, and *Memories from the Past Centuries*, 1999, Ewald asks the children to step into the shoes of a child whose racial identity, and even place in history, might appear to be completely other to them.

Consequently, 'Black Self/White Self' involves the work of white and African American pupils of a recently integrated school who were asked to create two photographic self-portraits, one being a literal self-portrait while the second one is as a member of the other race. Each child was given the final negatives to draw or write on, either scratching the emulsion to produce black, or using a black marker to produce white. The resulting series of large format photographic portraits, taken by Ewald and worked upon by the child, leads to two acts of transgression: the crossing of boundaries of fixed racial identity and the child's 'defacement' of the photographic negative. This literal mark-making is very ambiguous in some portraits, where the marking of racial identities seems to be associated with erasure. The name 'Snow White' appears next to a carefully drawn-in white mask, while the words etched into the emulsion of Antonio Gunther's image clearly mean that to become white is to become rootless, abandoned. Conversely Jonathan Tarp is photographed in the schoolyard holding his painting of the American flag. This has been drawn over again, and his face scratched out. This is the white pupil whose black self wants to be the first Black American president. 'Black Self/White Self' raises provocative and sometimes disturbing questions on subjects of racial identity and collaborative practice, suggesting that the question of identity politics is far from exhausted.

The most recent work, *Memories of the Past Centuries*, complicates identity boundaries even further, by asking children from North Carolina to transport

themselves back in time to another loaded location. Ewald gave each child a photograph and case history of a Jewish child who was a Holocaust survivor, and they were asked to respond by writing scripts from three very different positions. The resulting two-screen video projection includes the original photograph of a Jewish child on the one side. Next to this is the image of a contemporary child acting out one of three personae: the Jewish child, a Nazi sympathiser and a witness. This work investigates a way of making history resonate for children today and enables them to understand how individuals become implicated in traumatic events such as the Holocaust, where issues related to power and society have unspeakable consequences.

For Ewald, the most important political implication of her work is 'to contribute to imagining what it's like to inhabit different worlds'. The play between dreams, identity and history is full of social and political implications. It is also direct, candid and often exuberant. ∎

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