

Carey Young



Appearance



25 March – 2 July

About Modern Art Oxford

Located in one of the world's great cities of learning, Modern Art Oxford is a leading contemporary art space with an international reputation for innovative and ambitious programming. We promote creativity in all its visual forms as a progressive agent of social change. Our programmes, both in person and online, are shaped by a belief in dialogue between contemporary art and ideas, and celebrate the relevance of contemporary visual culture to society today.

Modern Art Oxford offers opportunities for audiences to be inspired, to enjoy, to learn, and to develop their creative potential.

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“Law has been rather overlooked by artists. It’s a rich and vast subject. Once you start to abstract it, it’s far from the rule-bound, dry bureaucracy that one may first imagine. Of course, law centres on power. Law is a field in which the very idea of what a person is, and what they can or can’t do in the world, is constructed and enacted.” – Carey Young

Carey Young (b. 1970, UK/US citizen, lives and works in London, UK) specialises in video, photography and text works, and is pioneering in her use of law as an artistic medium. This exhibition presents Young’s imaginative explorations of systems of power, gender equality and the camera. Drawing on her 20 years of research into law, the artist questions, “How does law feel to us, as individuals, as citizens? How can it touch us? How close can it get?”



Carey Young, still from *The Vision Machine*, 2020. © Carey Young.
Courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

In the first gallery, Young's photographic and text works invite us to reflect on connections between law and the body. Each text piece prompts us to participate in legal propositions and consider our own perceptions of relationships between people, politics and legal borders. Young's compelling photographs reference the abstraction of Modernist painting. Yet careful inspection reveals them to be close-up views of institutions of law, with each surface representing the physical interaction of individuals, from imprisoned people to law students or legal professionals.

In the adjoining gallery spaces, the artist presents three major video works as 'thought experiments' to encourage speculation about gender and power. Each presents a female-centric vision and critiques the dominant conventions of female identity as perpetuated by photography and cinema. *The Vision Machine* (2020) was filmed at the lens manufacturing factory of SIGMA

Corporation in Japan. Shooting with lenses made by the workers she depicts, Young features only the female technicians, editing her footage, in her words, "to suggest a speculative fiction: a lens factory run (and perhaps owned) by women... The piece uses lenses as a motif and pays homage to women as skilled makers and creators – who so often have been overlooked in any industry or field - in order to explore ideas of the male gaze, and women's identity in relation to mass production and the global dissemination of images."



Carey Young, still from *Palais de Justice*, 2017. © Carey Young.
Courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

Young's two largest video projections focus on judges, as individuals that preside over legal matters in courts of law. The critically-acclaimed *Palais de Justice* (2017) is a dreamlike evocation of a court or legal system run by women. Young surreptitiously filmed female judges and lawyers, without official permission, during trials at Brussels' main courthouse over a two-year period. Shooting through circular windows in courthouse doors,

we watch justice as performance and, along with the artist, we become implicated as witnesses and voyeurs.

Young's substantial new commission *Appearance* (2023) is a silent sequence of video portraits featuring 15 British female judges diverse in age, seniority and ethnicity. Each appears in her own judicial robes. At the request of the artist, they do not wear ceremonial judges wigs. Through Young's astute vision, we become eyewitnesses to uniquely close encounters with the operations of power.

As the artist explains, "The title, *Appearance*, refers not only to the judging of women on their appearance, but also to the importance of appearing (i.e. being summoned in person) at court, and the formal act in which a defendant submits themselves to a court's jurisdiction. The judges appear one by one. Invited to participate in what was, essentially, a reworking of Warhol's *Screen Tests* (itself inspired by the 'Most Wanted' ads of the New York Police Dept), each judge was asked to respond to the camera in their own way, within a bare film studio setting. The resulting video centres on ideas of judgement and the power relations between camera and judge, and puts the viewer 'in the dock'. Extreme close-up shots of personal details (clothes, hair, jewellery, shoes etc.) detail expressions of individuality in contrast to the robes' pomp, tradition and anonymity."

List of Works

Appearance (2023)

Single-channel HD video (from 4K), stereo sound, 49 mins 30 secs

The Vision Machine (2020)

Single-channel HD video (from 4K), stereo sound, 13 min 27 secs

Palais de Justice (2017)

Single-channel HD video (from 4K), quadraphonic sound,
17 min 58 secs

World Court (2023)

Digital C-Type photograph, 81 x 54 cm

Counter Offer (2008)

Archival inkjet prints, 2 parts, each 21 x 29 cm

Declared Void III (2005/23)

Vinyl drawing and text, dimensions variable

Obsidian Contract (2010)

Vinyl text and black mirror

Mirror 70 x 55 cm, text 25 x 19 cm

Court Artist (Supreme Court) (2023)

Digital C-Type photograph, 40.5 x 27 cm

Faculty of Law, Oxford University (2022) and

Prison Yard, Beveren, Belgium (2022)

Digital C-Type photographs, each 81 x 54 cm

Prison Yard, Leuze, Belgium (2023)

Prison Gym, Leuze, Belgium (I) (2023)

Prison Gym, Leuze, Belgium (II) (2023)

Prison Gym, Leuze, Belgium (III) (2023)

Digital C-Type photographs, 81 x 54 cm

Work credits

Appearance credits

Director: Carey Young
Production manager: Elizabeth Benjamin
Director of photography: Emma Dalesman
Editor: Carey Young
First assistant camera: Jason Henwood
Second assistant camera: Tera Pechmannova
Gaffer: Chris Broomfield
Spark: Josie Rafter
Data wrangler: Ashley Cooke
Hair and make-up: Celia Grace, Olivia Nicolau
Wardrobe: Jocelyn Liu
Production assistant: Maria Diaz
Runners: Christopher Grieves, Ellis Parkinson, James Williams
Technical editor: Sue Giovanni
VFX: Paul Willis, Jonathan Klahr
Colourist: Hannah Hunt and Pat Wintersgill, Film Shed, London

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With special thanks to: the participating judges, The Lord Chief Justice, Prof. Cheryl Thomas (UCL), Ede & Ravenscroft, Simmons & Simmons LLP, Slade School of Fine Art and TORCH (The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities), University of Oxford.

The Vision Machine credits

Director: Carey Young
Camera: Carey Young
Editor: Carey Young
Camera assistant: Mikael Senninge
Sound recordist: Kazuhiko Tomita
Colourist: Sue Giovanni
Sound design: Niall Kearney
Thanks to: SIGMA Corporation, The Elephant Trust, Daiwa Foundation and Wolfson College, University of Oxford.

Palais de Justice credits

Director: Carey Young
Camera: Carey Young
Editor: Carey Young
Camera assistant (1st): Constantin Didisheim
Camera assistant (2nd): Albin Metthey
Online editor: Sue Giovanni
Colourist: Colm O'Rourke
Production management: Ioanna Karavela, Carey Young
Sound recordists: Fabrice Osinski, Aurelien Lebourg, Carey Young
Sound design: Niall Kearney and Mike Avgeros, Soho Sonic Studios
Thanks to: Annick Mottet, Soho Sonic Studios

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Cover image: Carey Young, stills from *Appearance*, 2023. © Carey Young.
Courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.