

### Jordan Baseman: Artist Talk

Thursday 16 February / 18.30-19.30 / FREE

Artist Jordan Baseman will be talking about his exhibition *Nasty Piece of Stuff* at BALTIC in addition to screening some of his recent films, some of which have never been shown in the UK previously.

Pre-booking is essential. Please call 0191 478 1810 or e-mail [events@balticmill.com](mailto:events@balticmill.com) to reserve a place.

### Further Information

#### BALTIC Crew

Our friendly, informative BALTIC Crew are available on every floor. You can approach them with any questions and find out more about the artwork and artist in this exhibition.

#### BALTIC Library & Archive

Drop into BALTIC's Library & Archive on Level 2. This unique, free resource for the study of contemporary art and design contains information in much greater detail on this artist and exhibition. You can also visit the online database, both in the building and via the internet and view images, videos and information about our exhibitions. <http://archive.balticmill.com>

### BALTIC Podcasts

We produce a series of monthly audio and video podcasts, allowing even greater access to BALTIC's exhibitions. They are available free of charge and once downloaded can be played on any supporting portable device or on your computer. Download and subscribe via iTunes (search BALTIC) or from [www.balticmill.com/podcasts](http://www.balticmill.com/podcasts)

**BALTIC Bites** is our series of video podcasts which visually explore BALTIC exhibitions and projects in bite size form and include footage of artwork, curators, artists and staff.

**BALTIC Soundbites** is our audio podcasts series featuring talks, commentary and discussions by artists, curators and staff.

#### YouTube Channel

You can also watch the ongoing BALTIC Bites series of videos on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/balticbitesbalticbites](http://www.youtube.com/balticbitesbalticbites)

#### QUAY TV

Watch programmes on all the current exhibitions at BALTIC, as well as favourites from the archive on Quay TV, our in-house TV station. Screens are located in Quay on Level 2 and on Level 5.

# JORDAN BASEMAN

*The Most Powerful  
Weapon in this World*  
6 February – May 2010

# BALTIC

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## JORDAN BASEMAN

### *The Most Powerful Weapon in this World*

6 February – May 2010

Title is an exhibition of three recent works by American born, UK-based artist Jordan Baseman. *Joy on Toast* (2007-8), *Inside Man* (2008) and *Nasty Piece of Stuff* (2009) collectively question the nature of documentary, narrative and authenticity and explore belief systems, human experience and motivation.

The works in the exhibition were developed from the lengthy and detailed interview process that is at the heart of Baseman's work. The visual element of the recorded interviews has been removed and replaced, leaving only the voice of the subject. For the replacement material Baseman has employed various techniques including the use of archival footage and original 16mm film. The result is an intricate play between the aural and the visual, fact and construct.

In *Joy on Toast* botanical explorer Sheila Collette describes her experiences collecting plant specimens for the British Museum, Kew Gardens and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh. In *Inside Man* a con man and gangster tells of a life of crime, pride and shame. We hear of his unlawful activities and sexual prowess while onscreen we see archival footage of a beautiful young woman dancing in a nightclub with a group of friends. Alan Wakeman, a well known resident within Soho, London, recounts his early experiences in *Nasty Piece of Stuff* as a gay man in the 1960s with touching naivety, yet stoic restraint and unflinching honesty. Offering an insight into a time when homosexuality was still illegal, the work prompts comparisons with the liberal gay scene of London's Soho today.

Both *Joy on Toast* and *Inside Man* have been given original soundtracks to accompany the voice and visual material. In documentary filmmaking or recorded interviews this technique is rarely, if ever, used: we expect subjects to speak for themselves. The use of a soundtrack that signals or manipulates our reaction to the content of the narrative is a technique borrowed

from cinema. Using the technique here questions the boundaries between documentary and narrative and fact and fiction.

For *Nasty Piece of Stuff*, Baseman produced original visual material. Using stop-frame in-camera techniques, and panning the camera at slow shutter speeds, the footage of street life in late night Soho was shot on 16mm film and then painstakingly edited. The resulting material provides a frantic, agitated counterpoint to the moderate tones of the narrator, bursting, pulsing and flowing in tandem with his breath and voice. The absence of visual information relating to the subject in each of the three works focuses our attention on the voice, choice of words, syntax and the rhythm of speech. We are prompted to consider the cues we use in forming judgments about others. Foregrounding the psychological or emotional content, these conversations in the dark are reminiscent of the confessional or a conversation with a therapist. Echoing these situations, the anticipation is that sense and significance will emerge from the subject's narrative.

Though increasing the intimacy of the works, the absence of the visual of the subject denies a direct connection between the subject and the viewer. This exposes the complex relationship between documentary, fact and fiction and leads us to question the 'reality' being proposed by the artist. How far is our view of the subject manipulated or constructed? Do we all, as viewers, have the same reaction to the narrative? How far is our reception of the material in fact dependent upon our own experiences? Ultimately the works lead us to consider how our own identities are constructed.

Baseman's sensitive and personal approach uses the individual as a hook for larger themes. These subtly disarming and intimate portraits prompt questions about identity, fact and construct, about the nature of the medium of film and video and the category of art.



Image credit:  
Jordan Baseman, *Nasty Piece of Stuff* 2009 (film still).  
Courtesy of the artist and Matt's Gallery, London.  
Co-commissioned by ArtSway and The Photographers' Gallery, London