

Bonnie Camplin, *The Eight Pieces*, Camden Arts Centre, Londres

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Bonnie Camplin

The Eight Pieces, installation views,
Camden Arts Centre, London,
2016–2017.

Photo : Mark Blower

Bonnie Camplin

The Eight Pieces

“Philosophers have not hesitated to identify the real and the rational,” writes Roger Caillois, in his 1970 book, *The Writing of Stones*. “I am persuaded that a different bold step would lead to discover the grid of basic analogies and hidden connections that constitute the logic of the imaginary.” Caillois’ book is a meditation on his vast collection of stones, chosen for their imaginative properties: agate resembles an early morning sun through the clouds, another appears as a landscape of Tuscan ruins, and yet another, “le petit fantôme,” a ghost gleaming out of the dark.

To uncover the logic of the imaginary, to apprehend that which lurks just beneath the surface of the visible, to investigate the interstices embedded within the normative everyday—these ambitious and ephemeral aims are central to Bonnie Camplin’s wide-ranging practice. An intriguing, if at times gnomic, exhibition of new work at Camden Arts Centre reveals a new avenue of the artist’s persistent interest in the nature of consciousness and the means by which we perceive the world, including the “psychic relations” that underpin our connections to other people, environments, and non-human entities. What tools might we use, Camplin asks, to cognitively and creatively excise ourselves from the morass of “consensus reality” to experience alternative coordinates of truth that exist outside of the Enlightenment model confines of body and mind as bounded and discrete?

The information presented in *The Eight Pieces*, we are told, was “transmitted to and downloaded” by Camplin through psychic communication. What the information is and how this process occurred, remains ambiguous in the series of schematic drawings: simple black figures and shapes on white board backgrounds, which lie on the floor or lean propped against the walls in austere groupings. A larger than life-size outline of a gender-neutral human figure, bald and faceless, holds a bubble-lettered “is” in its palm, other hand

on hip, body tilted to the side; five cat heads, each tethered by a snaking line attached to a node in the centre of its forehead, float in a circle around a central point; tripartite arrangements of circles within circles within circles, on a circular segment of white board, recall Venn diagrams, geometry formulas, or probability models. Two small ink drawings gesture at other elements of Camplin’s wider practice, which often involves large-scale, sensitively rendered drawings that evoke mysterious narratives through their peculiar arrangement of figures and arcane aesthetic symbols.

In a video that accompanies the exhibition, Camplin states, “When I’m drawing, I’m accessing information remote in space-time. I’m decoding and objectifying information.” *The Eight Pieces* borrows the didactic language of infographics and instructive illustration only to render its simplicity indecipherable—a deliberate, sleight-of-hand occlusion that highlights the hopeful folly of semantic technology and schematic devices. To create is not simply to convey information, but to provide productive elisions within which the individual mind perceives the pure pleasure of de-instrumentalized experience and idiosyncratic meditation, the happy embrace of not knowing, but of reaching for the logic of the imaginary.

Emily LaBarge

Camden Arts Centre, London,
September 30, 2016—January 15, 2017