

October 22, 2018

# It's Nice That

## Marianna Simnett's videos explore fears and phobias surrounding the human body

Words by [Daphne Milner](#), Monday 22 October 2018



"Marianna Simnett: Blood In My Milk," 2018. Exhibition view: New Museum, New York. Photo: Maris Hutchinson / EPW Studio

"I never had colour TV growing up," says artist Marianna Simnett first off. "I used to watch *Gladiators* and *Blind Date* on Saturday night ITV. Cilla would comment on the ladies' colourful dresses and I was always sad because I couldn't see them." The result: Marianna has spent the past few years constructing vibrant, large-scale video installations, one of which — *Blood In My Milk* — is currently on display at the New Museum in New York, with another set to open at Museum für Moderne Kunst, Germany on 26 October 2018.

*Blood In My Milk* is an immersive 73-minute, five-channel video installation four years in the making, which looks at our fears and phobias surrounding the human body. Through shots of udders, cockroaches and internal organs, Marianna weaves together a series of anxious narratives spoken and sung by non-actors and medical professionals. "*Blood In My Milk* has been installed in a way that is like walking into my imagination," Marianna says. "There is no safe zone,

nowhere you can escape to in the peripheries. People stay in there for hours. Many also walk out. An unpredictable slippage between the soothing and the grotesque instills a sense of fear in viewers." Surprising paradoxes and sharp contrasts are integral to *Blood In My Milk*. The giant screens show young girls dancing and singing at a sleepover party one minute, and a graphic, unapologetically bloody close-up of an endoscopy the next.

Marianna's past four years were spent interviewing the characters, and observing how their physical features would change and adjust according to what they were saying — "it's like watching a ballet". "I observe every last detail and then I choose how to represent what they say to the world," Marianna explains. "Each screen tells a slightly different story. I've made it impossible to witness all the work at the same time because the layout is fractured and complex, just like the story I want to tell." Through her fragmented representation of our fears and phobias, Marianna shines a light on the deep-rooted, often irrational internal narratives that surround bodies and health. Marianna's use of five different screens explicitly points to the multi-faceted and complicated manifestations of our modern-day anxieties.

"I think it is impossible not to be worried about the state of living bodies today, with continual crises — from closing borders and migration control, to environmental disasters and climate change — making a sense of humour difficult to retain. But we need strong imaginations to carve out new avenues, ones where existence is not dependent upon the suffering of others." Our physicality is a subject Marianna will continue to explore; the artist is currently writing a film script for a feature and a short film about sleeplessness, and preparing for a number of international screenings and upcoming exhibitions.



Marianna Simnett, still from *Blood In My Milk*, 2018. Courtesy of the artist and Matt's Gallery



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