

ALMA PEARL

Ivan Seal: Your Guests Never Mention Me

26–28 June 2026

Albert Hotel

117 Albert Road, Blackpool FY1 4PW

Alma Pearl is pleased to announce *Your Guests Never Mention Me*, an off-site exhibition by British artist Ivan Seal (b. 1973, Stockport, UK), presented as part of The Black Lights Festival in Blackpool. Seal's practice spans painting and sound, and is informed by conceptual frameworks drawn from deconstruction, psychoanalysis, theories of the unconscious, spectrality, and the grotesque. Within this constellation, language and image are treated as unstable structures, which are continually subject to slippage, misrecognition, and revision.

As he states: "By replacing the existing artworks in each room with my own paintings, the familiar decorative function of hotel imagery is disrupted, opening a space where recognition falters and the atmosphere becomes uncertain."

Central to the exhibition is the notion of the trace, as articulated by Jacques Derrida: the mark of an absence that nonetheless produces and conditions presence. This resonates with Freud's account of repression, in which what is excluded from consciousness returns in displaced, distorted form. In Seal's work, these ideas emerge as a visual economy of transformation, where forms remain in a continuous state of becoming without resolution.

Boats become shells; shells become dancers; dancers dissolve into tide, darkness, or sediment. These unstable metamorphoses unfold across dense, nocturnal pictorial atmospheres, in which recognition is repeatedly staged and withdrawn. The tonal register recalls hauntological thinking, as well as the temporal disjunctions of British television ghost stories of the 1960s and 70s, including adaptations of M. R. James such as *Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad* (BBC, 1968, dir. Jonathan Miller). Within Blackpool's hotel architecture and decor, the exhibition intensifies a sense of layered temporality, where past atmospheres persist as residual but active presences.

Accompanying the paintings are sound works by James Leyland Kirby (The Caretaker) and Ivan Seal, transmitted via televisions installed within each room. These compositions operate as sonic residue: looping, degrading, and reconstituting over time. They mirror the instability of the painted works, establishing a dispersed dialogue between visual and auditory drift. Rather than a unified exhibition space, the work unfolds across multiple private interiors, encountered individually and out of sync.

Seal's engagement with sound originates in early experimental practice in the 2000s, where he performed in collaboration with Benedict Drew as "*nish*", also where he first met Kirby, then under the moniker VVM. Working with early computational systems, he increasingly incorporated algorithmic processes and chance operations, shifting authorship toward systems of generation, erosion, and recomposition.

This approach extends into his current practice, where materials—including psychological reports, questionnaires, and autobiographical writings—are reframed as unstable textual formations. Rather than sources of clarification, these materials function as fragmented cognitive residues, echoing the logic of still life while resisting its promise of coherence or resolution.

Installed within the hotel environment, the works become inseparable from a site already defined by transience and repetition. Each room operates as a provisional container of partial impressions, where decorative familiarity gives way to subtle dislocation. Guests move through interiors that feel at once recognisable and unsettled, as though perception is continually interrupted by what cannot quite be retrieved.