

SPECTRUM

A SURVEY OF ARTISTS' MOVING IMAGE

THE DIGITAL (IN)STABILITY

11th October 2016

RCA Dyson Building, Battersea. SW11 4AN

&

19th November 2016

Blip Blip Blip, East Street Arts LS9 7EH

Claire Davies, Anne Haaning, John Lawrence, David Steans

Guest Curated by Harry Meadley

Guest Artists

Richard Bell (RCA Screening)

&

Josephine Flynn (Blip Blip Blip screening)

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THE DIGITAL (IN)STABILITY brings together five works that negotiate the relationship between the human body and digital images. The films interrogate how digital forms can exploit moments of instability in both matter and identity. As an increasingly familiar processes of interrogating the personal and emotive through digital forms become apparent: Claire Davies, John Lawrence and David Steans explore the digital's role amongst domestic spaces and offer a seemingly intimate narrative portrayal of each protagonist. Similarly in Anne Haaning's work special effects imagery pulled from YouTube tutorials are used to find common ground between permeating digital processes and much older spiritual beliefs, provocatively questioning whether this immaterial anarchism might also offer us liberation from the very laws of physics.

This screening marks the start of a second screening program curated by Spectrum that will continue throughout 2016 and 2017. Initiated by Alex Culshaw and Rachel Wilson the curatorial project arose from a want to research and provide a platform for artists currently working with moving image. Spectrum is formed from an annual open call, the screening events are curated from the entries received and tailored to the entries rather than prescribing a particular 'theme' beforehand. A guest curator is invited to respond to each screening by contributing the work of another artist who is listed as the guest artist. Alongside this we publish a collection of writings inspired by the films selected which feature below in the order that they were screened.



David Steans *Mood Board* 2016, 6min 32, digital video.

In *Mood Board*, an unnamed protagonist describes their obsession with making Mood Boards, brought on by the 'settling' of a 'bad mood'. *Mood Board* was produced for a solo exhibition in Nantes, France, earlier this year, though functions as an autonomous work.

"I tell stories and invent histories, as well as subvert existing ones. I work across writing, sound, moving image and installation. Recent work has centred around the spoken word, including for example the rapped and sung delivery of fictive texts that unpick their own 'telling' through wordplay, repetition, 'corpsing' and vocal effects." David Steans 2016

Cut Out & Keep

Think through things. Need to. Need to breakdown to recombine. Need to depressurise the pressure behind the eyes. De-pressed and un-mind. False sense of security — pushing thumbs into sockets — blanket ban on feelings. Hands on table. Scissors in hand, pull out magazine.

Brackish backwaters at the back of the throat. Sobriety shakes. Growing internal density. Layering up, sluicing down. Worlds in front of you. Words in front of you. Look at the images. Cut out, cut out, cut out and keep.

Tracing backwards through mislaid leakings of thoughts. Stray thoughts, stray cats. Making something of — something of that. All the clipped, cropped, cracked, cached, broken, breaking, leering, fearing. Returning to the start. Pick up scissors. Intervene. Clip, clip, clip, assemble, stick. Grind teeth. Lean.

Scissors up, cut through. Tracing edges of objects, edges of faces, edges of hedges. Nothing matches, nothing means. Nothing feels the way you do, except all the other people who feel like you. Cut out, cut out, cut out and —

Imagine the collage you'd do if you were asked to do a collage of you. Images of gristle caught in glue. Tufts of hair, streaks of fat. Fleshy tracks, all arranged around fur from your cat. Scissors down, breathe. And again.

Scissors up, scissors out. Punch holes. Crop, hack. Collage, quel âge, collage as-tu? Cut out, cut out, cut out, cut out and chew.

Beth Bramich



Clare Davies *Gif Cat Gif* 2016 4min 04

This work introduces some long-standing interests I've had with GIFs, the relationship between 2D and 3D objects, and the understanding of these concepts through my relationships with my friends, my family and my cat.

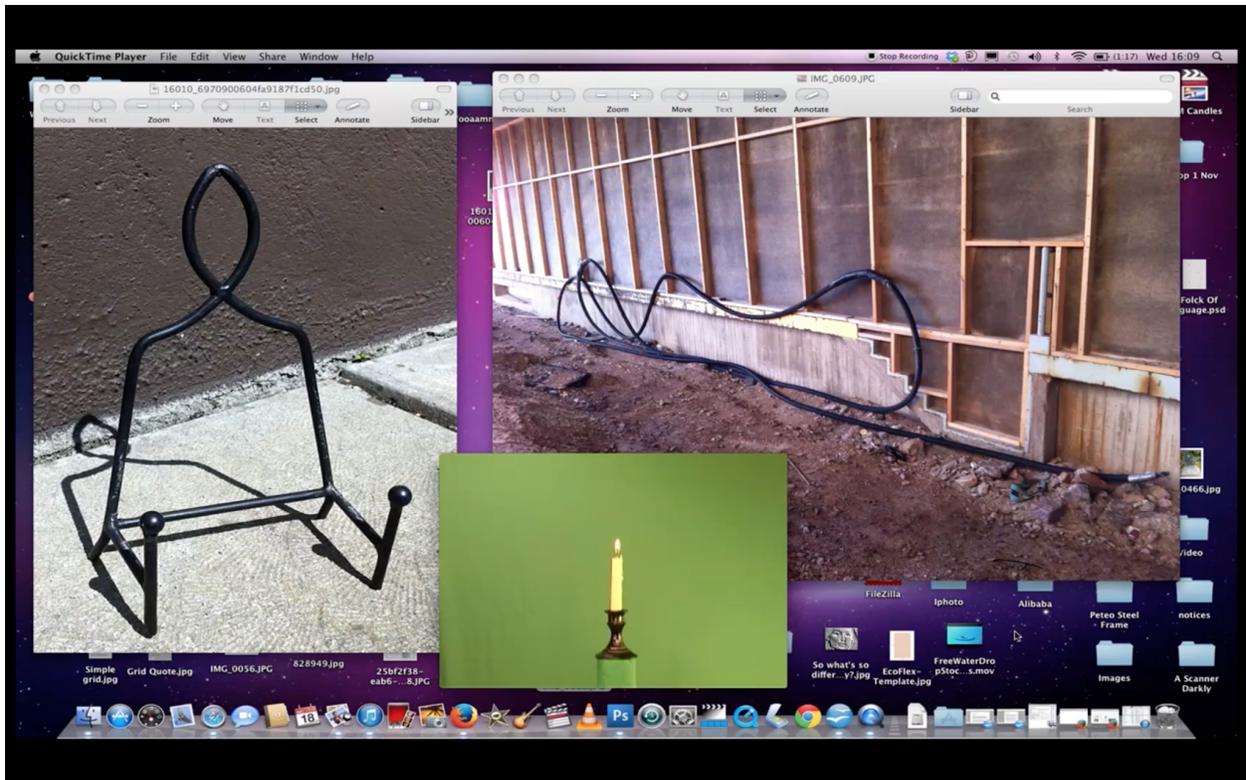
An animated GIF can loop endlessly or stop after a few sequences. The green and purple CGI blob that attracts artist Claire Davies' cat in her 7 minute 51 second video Gif Cat Gif pulsates continuously. It's hypnotic bulging prompts the artist to wonder what it is about this formless mass that fascinates her cat. Is it the shape itself, or GIFs in general?

The video is roughly divided into three sections, and illustrates Davies' interest in the translation of 2D images into 3D objects. It begins with an animated series of images (a GIF!) of Davies' cat, Audrey. She is shown pawing at a laptop screen as Davies' voiceover ruminates on the construction of GIFs and their abrupt sequencing of static images. Moving forward with this theme, Act 2 focuses on Davies' mother's request for a copy of said green and purple GIF. 'Can you make me one of those?' The artist relates the moments it took her to realise that her mother was not asking for a digital keepsake, but an animatronic model to display in her living room.

Davies composes the final section of the video from footage she has filmed of a blob of homemade slime. An attempt at presenting the GIF IRL, the form changes from pink to red to orange to green as it is lit under various lights. It, in combination with the contrasting background colour, produces an effect that is evocative of 19th century experiments into 3-D imaging. Generally known as anaglyph 3D, the process involves two slides of the same image being projected onto the same screen in complementary colours (usually red and cyan). 'Anaglyph' or 'colour-coded' glasses are used to view the imagery, which presents the two offset images separately to the left and right eyes of the viewer. Upon receiving this information, the visual cortex of the brain fuses the two 2D images giving the perception of 3D depth.

Confronted by the current impossibility of converting a computer generated entity into a physical reality, Davies hits upon the limited capacity for GIFs and other digitally born material to be shared beyond cyberspace. It is perhaps not a coincidence that her purple and green protagonist is formally reminiscent of medical illustrations of viruses or bacteria. While the GIF's small size and mesmeric looping make it extremely desirable to share, replicate and spread — to go viral — it's life beyond the screen is difficult to manufacture. Moreover in mimicking the internet cat video Gif Cat Gif highlights the function of the meme as a proxy for cute-obsessed millennials with pet-prohibiting lifestyles. In doing so it stresses the potential of, and limitations to, the virtual surrogates we have come to rely upon emotionally on a daily basis.

Kirsty White



John Lawrence, *I've Been Loving You Too Long* 2013. 4 min 04 sec

Mining a contemporary archive of objects, imagery and footage John Lawrence is drawn to reorganising familiar, recognisable elements in order to offer up new readings and open out meaning. John works within this common popular language in order to navigate our contemporary mediated experience and better understanding the way we see ourselves.

I had no idea what Labor Day meant so I sat in a café and listened to that album five, ten times while I worked. This wasn't the song I had listened to though. It was this and Smokey Robinson which I wanted at that point but the song had meant more this time. And I had Googled the lyrics so read them rather than listened.

A few days ago I realised that the blue ticks on my Whatsapp messaging probably would not be returned. At least for a few days. A pattern was emerging - read and not returned. And blocked and then unblocked. And repeat. I had decided to disappear this time into a questioning of heterosexual love rather than mourning of a lost idyll or past forms of pleasure. I had proved the point that you had wanted me to prove. Before then you had been checking for me through the night. I could see your presence by the minutes on the screen and then for a split-second 'Online' and then we'd both disappear again. United by 'Online.'

The words take on more meaning when they were there, printed. Listening again to them over these sculptural forms they become parodic with the icons on the computer sat between them. A metaphor for meeting online or the distance and closeness felt by monitoring 'read' ticks at the end of messages. The real and imagined side by side and the attempt to manipulate and twist a person into a set of recognizable particular desires/statistics. And the inevitable failure of this. You found me through my statistics and now I had returned to that. Or maybe I had never developed from those flattened physical attributes and that was the problem.

The compression of these emotions into a looped video – material process, labour, duration – makes them almost invisible. And that repression or learnt repression – maybe its best you don't tell me everything. And then the flitting distractions between these two shapes - one is entangled, the other flaccid but they sit alongside each other and inhabit that space. Click and play and pause. And then start again and you're there but its late and I know you're also probably not. And this flickering burning candle that I probably shouldn't mention but layered over the top of these two twisted bodies, its hard not to.

I had tried to block you on Facebook and then Whatsapp and then I realized there was a way on Gmail where you just went to spam so that was it. You were digitally invisible. Between these two states. Your status and the repressed - I'm not sure if there was any left of you. So there you remain hanging and mediated by this song and the lyrics which now I notice. Or at least I found online.

Louisa Lee



Anne Haaning *KhoiSan Medicine* 2014 Single screen video (12 min. 20 sec.) – projection 8:3

Anne Haaning was one of the selected artists for the Jerwood/Film and Video Umbrella Awards: ['What Will They See of Me?' 2014](#). She was commissioned to produce *KhoiSan Medicine* which was shown in the [Jerwood Space](#), London and the [CCA](#), Glasgow alongside Lucy Clout, Kate Cooper and Marianna Simnett.

The work was subsequently shortlisted for [Selected IV](#), videoclub and Film London Artists' Moving Image Network, Star and Shadow Cinema, Newcastle, CCA, Glasgow, Fabrica, Brighton, FACT, Liverpool, Whitechapel Gallery, London.

KhoiSan Medicine is an exploration of contemporary myth through the unlikely pairing of special effects youtube tutorials and anthropological studies of the KhoiSan – the aboriginal people of Southern Africa. Using fragmentary sound-bites and particle based animation it connects digital production and circulation with ancient beliefs about the spiritual nature of the universe. Here disintegration and physical entropy reigns aided by the resilience and adaptability of technology. It seeks to emphasise the instability of matter and identity in a digital context, and provocatively questions whether this immaterial anarchism might also offer us liberation from the very laws of physics.

Cast:
Gemma Brockis

Susanne Dietz

Music:
Isambard Khroustaliov

Cats:
Lille Bent
Stinker the cat

Production Assistants:

Lucy Ashton
Britt Hatzius
Dorine van Meel
Sarah Pager
Gro Sarauw
Kum Sung CHOI

Special Thanks:
University of East London
Neil Bennun
Maia Conran, University of East London
Steven Eastwood, University of East London
Chris Low

Executive Producer:
Steven Bode
Film and Video Umbrella

Editor:
Anne Haaning

Director of Photography:

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This is the wind, you whisper in my ear

Inspiration: Breathing in

My understanding of the lungs comes from biology lessons at school, when I learnt to draw them as inverted trees. From the main trunk of the trachea to the branching bronchioles and bunches of alveoli with blue and red capillaries twisting over their surface. Our lungs contain 500 million of these microscopic sacks. It's hard to conflate the image of fleshy, spongy dampness with the feeling of inhaling; filling my lungs with air it's easier to imagine a cavity held within the taught, stretched skin of a balloon.

The breath is invisible yet tangible, able to slip so stealthily in and out of our consciousness. It is mundane but we give it super powers. Take a deep breath and count to three. Breathe to find calm. Breathe through the pain. A breath is a moment of resolve.

Within 10 seconds of our birth we take our first breath, which is followed by a continuous automatic loop: in, out. The lungs start to develop in the womb, but are filled with fluid until that first breath. Then they continue to grow, adapting to their environment. At sea level becoming smaller than those at higher altitudes, where oxygen is less concentrated so each breath must be larger.

Breathing beats a rhythm to our lives; we regain some control by overriding the autopilot. How long can you hold your breath?

Take one, two, three big breaths before you dive under. This will make your blood as oxygenated as possible. Make the final one the largest as you lift up to dive down. Swim deep and strong and fast and don't stop. Even when your breath is running out and your chest starts to hurt. Don't rise up until your fingers touch the wall at the deep end. Break the surface gasping for air, that sweet relief. These childhood challenges teach you something of your mortality.

Expiration: Breathing out

A temporary or minor problem or setback: a hiccough. A sneeze, a splutter, a splurt. A sigh.

Our lungs are built for gas exchange, to facilitate respiration. The alveoli are the entry point for oxygen, and exit point for carbon dioxide and water vapour. I imagine that I'm sucking in a string of O₂s and blowing back out those pesky CO₂s. But the bulk of what we inhale and exhale is nitrogen. 78 per cent is just padding, in it goes then whoosh back out.

But that air is not wasted. The exhalation from our lungs is used to make sound; from grunts to groans, shouts, whistles and laughs, it is the wind that powers our voice. With the shape of our mouth we control pressure and flow, we send the breath back out vibrating through our vocal chords.

(P.T.O.)

Even without verbalisation the expressiveness of the breath can communicate mood, health, intentions. The purpose of the yawn, an augmented breath, is yet to be scientifically proven or agreed upon. Many viable suggestions have been made, from cooling the brain to providing a sudden intake of oxygen or expulsion of carbon dioxide. Other theories explain why yawns are contagious. Within a community or pack a yawn can communicate visually to others the need to stay awake and vigilant, or can act as a way to synchronise sleeping patterns by passing on tiredness.

We think our bodies have firm boundaries, but we are porous, surrounded by a chemical haze. We leak out carbon dioxide, water vapour, methane, and invisible clouds of signals. Sometimes we are breathing in much more than air.

Your breath is heavy in my ear, hot and soft. The comfort of another body breathing, that steady rhythm I have always known. I breathe in your smell, feel its humid almost-solidity flow through me, flicking a switch.

Jessie Bond

Guest curator:

Harry Meadley (b. 1990) is an artist based in Leeds. He takes a varied yet interconnected approach to art making that materialises in many different forms ranging from sculpture to photography, installation, film, performance, and writing amongst others. Recent works have ranged from performing an one-hour stand-up comedy special to releasing an audiobook on Amazon and iTunes to recording vocal sessions with international synthetic pop star Hatsune Miku. Though predominately utilising humor as a tool within his work, there is a growing sincere and heartfelt quality emerging in more recent works that have become more autobiographical and personal in nature.

Recent exhibitions include Associate Artists, Liverpool Biennial; General Studies, OUTPOST, Norwich; The Kippenberger Challenge, de Appel, Amsterdam; Moments of Zen, Turf Projects, London; Italian and British artists meet Milan N.2, BeatTricks, Milan; Display Show, Eastside Projects, Birmingham; LEVEL 3, Spike Island Test Space, Bristol; and Emotional Resources, Northern Gallery of Contemporary Art, Sunderland.

Further information on the artists and writers can be found on the below links:

Richard Bell - <http://www.milanigallery.com.au/artist/richard-bell>

Beth Bramich - <https://bethbramich.com/>

Jessie Bond - <http://www.jessiebond.co.uk/>

Claire Davies - <http://www.clairedavies.info>

Josephine Flynn - <http://www.international3.com/artist/josephine-flynn/>

Anne Haaning - <http://www.annehaaning.com>

John Lawrence - <http://www.johnlawrence.tv/cv.html>

Harry Mradley - <http://s207554463.co.uk/>

David Steans - <http://www.grinkinginthedraveyard.co.uk/>

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