

SPECTRUM

A SURVEY OF ARTISTS' MOVING IMAGE

CAPTURE

Evelyn Yard, London, W1T 1HN
Thursday 22nd October, 7 pm

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Capture

Guest curated by Gareth Evans.
Jamie Jenkinson, Sasha Litvintseva, You Qi.
Guest artist: Cordelia Swan.

In these works formal choices highlight how image is physically restrained within the frame, mirroring our own visual perspective and the frames of other image producing media - cinema, film photography and digital photography. Personal histories are mixed among broader concerns of nostalgia, familiarity and cultural memory helping to explore the ways sentient experience and awareness is translated in the production and consumption of images.

Sasha Litvintseva's *Immortality, Home & Elsewhere* weaves around a theory of immortality based on the premise that our lives are a summation of all the information we consume and process, gleaned from existing theories from a number of scientific disciplines, the film draws on her personal history's brush with a global nuclear disaster, to precipitate a meditation on the potential role of an individual in the imaginary film/event of our individual or collective death: as a protagonist, or as an extra appearing in a handful of frames at the very moment of their death.

The (im)possibility of a singular setting for such an event is at question, and there is a temporal flattening accompanying the spatial flattening, both as a collapse of history implied by the end of potential futures, but also the flattening of time implicit in our fascination with ruin.

The uncanny familiarity we gain with spaces through mainstream cinema, which is itself becoming increasingly domesticated, is not unlike what is made possible with street-view. By releasing locations such as the pyramids and the Taj Mahal, themselves monumental attempts at immortality, street-view is declaring itself as a competitor to tourism, tourism itself a chase of experience and self-documentation.

The virtual experience may not quite compare to the real thing yet, but the mediated virtual experience carries the same indexical value as the mediated real thing, being one step removed from the physical world. The question of authenticity in terms of cinematic authorship as well as consumption remains to be answered.

If you could experience everything that ever was, would you still be afraid?

Jamie Jenkinson produces much of his work on an iPhone (the world's most popular camera). He utilises the camera's in-built features and recording process - the medium within the medium - to produce abstracted images through unconventional recording methods without post-production. His medium specific videos discuss the spectator's consumerist understanding of video's hyperreal image, as the camera's recording process imitates and distorts form and structure into performative, gestural interactions of camera, artist and spectator.

Shaky-Cam is a recording method he uses to disrupt consumer cameras in-built 'steady-cam'. By moving the camera rapidly new perceptions of motion, form and shape, illusory edits and abstraction occur. Using this process in certain environments causes further interaction with light, human-made and natural form, repetition and perspective where aesthetic judgement and composition form new works. The images' likeness to reality, dipping in and out of representation and abstraction question the honesty of video images in contemporary society.

Disintegrations, authenticity and history

Go to a launch of a book about radical economics at the ICA and half the crowd is dressed in full tracksuits, rollups thoughtfully arranged to reveal a black Nike tick on pristine white cotton. I spotted a couple of the same guys at an artist talk later in the week, at another of London's most forward-thinking institutions, which just happens to be bankrolled by a pro-Israel lobbyist, Tory donor and billionaire magnate. Here are some hoodies that David Cameron might do well to hug.

Meanwhile in Beijing, a throbbing punk scene re-captures all the energy that we thought had dissipated into the ether of the last three decades, it gets inhaled and spat out again, rebirthed, Ramones shirts in Wuhan worn brazenly without the backwash of nostalgia.

The point in either case is not cultural appropriation or commodification. Disintegration, though, is the hallmark of the neoliberal superstructure. It's the liberation of culture into the universal free market of labour. All that is solid melts into the cloud. It's a bit like high-frequency trading, in that the vectors change so fast you're not sure where you're going to end up. Networks of complicity and conspiracy, accidental doppelgängers and bad double entendres. You're either downloaded and upcycled as part of a new Salvage line; or just stranded in the cache, melted down and recast, indexed but not quite in demand.

When we think of authenticity, we think of our body-bound selves. Memories have insides and outsides, all skin and guts; we stumble into a state of mind and crawl back out again, and we accord provenance to narratives of space, place and temporal linearity. Even now, as history outgrows these peculiarly delicate sensibilities.

To take a nosedive from the panoptic topography of Google Earth into the imaginary *dérive* of Streetview is to take it one step at a time, to express space like a proper sentence. The internet, after all, is a series of tubes, channelled by little more than a collective unconscious of everyday desires.

We're told that the digital is a cut in the real. The word itself (referring to discrete values; archaically: 'up to ten fingers'), captures the continuity of the world and renders it into the graveyard of representation. But is not the opposite also the case: that it's we who always come up short, who incessantly demand stasis instantiations over the flux.

So what if you could be everywhere at once? If only images weren't circumscribed as objects, but relayed as signals, semblances dredged momentarily from an ocean of noise, before the net breaks and the fragments fall away again. One pixel is as good as another, and if you had infinite number of pixels locked in a room, you'd have the world post-representation, if you like, you'd be able to brute-force every moment in history.

In a world of memes, there's something oddly tautological about the phrase, (artist's) 'moving image'.

Orientation really only means that something is rising

I am walking down the road. Out of the corner of my eye I see a blackbird perched on the roof of a car. I glance again and see that it was never there. On the ground, as I walk further, a flickering pigeon forms a ball with its body and rolls away from my footsteps as a crumpled paper bag.

My body blisters with heat and everything palpitates.

Light shines more brightly than before.

My eyes water.

Liquid streams down my face.

I blink and blink and blink and the world shudders.

(Some blackbird darts down and lands on an apple tree. Its wings flap as it hunkers down to excavate the interior flesh of a browning apple. Its yellow beak burrows away at the soft meat. The tree shivers against the thrashing wings.)

Blue lobelia drifts into focus before it, too, begins to waver: this blossom signals malevolence. The chemical compounds contained within the minute cellular structures of the plant cause trembling, cold sweats and nausea. They disrupt the rhythms and flows of the body. What should stay in spills out: every pore becomes an orifice and every orifice a fountain. A blue wash of petals reorients the body.

(A bright blue upper lip made of two smaller, erect lobes with a lower lip split and spreading into three distinct lobes. The petals insert into a two-chambered ovary with wiry stamens attaching to the base of a corolla. The filaments fuse together and split again to form anthers crowning with tufts of fur.)

Orientation really only means that something is rising. It refers to the mount of the sun in the east to the centre of the sky at midday. The sun rises. An erection rises. Orientation decides the focus of the stroke but the rhythm stays the same. A gentle fap, fap, fap flapping of the blackbird's wing.

I focus on the expanding glow of the sun.

A rinse of gold.

I shudder

and

everything reorients.

“Mulder: Whatever happened to playing a hunch, Scully? The element of surprise, random acts of unpredictability. If we fail to anticipate the unforeseen, or expect the unexpected in the universe of infinite possibilities, we may find ourselves at the mercy of anyone or anything that cannot be programmed, categorized, or easily referenced. What are we doing up here, Scully? It's hotter than hell.

Scully: I know you're bored in this assignment, Mulder, but unconventional thinking is only gonna get you into trouble now.”

The X-files movie, Fight the Future

In Sasha Litvintseva's video piece 'Immortality, home and elsewhere' we are asked if we can process the information that “the universe will come to an end”.

A text appears at the bottom of the screen superimposed over a panning Google street view “The first time you come to New York you feel like you've been there before”. Traffic sounds can be heard. I think of family photo albums. Seeing the photo before visiting. We are told that Google maps could be a new form of tourism. Character and humanity is placed onto the stars: A way to relate not just to specific places but also time. To relate to the nostalgia itself that the film brings up with its clips of 90s disaster movies and direct questions to the viewer.

Nostalgia is a division and domination of imagination by zones of time. It is the energetic application of imagination to the past, generally to the exclusion of the future and always to the exclusion of the present. This exclusion of the future with regards to nostalgia may nowadays be seen within a specific context of the last 50 years or so of Sci-Fi. This exclusion is equally apparent in popular science, whereby ideas capture public imagination without all the maths behind it having to be learned. Theoretical change within science and how the future in a Sci-Fi film or novel is depicted is often dependent upon the particular present in which it is being written or planned out. Anchored in the present in the intro to the film by familiar suburban images and the flow of planes overhead, we become immersed in a

multi layered personal story with the artist where fragments of biography, pop songs, historic disasters and imaginary blockbuster movie catastrophes intermingle. This matches the text and voice over in content in terms of the theme of information/time/speed.

Litvintseva has stated that:

“The work starts from an idea and a place, and then I am very responsive to that place and the contingencies at the time of recording, and it's in the edit that it gets written almost, where the initial ideas come to bear on it somewhat, but also then it's the recorded material itself that I am being responsive to... The piece is different somewhat as it came out of a multitude of directions at once, and was actually initially a note-to-self type commentary on some unanswered questions raised by Evergreen which I just finished beforehand. So in a way it is research maybe, and in a way it is a commentary on my other work, and certainly on itself also as its fairly self-referential in criticising/noting the use of certain architecture to invoke certain things...”

I would suggest the piece itself becomes a form of tourism. Not just for places/images but also for ideas themselves and what we can do in the face of a rising tide of information and facts. It asks where we are or end up after all is said and done.

Spectrum initiated from a want to research and provide a platform for artists currently working with moving image. Spectrum has formed from an open call, the screening events are curated from the entries received and tailored to the entries rather than prescribing a particular 'theme' beforehand. The guest curator for each event responds to the works entered in the open call and selects the guest artists.

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