

Elizabeth Price

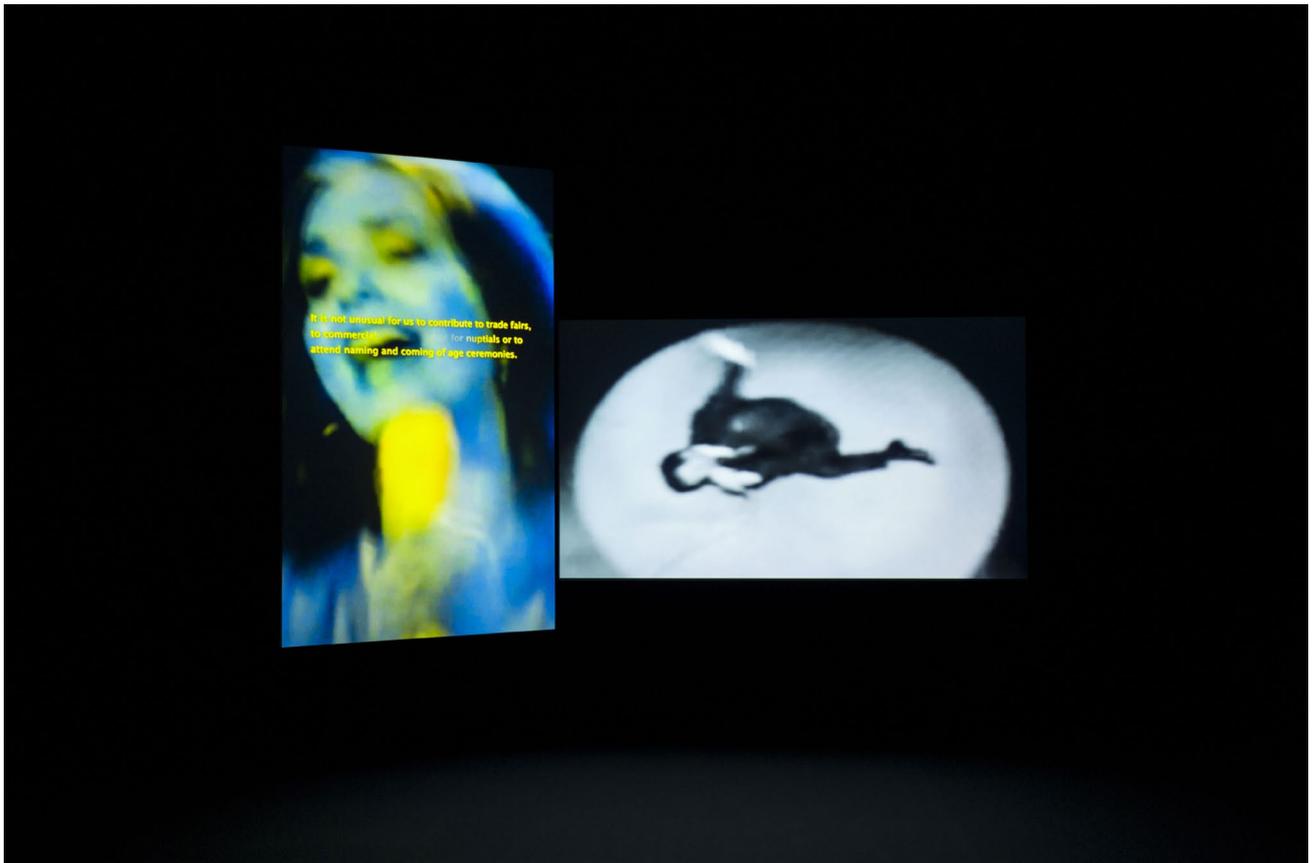
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STANCE or DISTANCE? Connecting Myself to the World
Exhibition view, Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto, 2015



K, 2015
Exhibition view, Unlimited Art Basel, Basel 2015



K, 2015

Two screen HD video installation

230 x 130 cm each

7 min 15

Link to video work: [K, 2015](#)

Installation view, Unlimited Art Basel, Basel, 2015



K, 2015

HD video installation

7 min 15

Installation on two screens

230 x 130 cm each

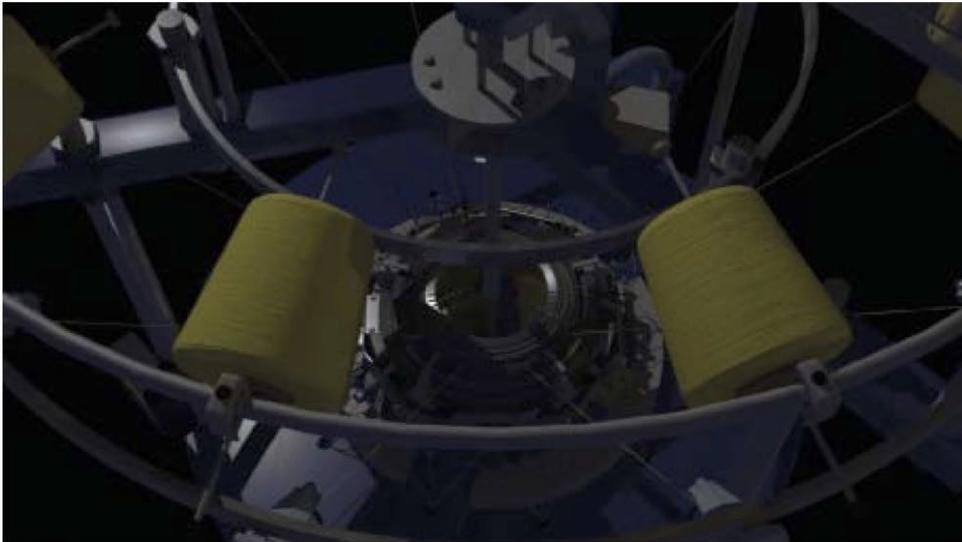
Vimeo link: <https://vimeo.com/130197064>

Password: ep100ep100

K builds on the ideas and research explored in a previous work called *SUNLIGHT* (2013), which speeds chronologically through an historic archive of thousands of images of the sun taken from 1875–1945. Photographed in high temperature 'K' light, the images are presented as a staccato animation, a feverishly ticking meter for a narrative told by a self-proclaimed 'troupe of professional mourners.' Price similarly revisits a series of photographs taken from hosiery packaging, featuring young women in highly expressive, stylised poses of fear, dread or despair. They are pictured shielding their eyes; apparently from the camera and/or the sun. In *K*, these women become the film's central protagonists.

FRIEZE #174, October 2015
"Trying to Escape a Pattern" by Lavinia Greenlaw





1

By repeating ourselves, we activate memory.

Nicole began to run very suddenly, so suddenly that, for a moment, Dick did not miss her. Far ahead he saw her yellow dress twisting through the crowd, an ochre stitch along the edge of reality and unreality, and started after her. Secretly she ran and secretly he followed.¹

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* (1934) moves from the baked and rotting colours of the French Riviera to the anaesthetizing blue and white of Switzerland and the clinic where Dick Diver works. His wife and former patient, Nicole, is in torment, a stitch unravelling. Her dress is ochre – a subterranean colour that looks unnaturally exposed. They have stopped at a fairground where, in front of a Punch and Judy show, Nicole has a sudden imperative. She must move and move fast, so as to keep the line between reality and unreality clear.

Yellow pulls into the foreground just as it pushes us away. There is something desperate or strenuous about the colour, even in its sunniest form. Writing 40 years before Fitzgerald in *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), Charlotte Perkins Gilman focused the story of a breakdown on the volatile nature of the hue: 'The colour is repellent, almost revolting; a smouldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight.'²

A bleached shade of ochre, one that is equally troubling, draws the eye in Elizabeth Price's new two-screen HD video installation, *K* (2015). We watch a machine manufacturing yellow tights, the same flat shape being spun and folded with efficient magic and then bluntly packaged.

The artist uses high-temperature 'K' light for filming, which has a draining and cooling effect. 'K' stands for kelvin, the unit of measurement for colour temperature: the higher the temperature, the cooler the light. In this hushed and diagrammatic visual register, Price places the machine in tight focus, giving its processes an eerie intimacy. Human presence comes only in the interjected footage of Crystal Gayle and her backing singers who, like the machine, are broken down into repeated gestures. Swaying hips, undulating fingers, theatrical expressions and swinging hair gather urgency in repetition; they pile up like the models on the packets that the machine spits out. By repeating ourselves, we activate memory. By repeating ourselves, we become real.

In the corner of the screen, a small flickering disc reprises Price's two-channel projection, *Sunlight* (2013), a composite of 50 years of photographs of the sun, also taken using 'K' light, so as to remove its glare. Here, the sun is reduced to an emblem or logo. Beneath it, a text (also in yellow) is being spelled out, while simultaneously being spoken by a voice that sounds as synthetic as the colour looks.

The yellow of *K* is not of the earth: it is a simulation. As are the Krystals, the professional mourning troupe whose practice is described by the text. These mourners follow protocols as intricate and nuanced as any other ancient rite. Yet, the description given here is a very modern analysis of the mechanics of emotional and visual impact. The expression of feeling is an act of manufacture. We use the repeated gesture in the form of words, dance and song. Our grief is always a performance.

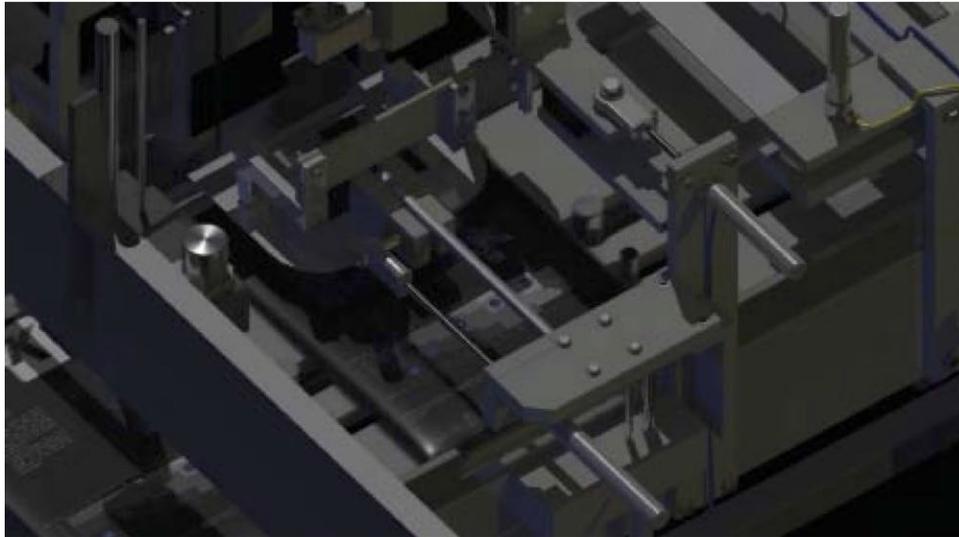
Each of the two screens is split into two-thirds image and one-third text, with a little leakage between. The two thirds might be our conscious and subconscious, and the text a kind of super-consciousness in which things are made deceptively clear. Or should that be painfully clear? Such formal enactments as the rites of mourning have always enabled us to channel and express what we feel.

It is the strangest yellow, that wall-paper!
It makes me think of all the yellow things
I ever saw – not beautiful ones like butter-
cups, but old foul, bad yellow things.³

W.H. Auden observed in his lecture 'The World of Opera' (1968) that it is at times of emotional extremis that we burst into song. Once our feelings reach a certain height, local details get left behind and what remains is universal. Our feelings are simplified and brightly lit. So, what do we sing?

We all have experienced occasions, when, as we say, we feel like singing. We may sometimes even attempt to sing, but if we do we are dissatisfied with the results for two reasons. First, most of us cannot produce pleasing sounds; second, even if we are professional singers, we cannot compose a song expressly for the occasion but can only sing some song that is already in existence, which we happen to know ...⁴

We sing a song we happen to know. We repeat ourselves and each other, the repetitions hardening into pattern, formula, routine.



By repeating ourselves, we become real.

Step to the side, shimmy, clap, wave, spin. Set to music, these are the gestures of dance. Without music, they appear desperate, even agonized. Trapped in a spotlight, a singer spins and drops. He keeps capsizing, like Alberto Giacometti's sculpture *L'homme qui chavire* (Falling Man, 1950), as if the world has suddenly withdrawn its support. It's just part of his act but, isolated like this, as a single gesture without music, the man well and truly hits the ground, covering his eyes as if felled by the glare. In repetition, the moment becomes both more real and less so: a possible crisis or a party trick.

The duration of *K* is seven minutes and 15 seconds: the film seems both short and long as it's driven forward by words and noise, and held back by image and gesture. Set against the noise of the factory, dance becomes a process of stalled and repeated manufacture. The machine noise is heightened and enriched so as to be musical. When it evolves into actual music, everything takes shape and makes sense. It dances. And then it all gives way again. What finally emerges from the machine is just something in outline.

The pattern of the film is of a woman trying to escape a pattern – like Édouard Vuillard's sister about to emerge from, or disappear into, more yellow wallpaper. (His painting *Interior: Mother and Sister of the Artist* was made in 1893, just a year after *The Yellow Wallpaper* was published.) The yellow check on her black dress cages her in. She is struggling to take, or hold onto, shape. She is out of proportion, like Gayle's floor-length tresses. As the voice describes how long hair is prized by professional mourners and how it is implemented as

a phantom or a shadow, we watch Gayle singing country songs, making country gestures and giving us (in silent outline) words 'we happen to know'. But the extremity of her hair tips this all off-balance. It asserts the push and pull of Nicole's yellow dress and disturbed mind. The sexual tips over into the animal. What was most attractive when kept in proportion now threatens us and even repels.

What do we spin? The yarn, the body, the hair. And then there is the spin put on language, the surprise angle taken so that meaning swerves. The constructs of authenticity and authority are spun until they blur and so appear to take shape. The film's synthesized voice has a multi-strand register. Biblical, testimonial, fabulist and futurist, it could also be a research report, manual or corporate guide: 'As sorrow has increasingly become contingent to all public and social affairs, any occasion of significance requires its proper acknowledgement.'

The tensions out of which we build perception are made explicit as we try to watch, listen and read at the same time. Text, sound and image are held in centrifuge so that we experience a fraying attentiveness. A loose thread is being pulled. Meanwhile, the connections we usually make without thinking are subverted. Music is replaced by the punch and clamp rhythms of the machine. Emphasis shifts from the release of dance to the ways in which we are compelled to take shape.

The models posed on the packaging look cornered and dazzled. They shield their eyes as if to be fixed as an image of femininity is to be in a place of obliterating brightness. But we are dependent upon such images. We

need shapes to inhabit and these include clothes and song and dance, and people who will stand in the place of our grief.

The text claims that outbreaks of dancing mania occurred when the mechanical loom was invented. What could be more entrancing than the possibility of moving so fast that you forget yourself? Only then you find yourself back where you started. Secretly we run and secretly we follow. ♦

1. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*, 1934, Penguin Books, London, 1985, p. 207
2. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 1892, in *Herland and The Yellow Wallpaper*, Vintage Classics, London, 2015, p. 198
3. *Ibid.* p. 120
4. W.H. Auden, 'The World of Opera', *Secondary Worlds*, Faber & Faber, London, 1968, p. 76

Lavinia Greenlaw is a writer who lives in London, UK. She is currently working on a book about seeing and not seeing further.

Elizabeth Price lives in London, UK. Her work User Group Disco (2009) is currently on show at Turku Art Museum, Finland. In 2016, she will have solo exhibitions at Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin, Germany, the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, UK, and The Model, Sligo, Ireland.

1 & 2
K, 2015, HD video stills

Courtesy
the artist and MOT International,
London and Brussels

Elizabeth Price

Elizabeth Price (b.1966) predominantly works in moving image. She uses high-definition digital video, with live action, motion graphics, 3D computer animation and sound. Her work is informed by histories of narrative cinema and experimental film, but more precisely concerned with digital video, and in particular its contemporary heterogeneity as a medium used for navigation, advertising, knowledge organisation as well as cinematic special effects.

Price uses these attributes to explore and dramatically map the value and meaning of cultural artefacts, collections and archives. As such her work can be related to conceptual art and institutional critique. But, whilst she takes up certain formal attributes, and political concerns of those movements, she does not employ their documentary tendencies to narrate artefacts. Instead she uses modes of fiction and fantasy, drawing on artistic and literary surrealism, horror cinema and science fiction.

In 2012 Price was awarded the Turner Prize for her solo exhibition 'HERE' at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead. She was featured in the British Art Show 2011, with USER GROUP DISCO (2009, HD video 15 minutes), and has recently had solo presentations at Turku Art Museum, Turku; Cinémathèque Robert-Lynen, Paris; Bloomberg International and Chisenhale Gallery London; The Stedelijk, Amsterdam, The New Museum, New York; Julia Stoschek Collection, Düsseldorf; The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, Stockholm; Kunsthalle Winterthur, Switzerland and the Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal.

Upcoming shows include: Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin; The Model, Sligo, Ireland; Natural History Museum, Berlin and a major touring exhibition curated by the artist for Hayward Touring, opening in 2016 at the Whitworth, Manchester.

Price lives and works in London.

Born in 1966, Bradford, United Kingdom
Lives and works in London, United Kingdom

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2016

Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin (upcoming)

The Model, Sligo (upcoming)

Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin (upcoming)

Elizabeth Price: A RESTORATION, Contemporary Art Society Annual Award for Museums 2013, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (in collaboration with the Pitt Rivers Museum and Ruskin School of Drawing & Fine Art)

2015

ELIZABETH PRICE: USER GROUP DISCO, Darkroom, Turku Art Museum, Turku

2014

SUNLIGHT, Index, The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, Stockholm

Elizabeth Price, Kunsthalle Winterthur, Winterthur

Sleep, MOT International, Brussels

Number Nine: Elizabeth Price, Julia Stoschek Collection, Düsseldorf

USER GROUP DISCO and *THE HOUSE OF MR X*, Hå gamle prestegard, Nærbø

2013

THE WOOLWORTHS CHOIR OF 1979, Projections Series, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montréal

SUNLIGHT, Focal Point Gallery, Southend-On-Sea

USER GROUP DISCO, Contemporary Art Society, London

2012

Turner Prize 2012, Tate Britain, London

THE TENT, Bloomberg SPACE, London

CHOIR, Bielefelder Kunstverein, Bielefeld

THE WOOLWORTHS CHOIR OF 1979, MOT International, London

2011

HERE, The Baltic, Newcastle

CHOIR, New Museum, New York

2010

Frieze Projects, Frieze Art Fair, London

Perfect Courses and Glistening Obstacles, Tate Britain, London

USER GROUP DISCO, Pavilion, Leeds

2009

USER GROUP DISCO, Spike Island, Bristol

2008

O Fontana, MOT International, London

2007

AT THE HOUSE OF MR X, Stanley Picker Gallery, London

2006

A PUBLIC LECTURE AND EXHUMATION, Studio Voltaire, London

CRY, MOT International, London

2005

Prepare Now, Mildmay Club, London

2004

Jerwood Artists Platform, Jerwood Space, London

2003

DENNESS, Mobile Home, London

2001

HELP, Mobile Home, London

Selected Group Exhibitions

2016

Museum ON/OFF, Centre Pompidou, Paris

SECRET SURFACE. WHERE MEANING MATERIALIZES, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin

The Indivisible Present, Modern Art Oxford, Oxford

The Green Ray, Wilkinson Gallery, London

Hayward Touring exhibition, Whitworth Museum, Manchester; De La Warr

Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea; Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea, Curated by

Elizabeth Price

MashUp: The Birth of Modern Culture, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver

2015

Lofoten International Art Festival, Sleneset

Immersive Frames, Celda Contemporanea Universidad del Claustro de Sor Juana Mexico, Mexico City

STANCE or DISTANCE? Connecting Myself to the World, Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto

UNBLINKING, Centre for Contemporary Art FUTURA, Prague

The Curves of the Needle, Baltic 39, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Art Basel Unlimited, Art Basel, Basel
Zabludowicz Collection: 20 Years, Zabludowicz Collection, London
How to Construct a Time Machine, MK Gallery, Milton Keynes

2014

Temperamental, Doris McCarthy Gallery, Toronto
Death and Dying, MAG3 Project Space, Vienna
USER GROUP DISCO, IndieMovingImage Programme, CAM Fundacao Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon
A Thousand Doors, The Gennadius Library of The American School of Classical Studies, Athens. Curated by Iwona Blazwick
Artists' Film International: Elizabeth Price, Whitechapel Gallery, London; Belgrade Cultural Centre, Belgrade; Video-Forum (n.b.k), Berlin; GAMEC, Bergamo; Fundacion PRÓA, Buenos Aires; New Media Center, Haifa; Hanoi/DOCLAB, Hanoi; Para/Site Art Space, Hong Kong; Istanbul Modern, Istanbul; Centre for Contemporary Arts Afghanistan (CCAA), Kabul; Ballroom Marfa, Marfa, TX; National Centre for Contemporary Arts, Moscow; Project 88, Bombay; KINOKINO Centre for Art and Film, Sandnes; Cinemathèque de Tanger, Tanger; City Gallery Wellington, Wellington
EVA International, Limerick City
The Surface of the World: Architecture and the Moving Image, Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Manille
Private Utopia: Contemporary Works from the British Council Collection, Japanese Museum Tour, Japan

2013

Assembly: A Survey of Recent Artists' Film and Video in Britain 2008–2013, Tate Britain, London
The Narrators, The Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. Curated by Lucy MacDonald with The Royal Standard
British and Polish Art Since 1990, CCA, Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw. Curated by Tom Morton and Marek Gozdziwski
V22 Collection Show, V22 Workspace, The Biscuit Factory, London
The Objects, Glasgow Sculpture Studios, Glasgow
Relatively Absolute, Wysing Art Centre, Cambridge

2012

Autumn Almanac: The Voice and the Lens, IKON Gallery, Birmingham
The Sculpture Show, Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh

2011

British Art Show 7 – In the Days of the Comet, Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham; Hayward Gallery, London; Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow; Plymouth City Museum et Art Gallery, Plymouth

Light Reading: Crises in Modernism and the Language of Dissent, Arnolfini, Bristol

A Direct Experience in Local Time, Collective Gallery, Edinburgh; Fettes College, Edinburgh

A Fire in the Master's House is Set, Chapter Gallery, Cardiff

Cross-Check, Petra Rinck, Düsseldorf

Archivo-Archivante, Intermediae, Madrid

We Are Grammar, Pratt Manhattan Gallery, New York

2010

Frieze Film, Frieze Art Fair, London

The Chained Lady, the Microscope and the Southern Fish, SoFA Gallery, University of Canterbury, Christchurch

2009

Every Version Belongs to the Myth, Project Arts Center, Dublin

The Sculpture Show, Eastside Projects, Birmingham

The Society of London Ladies, Dispari & Dispari Project, Reggio d'Emilie

Word/Event, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel

2008

Strange Events Permit Themselves The Luxury Of Occurring, Camden Arts Centre, London

The Affirmation, Chelsea Space, Londres. Curated by Andrew Hunt

One Brief Moment, Apexart, New York

2007

Local Operations, Serpentine Gallery, London

Scarecrow, Evangelos Averoff Museum, Metsovo

Tipos Moviles, Kultuuritehas, Tallinn

Pimps and Hookers, 1000000MPH Gallery, London

Off, Outpost Gallery in conjunction with Norwich Gallery, Norwich

The Spiral House, Tensta Kunsthalle, Stockholm

Wandering Rocks, Gimpel Fils Gallery, London

2005

Time Line Volume 2, Betonsalon, Paris,

Zombie, Galerie Neudecker, Gelsenkirchen

2004

Timeline, Internet project MOMA, Vitry

Copy-Art.Net, internet project, ICA, London

Tonight, Studio Voltaire, London

Like beads on an Abacus Designed to Claculate Infinity, Rockwell, London

Russian Doll, MOT International, London

2003

Taking Speed, 1000000mph, London

Imaging London, Houldsworth Gallery, London

2002

Am Anfang Der Bewegung Stand Ein Skandal, Lenbachaus Museum,
Munich

2001

Century City, Tate Modern, London

Cool Green, Museum of Contemporary Art, Washington

3 Rooms, Anthony Wilkinson Gallery, London

Point Of View, Richard Salmon Gallery, London

2000

Limitless, Krinzinger Gallery, Vienna

Ninenineninety-nine, Anthony Wilkinson Gallery, London

Awards

2013

Contemporary Art Society Annual Award

2012

Turner Prize, Tate Britain

Paul Hamlyn Award

2011

FLAMIN Award

2010-2011

Arts Council England Helen Chadwick Fellowship

Screenings

2016

Næturvarp: Náin rafræn kynni (Night Transmissions: Electronic Intimacy),
an art exhibition on Icelandic public television

2015

THE HOUSE OF MR X and *USER GROUP DISCO*, Cinémathèque Robert-
Lynen, Paris

2014

THE WOOLWORTHS CHOIR OF 1979, THE TENT et *SUNLIGHT*,
Beursschouwburg, Brussels

Random Acts, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London
Art Basel Film, Basel

Keep Moving: Objects and Architecture in the Apocalypse, The Power Plant
Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto. Curated by Caryn Coleman

AT THE HOUSE OF MR X, Moderna Museet Malmö, Malmö

2013

THE WOOLWORTHS CHOIR OF 1979, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam
Images Festival, Toronto

Filming Objects as Sculpture, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (*AT THE
HOUSE OF MR X*)

2012

FLAMIN Screening, The Whitechapel, London (*WEST HINDER*)

2011

CHOIR, Chisenhale Gallery, London

Rotterdam International Film Festival, Schouwburg, Rotterdam (*THE
TENT*)

2010

USER GROUP DISCO, Whitechapel Gallery, London

THE TENT, Channel 4 (UK TV broadcast)

Camden Arts Centre, London

Stuttgart Filmwinter, Filmhaus, Stuttgart

Göteborg International Film Festival, Draken Cinema, Göteborg

2008

AT THE HOUSE OF MR X, British Film Institute, London