

OUR MACHINES

Our Machines presents a selection of ground-breaking work by artists using digital video installation, celluloid film, light reactive sound, performance, 3D video, audio/noise, scratch video, error based software, robotics, telepresence, scientific cloud data, a Theremin and other objects.

Observer Building Gallery
53 Cambridge Road
Hastings
East Sussex
TN34 1DT

Opening event 13th February
Open 14th February until 14th March
Saturday and Sundays only 12:00 - 5:00 pm

<http://ourmachines.blogspot.co.uk/>

Artists Sarah Angliss • Dara Birnbaum
Sebastian Buerkner • Caleb Madden and Bartosz Dylewski
Emma Hart • Bea Haut • David Leister and Lucy Harris
Guy Sherwin and Lynn Loo • Stephen Mallinder
Matthew Noel-Tod • Vesna Petresin
James Richards and Steve Reinke • Semiconductor
Charlotte Gould and Paul Sermon • Jack Strange
Saskia Olde Wolbers • Curated by Louise Colbourne



above Sebastian Buerkner *Identity Slice* 2007 **right** Emma Hart *M20 Death Drives* (2012). Photo by Douglas Atfield.

EMMA HART

M20 DEATH DRIVES 2012

Extended wing mirrors reflect a concealed television playing a video describing a near-fatal motorway crash. A leatherette booth that looks a bit like a slashed, fat car seat conceals the screen. Protruding catering trays become service stations, serving up products from the traumatised places the video slips down to when the re-traced journey is broken by going into M20 service stations. One turns out to be a cocktail bar, but I can't get served. This is the most recognisable station; the others journey to weirder places, maybe inspired by a bad game of Dungeons and Dragons.

JAMES RICHARDS AND STEVE REINKE

DISAMBIGUATION 2009

James Richards and Steve Reinke exchanged disks of music, stray footage and fragments of existing works for each other to remix, soundtrack and re-order. The result is somewhere between a compilation, a new work and a curated programme, an exquisite corpse forged from their attempt find a common voice. Dissolution of self, dissolution of meaning, dissolution of image, dissolution of the original, raw, disjointed, free, abstracted, visceral, retinal, discordant, close, distant, disembodied, liquid, implacable, democratic, dub.

SASKIA OLDE WOLBERS

PAREIDOLIA 2011

Pareidolia's narrative is based on the events surrounding the creation of Eugen Herrigel's book *Zen in the Art of Archery*, a popular book set in Japan in the 1930s that created a cult following in Europe during the post-war years.

Referencing computer-generated imagery, Saskia's liquid visuals are entirely analogue, shot in real-time in model sets. Skeletal objects, architecture and living forms are given a 'skin' when dipped in paint and submerged underwater. These recordings of sculptural and chemical lo-fi processes subvert the truth telling qualities of filming reality.

DARA BIRNBAUM

TECHNOLOGY-TRANSFORMATION: WONDER WOMAN 1978

Explosive bursts of fire open *Technology/Transformation*, an incendiary deconstruction of the ideology embedded in television form and pop cultural iconography. Entrapped in her magical metamorphosis by Birnbaum's stuttering edits, *Wonder Woman* spins dizzily like a music-box doll. Through radical manipulation of this female Pop icon, she subverts its meaning within the television text. Arresting the flow of images through fragmentation and repetition, Birnbaum condenses the comic-book narrative.

SEBASTIAN BUERKNER

INSTALLATION 2016

Three projections will conjure into a single light sculpture. This installation offers a very distinct porous, unsettled rendition of a 3D film using multiple layers of projection surfaces, where the emitted visuals will attain a hazy volume. Cognitive behavior studies, neuroscience and the contemporary discourse of media, result in the conjuring of memory and association, subjectivity of experience and multi-narrative possibilities.

Flashes of abstracted imagery, representing a distilled essence of a family photo album, are paired with a scrambled, rearranged and synthesized version of Mozart's Requiem.

SEMICONDUCTOR

BAND 9 2015

Band 9 is an installation that considers nature within the framework of science. Nine light boxes show scientific cloud data, which have been captured from space by a remote sensing satellite, orbiting the Earth. Using optical sensors it collects reflected light in various wavelengths of the electromagnetic spectrum. By focusing on very thin slices of these, scientists can pinpoint individual phenomena such as the band we see here, which is designed to reveal high-altitude clouds called Cirrus.

CHARLOTTE GOULD AND PAUL SERMON

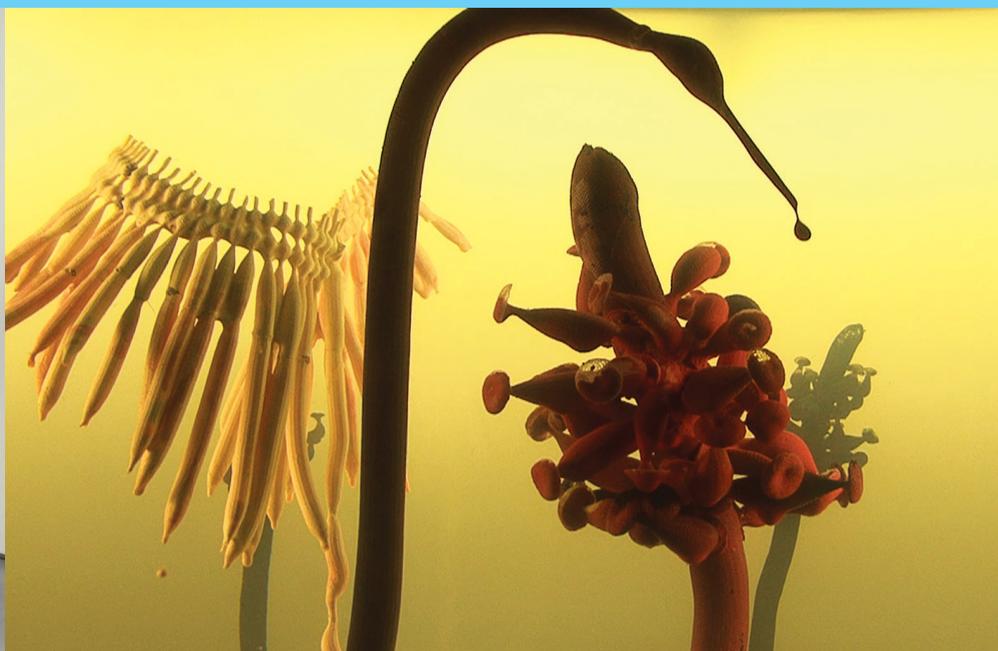
SCREEN MACHINE 2016

'*Screen Machine*' offers public audience participants the opportunity to co-create chance encounters and self direct spontaneous performances between two separate installation locations. These unique transitory events will rely entirely on the roles and performances the participants bring to these telepresent screens and the experiences they choose to live out. Inspired by our urban and cultural surroundings and re-contextualized in a diverse array of digital milieus, 'Screen Machine' aims to allow these public audiences the agency and control over the outcomes of this intervention, akin to a telepresent fluxus happening.

JACK STRANGE

CONSCIOUSNESS COMBI 1 2011

Strange's work re-contextualizes and re-imagines the functions of everyday objects and ideas in a manner that is humorous, clever, surprising and at times revelatory. Strange invites new meanings and interpretations of their uses that challenge human logic and the limits of human consciousness at large.



above Saskia Olde Wolbers *Pareidolia* 2011

**“OUR MACHINES
ARE DISTURBINGLY
LIVELY, AND WE
OURSELVES
FRIGHTENINGLY
INERT.”** DONNA J. HARAWAY

VESNA PETRESIN

AUDIOMORPH 2011

Audiomorph (Can I Wear My Song) explores the topology, boundaries, immersion through embodiment, and the notion of gaze. It situates the space of the body in relation to its environment, and the sound of human voice in relation to technology. Particle fields informed by the body geometry interact with the space that surrounds the body; their transformation is driven by acoustic parameters of the piece of music performed by the artist. The pattern shaped by the body and the voice becomes a crystallised sonic pattern.

PERFORMANCES AND SCREENINGS

STEPHEN MALLINDER

13TH FEBRUARY: 8.00PM

‘It was quite serendipitous really as shortly after being asked to participate in the *Our Machines* exhibition and series of events, Wrangler, the analogue electronic group I’m part of, had just completed a mix for a collection of electronic artists from Manchester called The Duke Street Workshop.

The name of the track was ‘*The Machine*’. We kept the tempo and melody of the original and the simple voice sample repeating the phrase ‘the machine’ but everything else was composed by us. It seemed appropriate to build images, film clips and the sort of ‘retro’ aesthetic of the track into what I was doing for ‘*Our Machines*’. The idea was to expand the sense of movement and progression inherent in machines and lost idealism of technology, our often misplaced utopianism, that technology seems to infer’

BEA HAUT

27TH FEBRUARY: 3.30PM

The 16mm films manifest and behave as sculpture, installation, projection, photography and printmaking. Multi dimensional in media and often site responsive, these works allude to perceptions of inter-related moments, spaces, and actions in between. Regarding the mutating dialogue between the self and the surroundings, using the stuff of the everyday as material and subject.

GUY SHERWIN AND LYNN LOO

27TH FEBRUARY: 4.00PM

Sherwin and Loo present a selection of 16mm films that explore sounds made from light, using either light-sensitive microphones or hand-made or photographed ‘optical’ soundtracks. Creating a clear distinction from the smooth predictability of HD projection and embracing film as material

and projection as process - with all the glitchy sounds that film produces - the rough edges, the mechanical irregularities, the flare-outs.

DAVID LEISTER AND LUCY HARRIS

27TH FEBRUARY: 5:00PM

16mm film screening of *Crèmer* - an abstract document of a lost studio, not easily categorised, occupying the spaces between a photograph, a document and a film. It is a collaborative record and examination of the fire and resulting smoke damage that took place in the studio in 2006. As film is exposed to light, the studio was exposed to smoke, leaving a shadow or imprint on all surfaces. These appear almost as ‘x-ray’ images, with the results also reflecting personal circumstance of the time.

SARAH ANGLISS

5TH MARCH 2.00PM

PERFORMANCE/WORKSHOP

‘These days I rarely appear on stage without a robot by my side. Fashioned from found objects, my robots have more the air of faded variety performers than high-tech machines. I’m aware this ragbag of automatic accompanists makes my act look out of place on the electronic music scene, where minimal movement, disembodied sound and deliberate anti-performance are very much in fashion. At first glance, the set seems to exist somewhere between experimental electronics and 1930s cabaret. Yet, when the robots move and become part of the performance, I hope any thoughts that this is a novelty act are dispelled.’

MATTHEW NOEL-TOD

12TH MARCH: 5:00PM

A Season in Hell explores the spectacle and its contemporary forms, from the whimsical innocence of childlike animation to the apocalyptic sci-fi blockbuster.

CALEB MADDEN AND BARTOSZ DYLEWSKI

12TH MARCH: 6.00PM

Existing in an exiting new position at the intersection between gallery installation and live performance. Madden/Dylewski present an immersive audio-visual piece.

Incorporating extreme audio noise, field recordings taken at working power stations, and heavily processed electromagnetic signals combined with intense, reactive projected visuals originated from self-authored, error based software. Expect machine rhythms & turbine noise in conversation with error-born colour & form.

OUR MACHINES BY VESNA PETRESIN

Desire is the fuel of our lives. The thirst to be different from who we think we are, and things we think we have.

Invention propelled by desire, control and fear brought the myth of Technology, a quasi-religion of endless improvement that speaks through the prism of rituals of industry, its methods of production and mechanics of mass satisfaction. **Disappointment only fuels the dream.**

While Buckminster Fuller advocated the power of technology to promote social change, current condition observes the Modernist ideal of limitless progress in decay and reflects the power of technology generated control, terror and submission. The rise of fear and the return to fortress-building, barrier-erecting and militant polarising has marked a departure from principles of openness, transparency and clarity.

Information age has brought back an architecture of suspicion. **By creating a new interface between the self, the other and the world beyond, information technology takes part in constructing and controlling our reality.**

But what if reality is artifice?

Time-based media such as moving images are by definition illusory, non-existent – the projections of our perceptive apparatus, the architecture of our minds. They are instrumental in activating the viewer into questioning the world as we see it. Ambiguous structures, the shifting multiple views of a configuration in a single representation best demonstrate a reality in a state of flux. Here, what we perceive oscillates between two equally valid interpretations; none of them exists as a real object. No order or interpretation is privileged, and there is no ultimate overview- only the complexity of multiple reference points and connections. In Lacanian terminology, it is by suturing off the real that the reality of individuals remains a coherent illusion and also prevents them from “falling prey” to the Real. However, the very lack of the reference point and closure represents a denial that protects the individual from confronting the trauma of human finitude; because there is no ultimate irreversible point, the multiple universe always offers alternative realities. It allows for an endlessly repeated reenactment of an impossible Real to overcome the trauma. Multiple perspectives encircle an impossible Real.

Where does Body enter Technology?

The omnipotence of technology reflects a world gone global, replacing the symbolic and mythical structure of past paradigms. Universalism was characterised by the concepts of transcendence, subjectivity, conceptualisation, reality and representation. The global culture of Flow on the other hand relies on screens, networks, immanence, numbers and a space-time continuum. The global techno- structure eradicates of all forms of differentiation, aiming at establishing a world where reference to the natural must disappear. The ideology of technological progress brings a promise of freedom,

prosperity and release from body, birth, death and desire. The mechanistic cosmology of ancient Greece, with Heron's automata and architecture of war machines, prepared the philosophical ground for Descartes and the belief that engineering excellence can manifest a better future. The Bible's call to conquer nature, the Protestant work ethic and the apocalyptic vision of a New Jerusalem similarly propel the myth of an engineered utopia. Calvinism, American Christian workaholicism along with technoutopianism and perfectionism all share a **belief in a world of limitless potential for improvement.** Modernity is partly defined by the conceptual barrier erected between nature and culture. Latour sees the beginning of the split between nature and culture in the Enlightenment, when Descartes' mechanistic thought invaded natural philosophy. Nature is considered as an objective world 'out there' whose hidden mechanisms are unlocked by detached scientific gentlemen using technical instruments to amplify their perceptions. Thus, technology becomes a tool, a passive extension of the human being that reinforces our creative powers by amputating our natural ones.

The Myth of the Machine insists on the authority of technical and scientific elites and in the intrinsic value of efficiency, material progress, control and unrestrained technological development, of economic and territorial expansion.

In the industrial age when electrical current was transformed into a communication medium, the grandeur that Romanticism attached to nature shifted to technology as energy mutated into information. In the information economy that transcends rather than extends its material predecessors - the agricultural and industrial economies - **matter has been overthrown by mind.**

Technology and ideology thrive on dreams of mobility, power and omnipresence; this is in part an enactment of the denial of death, an open-ended system, a chance to start over, replay and event and try a different resolution.

Zizek situates the technological utopia of virtual space between perversion and trauma, fuelled by the desire to reach perfection. The virtual ultimately generates a proto-psychotic immersion into an imaginary universe unconstrained by symbolic Law or Real. Fantastic, Futurist, utopian, virtual space or a space of mechanistic dreams is a space without closure and reality of human finitude, constrained only by its self-imposed rules. The reality of utopia is a fantasmatic “passionate attachment”, a traumatic scene that never really took place. Real is the traumatic essence of the Same against whose threat we escape through the virtual, fantastic and symbolic universes. Resisting symbolisation and dialectical mediation can bring a release from the myth of the power of technology. The belief in technology is a way to play omnipresent god, to possess multiple identities, and to escape the trauma of our own mortality. But it is merely a false liberation from the constraints of the social space in which our existence is caught.

Our bodies are made of the same particles as the known universe. We are the music that shapes the world.



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