

THE OTHERS

This selection of contemporary British artists' films from the LUX Collection looks at subjectivity in the documentary tradition through a series of portraits of actions, people and animals that explore and raise fundamental questions about the limits of the form and the interplay between fiction and reality.

Contemporary media now offers us previously undreamt of levels of access to information about and knowledge the World. From 'reality tv' to social media this sense of knowability is heightened by a projection of 'unmediated' reality, of immediacy and of access to real people and real situations. But how much is this an illusion? For all of this sense of access are we still not ultimately limited to the making sense of people and things through their external attributes? How can we hope to know other others when their interior selves, their private thoughts and feelings remain fundamentally shut off to us? Do these heightened verité forms in popular media not only perpetuate but deepen an illusion of knowledge and understanding? Are we being manipulated? how well do really we know the others?

The programme begins with two films commissioned by LUX as part of a residency giving artists' access to the resources and archives of the UK national broadcaster, the BBC in return for making a work within the editorial context and guidelines of the organisation. The project was both interesting and challenging, revealing the profound differences in ideology and working practices between a broadcaster and an independent artist (even though each would profess a commitment to creativity). It is perhaps unsurprisingly that both of the films take a critical perspective on televisual form by using the broadcaster's own material to subvert and question the way it portrays its subjects. In *Weight*, Kate Davis questions value and representations of female creativity and domestic labour through the ironic juxtaposition of archive film with a documentary on the British sculptor Barbara Hepworth. While Luke Fowler's film *Depositions* explores the representation of traditionally marginalised traveller communities in the Highlands of Scotland, recouping material from patronising documentaries and news items to articulate a more complex narrative of difference and community.

Inspired by the French ethnographic filmmaker Jean Rouch's aim to explore his 'own tribe', the Parisians in his film *Chronique d'un été* (1960), US artist filmmaker Margaret Salmon attempts an ethnographic portrait of her adopted community in the South East of England. Exploring the rhythms and rituals of domestic life in the framework of psychologist Abraham Maslow's theory on the hierarchy of human need the film problematises the ethnographic film form. Employing a poetic affection the film subverts the traditional subject of western ethnographic studies by turning the camera on southern English middle class life.

Ben Rivers is known for his series of 'portrait' films that often suggest a fundamental interior unknowability of his subjects through lack of commentary, guiding elements or close up perspectives. *Things* is unique in that it is a self-portrait of sorts, but rather than looking at himself directly, Rivers constructs a personal history through the possessions in his London apartment. However as we start to reach a sense of an identity behind the things he abruptly shifts to a 3D digital rendering of the same space, now stripped of much of the personal detail of the first half of the film, it forcefully suggesting the constructed and manipulated nature of the image, shifted as it is to a now non-human and pure artificial perspective.

The final film in the selection *Taskafa* focuses on the most 'other'-ed of beings, animals and specifically the street animals that live alongside humans in many major cities. Animals are the focus for our most anthropomorphic projections and in Andrea Luka Zimmerman's film these street animals act as a cypher for the lowest order of inhabitants within the modern city, those that face the full brunt of the capitalist drive for development and gentrification. Zimmerman actively challenges traditional narratives around street animals as pests and disruption to the flow of the city, imbuing them with dignity and an interiority (with quotes from canine narrator of John Berger's book *King*). The film ultimately makes a passionate utopian proposition for the value of community, mutuality and inter-species care as powerful resistance to a voracious 'progress' in the modern world.

The LUX Collection is Europe's largest collection of films and videos made by visual artists, representing over 7000 works from the 1930s to the present day. www.lux.org.uk

Benjamin Cook is the Founder Director of LUX, a UK based agency for the support and promotion of artists working with the moving image. He has worked in the independent film and art sectors for the past 20 years as a curator, producer, archivist, writer and teacher.

Programme 1

Weight

Kate Davis

UK, 2014, 12 minutes

Taking a 1961 BBC documentary about artist Barbara Hepworth as its starting point, *Weight* explores how televised depictions of creativity have constructed our understanding of artistic production and other forms of labour. *Weight* re-imagines the value systems that this documentary is predicated upon and proposes an alternative vision.

Kate Davis (born 1977 in New Zealand) studied at The Glasgow School of Art where she completed a BA in Fine Art (1997–2000) and an MPhil (2000–1). Selected solo exhibitions include those at: Temporary Gallery, Cologne (2013); The Drawing Room, London (2012); CCA, Glasgow (with Faith Wilding) (2010); Tate Britain, London (2007); Galerie Kamm, Berlin (2007 and 2011); Kunsthalle Basel (2006); and Sorcha Dallas, Glasgow (2004 and 2008). Group exhibitions include those at: Art Stations Foundation, Poznan, Poland; Tate Britain, London; Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (all 2013); and *eva International 2012*, Limerick, Ireland (2012). Davis is a lecturer at The Glasgow School of Art. She lives and works in Glasgow.

Depositions

Luke Fowler

UK, 2014, 25 minutes

Luke Fowler's films dwell on potentiality: what might be, what might have been, what might still be if the world were to turn in a different direction? But film time runs in many directions, as do arguments. Film made only recently can be easily confused with the archival vintage of washed-out or saturated tones and blurred edges. Only the disjunction between sounds that live close within the ear and rich voices from a fading past distinguish archive from present. Gradually the pieces converge: our nostalgia for ancient folkways, traditional song and the romance of freedom, all undercut by scientific rationalism and the pressures of normativity bringing law to bear on lives resistant to conformity. What is an archive if not a collection of letters to ourselves?

David Toop, 2014

Luke Fowler (born 1978 in Glasgow) obtained his BA (Hons) at the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, Dundee in 2000. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Common Sense*, La Casa Encendida, Madrid (2013); *The Poor Stockinger, the Luddite Cropper and the Deluded Followers of Joanna Southcott*, Wolverhampton Art Gallery (2012); and *Luke Fowler with Toshiya Tsunoda and John Haynes*, Inverleith House, Edinburgh (2012). Recent group exhibitions include: *Soundings: A Contemporary Score*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2013); *Otherwise Unexplained Fires*, Malmö Konsthall, Malmö, Sweden (2013); and *British Art Show 7: In the Days of the Comet*, Nottingham, London, Glasgow and Plymouth (2010–11). Fowler was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2012 and received the inaugural Jarman Award in 2008. He lives and works in Glasgow.

Pyramid

Margaret Salmon

UK, 2014, 17 minutes

Pyramid is a film work on Abraham Maslow's theory on the hierarchy of human needs filmed through the rhythms and choreography of middle class South England. Filmed in color and b&w on 16mm film, it continues Salmon's interest in the performance of the artist/cinematographer within both spontaneous and constructed situations and incorporates methods developed by various movements within documentary and avant-garde history. Using an array of sounds, music and conversation as well as silence, Salmon constructs an abstract documentary which both develops and challenges the themes presented in Maslow's theory as well as her own interest in human iconography, stereotype and domestic rhythm. The image of Maslow's pyramid and his pragmatic dissection of human needs and possible motivations provide a system of organisation for the family and a philosophical framework for the video.

Born in 1975 in Suffern, New York, Margaret Salmon lives and works in Glasgow, Scotland. She creates filmic portraits that weave together poetry and ethnography. Focusing on individuals in their everyday habitats, her films capture the minutiae of daily life and infuse them with gentle grandeur, touching upon universal human themes. Adapting techniques drawn from various cinematic movements, such as Cinema Vérité, the European Avant Garde and Italian Neo-Realism, Salmon's orchestrations of sound and image introduce a formal lyricism into the tradition of realist film. Margaret Salmon won the first Max Mara Art Prize for Women in 2006. Her work was shown at the Venice Biennale in 2007 and the Berlin Biennale in 2010 and was featured in individual exhibitions at Witte de With in Rotterdam and Whitechapel Gallery in London among others.

Things

Ben Rivers

United Kingdom, 2014, 20 minutes

This film was a challenge set by a friend, to make something in my home over the course of the year. Coming from a country where the seasons are very evident, I am interested in how they effect people's sense of the world, moods, and our understanding and relationship to our environment. These mood changes feed into the film - in the Winter section the film is very internal and reflective, looking at the details around the house, and back to the things I've collected. In Spring, the atmosphere brightens, there are humans, hands holding a book or drawing, an eye reading. Summer is a mix of both the joy of these things, countered with a sense of unease. Autumn then becomes a further remove of representation of the space I live in, and in an uncertain state--are the walls crumbling around me? Is this the future, partly foretold in Fable, the book read in Spring - Ben Rivers

Ben Rivers (Born 1972) lives and works in London. He studied Fine Art at Falmouth School of Art, initially in sculpture before moving into photography and super8 film. After his degree he

taught himself 16mm filmmaking and hand-processing. His practice as a filmmaker treads a line between documentary and fiction. Often following and filming people who have in some way separated themselves from society, the raw film footage provides Rivers with a starting point for creating oblique narratives imagining alternative existences in marginal worlds.

Programme 2

Taskafa, Stories from the Street

Andrea Luka Zimmerman

UK/Turkey, 2013, 66 minutes

Taskafa is an artist's essay film about memory and the most necessary forms of belonging, both to a place and to history, through a search for the role played in the city by Istanbul's street dogs and their relationship to its human populations. Through this exploration, the film opens a window on the contested relationship between power and the public, community and categorisation (in location and identity), and the ongoing struggle / resistance against a single way of seeing

and being. Despite several major attempts by Istanbul's rulers, politicians and planners over the last 400 years to erase them, the city's street dogs have persisted thanks to an enduring alliance with widespread civilian communities, which recognise and defend their right to co-exist. Taskafa gathers the voices of diverse Istanbul residents, shopkeepers, and street based workers, all of whom display a striking commitment to the wellbeing and future of the city's canine population (a community of street dogs, and cats, free of formal ownership but fed and cared for by numerous individuals). From the rapidly gentrifying city centre district of Galata to the residential islands of the Sea of Marmara, and beyond, Taskafa navigates a history of empathy with, and threats to this highly distinctive urban community.

Andrea Luka Zimmerman is an artist filmmaker and cultural activist based in London. She has been making films since 1998, originally as part of the film collective Vision Machine, exploring the impact of globalisation and collaborating directly with plantation workers. This period also prompted early research for her film essay Prisoner of War (2014), which investigates US militarism and foreign policy through a character study of one of its most enduring rogue agents. She has recently completed her latest work, Estate, a Reverie (2015).

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