

Giles Bunch & dwellerforward
present:

Turn

it

on

Again

Emily Candela
Chloe Cooper
Elizabeth Cufley
Katherine Fishman
Richard Grange
Susannah Hewlett
Madeleine Hodge
Nicholas Owen Jones
Steve Nice
Harold Offeh
Mathew Parkin
Alia Pathan
Matthew Randle
Nina Wakeford

An evening of video screening, performance and installation,
celebrating television in light of the digital switchover.

Saturday 30th June 2012, from 20:00

Motel De Nowhere. Unit 007, First Floor, BJ House,
10-12 Hollybush Gardens, Bethnal Green E2 9QP

Saturday Night

I recently watched an episode of the long running US programme *Saturday Night Live* whilst staying in New York. Living and growing up in Britain, this is not a programme with which I am hugely familiar, though am aware of, in both its importance and its viewing construct. The show's title is somewhat self explanatory, and is further clarified at the beginning of each programme by someone breaking from a sketch and announcing, "Live from New York, it's Saturday Night!". This line exists to set the scene for the programme, the first part referencing the programme particularly, but the second drawing a parallel with the viewer, it is Saturday night and it's happening now, live. A significance unfortunately lost on me, as I was watching this episode on a lazy Tuesday morning, via the digital television recording device in my friend's apartment.

The rise of digital television, culminating in the recent digital switchover in Britain has created a shift in how television is viewed, in terms of how programmes are selected, bringing about the kind of behaviour mentioned above. This sounds perhaps like the activity of a naughty child, watching programmes out of context is not necessarily bad, but it isn't really what you are supposed to be doing, in the eyes of analogue transmission at least. Digital however condones this, the developed technology allowing us to do this. Television viewers now have the ability to create their own schedule, to operate around their own schedules, a massive shift in the way television has previously operated.

Like many others I'm sure, scheduling used to be a key part to my relationship with television, particularly the Saturday night viewing timetable, when in my younger years watching television with your family was the primary entertainment. The weekly guide that dropped through the door with the paper on a Saturday morning would be studied to plan the evening ahead, examining where the scheduling conflicts arose, perhaps having to make a decision on what would be seen, or possibly what would have to be recorded - the VCR perhaps the forerunner of digital television. The British scheduling of my childhood offered programmes such as *Big Break*, *Blind Date*, *Gladiators*, *The Generation Game*, *Stars In Their Eyes* and *Noel's House Party*, and in 1995, within

this period, viewing figures for Saturday night television were at a high, with 19.3million viewers. Figures have since massively declined, for various reasons - one being Noel Edmonds blaming himself for reduced quality programming.¹ I am not going to advocate the worth of *House Party*, but I suspect the introduction of digital television in 1998 was a key contributing factor to this drop. As illustrated, Saturday night television no longer needs to be watched on a Saturday night.

In an age of digital television, I'm led to consider two questions particularly; 'what is the role of the scheduler at this time?', and 'can television programmes that operate within or reference a time context continue to exist?'. I feel both merit answers in greater depth than this piece can offer, but I will begin a brief introduction now. Firstly, the role of the scheduler can be linked to any intermediary between art and its audience; the curator, the DJ both being examples of this. In increasing defiance of the TV guide by the viewer selecting their own programming, this role ceases to exist - traditional prime time slots have no value, as they are now at the convenience of the viewer. With sites like 4od (abbreviated from 'on demand' - the definition of this new relationship) digital recording devices, and even channels set up to promote this - everyone seemingly has a +1 version in accompaniment to the original - the viewer has taken control. This brings me neatly onto the second point, of how potentially the content of television programmes can alter in the prevalence of these viewing methods. The opening sequence of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* episode 'Conversations with Dead People' shows the date and time at which the episode was first broadcast, adding strong contextual value, as it alerts the viewer that in this particular episode, unlike others in the series, the following 45 minutes are being carried out in real time. Though it is not a live broadcast, it acts in a similar manner for the viewer, rather than being a historical reference for those like myself watching it later on DVD. The

live feed has the potential to become greatly compromised due to digital television - is there a need for *SNL* still to include 'Live' in its title, when there is little assurance that it will be seen in this state? Episodes of popular British soaps have recently broadcast live episodes that are usually prerecorded, however this seems to be because it is a novelty in an age where live transmission may not be relevant. (At this point I will offer an argument for the use of live television as a method of documentation - coverage of sporting events being perhaps the main example of this, but also events such as the recent Jubilee celebrations, and the Royal Wedding. Indeed, the 1953 coronation was the reason many bought a television set in the first place.) It is not only live broadcast that is affected however, in the removal of the need to watch programmes in their scheduled broadcast, the excitement and to a certain degree the anticipation of watching a newly aired show has vanished. Mounting advertisement for a new series release may not be so eye catching in the knowledge that the programmes may be better seen one after the other in the context of the box set DVD, rather than week by week, and in the midst of more advertisement for other shows that may be better seen in the context of the DVD box set...etc, and arbitrary products removing the viewer from the world of the show. Moving to digital transmission, any show that plays on the constructs of an analogue transmission will be no longer relevant. The charm of this method is lost.

Turn It On Again. 8.00pm; Saturday 30 June 2012.

¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/3190783.stm>

Hayley Dixon runs dwellerforward, a collaborative curatorial project. She lives and works in London.

dwellforward.tumblr.com

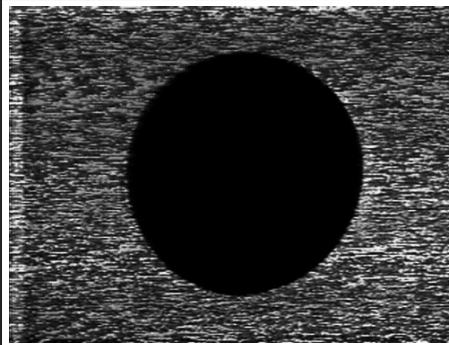
NO SIGNAL: From snow to the blue screen of death

It was hard to ignore the switchover from analogue to digital TV in the UK this spring. In London, where I live, reminders of an approaching doomsday were plastered all over the trains, buses and billboards. Beneath their upbeat pink-and-white colour scheme, these advertisements seethed with a foreboding tone. 'Your TV channels will disappear in APRIL', they warned, as though a technology-disabling electromagnetic pulse was on its way. Many featured a wizened robot grasping an impotent remote control. Behind it – the source of the trouble – was a television screen displaying the familiar mark of analogue transmission failure: snow.

This salt-and-pepper haze goes by many names. Some know it as 'white noise' or 'static'. In other languages, it's 'fleas', or 'war of the ants'. Snow's meaning, however, is fairly constant. It tells us that somewhere between the transmitter and our screen, a broadcast signal has been interrupted. It isn't surprising that snow is associated with obstruction, or - in the case of the posters I saw throughout the city - a coming void.

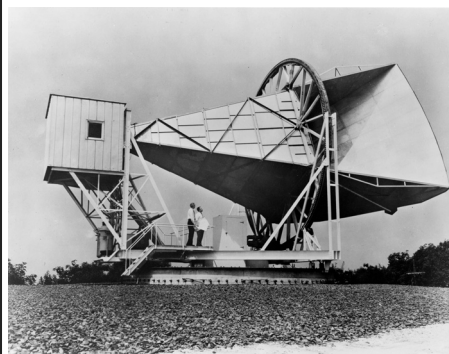
The recent news of analogue television's demise in the UK prompted my mother to reminisce about watching TV as a child. 'Sometimes the picture was so *staticky*', she told me, 'I thought maybe there were secret messages in it'. My mom isn't alone. Snow might indicate the disruption of one type of transmission, but it has appeared as the carrier of other, more subliminal, kinds. Take the work of video artists Steina and Woody Vasulka for instance. In their 1974 video *Noisefields*, electromagnetic signals, one of the features masked by television's 'transparent' interface, are revealed in the flicker of buzzing snow.

Scientists too have found secret messages in static's hum. Only after TV sets had exhibited snow for decades did we learn that much of it is caused by radiation left over from the Big



Still from Steina and Woody Vasulka, *Noisefields* (1974)

Bang. Researchers at the Bell Telephone Laboratories discovered this accidentally in the 1960s after being unable to eliminate the persistent 'noise' received by their antenna, which was trained on outer space. Snow is, in fact, a real-time cosmic data visualisation.



The antenna used at the Bell Telephone Laboratories

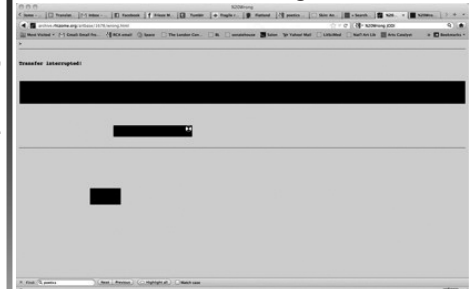
As the UK shifts to digital TV, the dynamism of snow is replaced in moments of transmission failure by a frozen screen. Unlike static's prickly 'war of the ants', the screen freeze is stony, silent, and sometimes accompanied by the tight-lipped message, *no signal*. Such technological disruptions have long served as critical and aesthetic tools for artists. From the Vasulkas to new media artists like JODI, interruptions to our screens' 'normal' processes have been deployed as jolting, productive failures. For instance, every computer user has no doubt encountered the frustrating technological hiccup or breakdown known as *the glitch*. But for artist Rosa Menkman, in these moments, she writes, 'the machine reveals itself'¹. Such technological hiccups are usually encountered privately. The transition to digital TV, however, might be thought of as a collectively experienced kind of glitch. With it has come a momentary shift in mainstream attention toward the television interface itself. Normally veiled features of the apparatus emerge as the focus of anxiety: not only do

switchover announcements picture unresponsive TV sets, but journalists have penned nervous eulogies to snow's comparatively communicative qualities, and the dire expression, 'blue screen of death' has migrated from the PC to digital TV.



Google image search results for 'blue screen of death', which now includes TV screens.

Digital television's laconic frozen screen reprises a piece by JODI installed online about a decade ago. *%20Wrong* confronts the internet user - who is expecting to see through their browser 'window' to some kind of content - with a blinking error message. Digital TV's 'blue screen of death' presents a similarly incoherent image. Taking place on the television screen, however, the freeze interrupts the position of the viewer in a different way. Once, we were still, settled perhaps on the couch or the bed, and allowed the broadcast image to move. Now, when the TV signal is disrupted, *the screen* takes on that immobility. It is still, and it is unsettling.



Screenshot of JODI's *%20Wrong* (2000)

The swapping of analogue for digital technologies is hardly new, but this country-wide disruption to the processes of television viewing has nevertheless carried that jolt of the technological malfunction, long shepherded by artists. Even many of us who no longer watch television on a *set* (opting instead to 'watch TV' on the Internet) were prompted to take stock of our changing relationship with television this year. This found expression in the recent *Remote Control* exhibition at London's ICA, staged to mark the switchover. The sudden highlighting of the mechanism, of the non-functioning *thing*, which has ac-

complicated this spring's transition to digital, manifested in the main gallery. There, the artist Simon Denny had deposited a gigantic now-defunct Channel 4 transmitter. A complex of switches, drawers and tubes, Denny's transmitter is a dead, silent slab of machinery. It divulges nothing. Standing beneath it is just as illuminating, in an immediate sense, as gazing at a snow-filled TV. But in this way, the transmitter is quietly revealing. Its presence, as an obsolete chunk of matter, makes palpable the alienation of most viewers from the processes it performed, and, more generally, from the production of the images on their screens. Similarly, the frozen television screen *reveals* in a way that might stimulate that critical effect intended by JODI's error message in *%20Wrong*. Existing outside the aesthetic context, however, the 'dead' TV screen's disrupting effect may be felt even more strongly. Or, on the other hand, it might breed an uncritical acceptance of this alienation, an *almost spiritual* regard for it:

Stock Photo - Watching a screen casting a blue light almost spiritual with leather sofa

Resolution	Output Size (2)	Credits	Download
400 x 400 px	14.1 cm x 14.1 cm (72dpi)	1	Download
600 x 600 px	21.4 cm x 21.4 cm (72dpi)	2	Download
1024 x 1024 px	37.3 cm x 37.3 cm (300dpi)	3	Download
2048 x 2048 px	74.6 cm x 74.6 cm (300dpi)	4	Download
3128 x 3128 px	124.3 cm x 124.3 cm (300dpi)	5	Download

Screenshot from stock photo website www.123rf.com

Like 'white noise' before it, the frozen screen is double-sided: it is both a void and, possibly, a disruptive trigger to critical reflection. Television snow may be dead, but the potential of the glitch or technological failure lives on. The frozen screen and the lifeless transmitter just might, like snow, carry their own secret messages.

¹ Menkman, Rosa, 'The use of artifacts as critical media aesthetics' in ISEA 2009 Conference Proceedings Reader, 2010, 4.

This essay is based on an article by the author for GUTmag, www.gutmag.eu.

Emily Candela is a London-based researcher and artist working across media and within several collaborative contexts. She is currently undertaking PhD research through an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award across the Royal College of Art and the Science Museum.

www.emilycandela.co.uk

What we think about when we think about television or When the darkness doubled



There was a time when there were 28 channels on the dial and all but five of them showed versions of fuzzy black and white, lines, snow, black with white fuzz, white with black fuzz and we mostly rushed past these channels flicking through to get to the five that showed content. We would get up, walk over to the television and turn the knob, clicking past the snow. Sometimes the other 23 were the ones that interested me, I would notice the difference in the patterns, the variations in the black and white, and wonder what these channels were for. These 23 "empty" channels were a place on the box that had a certain hypnotic power, as a site that allowed us to see the television differently, not just what it is for, but what it is, as a dark, grainy, pixelated place of potential.

I turn on the TV in a hotel room in Italy, it is late at night and porn is playing on almost every channel, a man in a g-string plays a guitar and two girls in bikinis dance behind him while on another channel a naked man straddles a woman whose face we can't see. The soundtrack for this second show is very odd and for a few moments I pause on this channel bewildered, the voices in the film are not him and they are not her, there are multiple voices one on top of the other, like an orgasmic choir. In the late night haze I imagine that this television is a little window onto the culture of this place, that in a dark hotel room in Milan I have learnt something about Italian-ness. It makes me think that the things we watch are strangely mapped against who we are and reminds me that culture is both created and sustained through

television's powerful influence. In the normalising light of the morning the TV shows human interest news stories for families at home, a message from the pope on another channel and a daytime murder mystery starring Pierce Brosnan whose brilliantly over the top acting is only enhanced when his voice is dubbed with another more melodramatic Italian voice.

Tacita Dean begins the book that accompanies her Turbine Hall commission with an anecdote about watching the Oscars on television in an Austrian hotel, 'a man and a woman, expert and presenter sit watching the event on a screen inside my screen'¹. She goes on to say that she sits up all night transfixed by this peculiar presentation of such a familiar television event. The 'expert' is the Director of the National Film Archive in Vienna and by coincidence she meets him at lunch the next day, the conversation they have begins a series of conversations that eventually leads to *Film*. Like film, television has changed, now with more channels, content that is downloadable, content that is interactive and instead of being stuck watching things as they are programmed we can save, record and watch later. As we begin to watch any time of day and night, new rituals are being constructed, new material relations to domestic space and to the objects through which we view our desired content are forming. Analogue television and its accompanying materiality is on its way out. Since the switch, televisions are littering the streets, they have become the choice du jour for hard rubbish dumpers and as they sit there, images fading, the wood veneer peeling off the sides of the box, we can't help but wonder what they are taking with them into the graveyard of electronic history.

I started to think about this piece of writing at a recent symposium², when an academic from Leipzig spoke about Austrian filmmakers Ulrich Siedhl and Michael Haneke and he proposed that these filmmakers employ particular conventions in their films that act as a direct opposition to the television culture in Austria. The

statement sparked an interest and I wondered whether there might be something particular about Austrian television, something deeply superficial or grotesque that made these filmmakers react so strongly against television and its effects. Wanting to form a comparison I searched YouTube for 'Austrian Television', in the results were a random series of clips, from short clips of news, game shows, the Austrian national anthem to several clips of the great, great grandchildren of the Von Trapp family on a tour around the world. The most that I learnt from my superficial searches was that without the sense that comes from growing up with Austrian television combined with the sense that only comes from being Austrian it might not be possible to say whether the statement about Austrian television is true. The way in which television guides and shapes our culture is something that remains hidden in the associative, fleeting gathering that makes up the uncharted decisions of artists and filmmakers. When we think about television, we conceive of it as both an object and a cultural force, it makes me wonder about the way in which we have 'performed' our roles, both as a society and as individuals in relation to this small, unassuming box that sits in the lounge room of each person's home. And however hard it is to quantify this statement about these Austrian filmmakers it is not possible to reject. In Michael Haneke's *Cache (Hidden)* the action centres on a long still shot of the main character's house filmed at a distance by an unknown observer. The same character is a television presenter on a popular French culture show and his television personality seems to stand as metaphor for the superficiality of his western middle class existence; a perfect life which hides deeper and darker truths. Siedhl's films follow a logic that mirrors the glossy representational forms of television, however they speak of a broken, dysfunctional society in which the characters connect only fleetingly. His films are said to use the conventions of documentaries or reality TV shows allowing the viewer to 'see' the characters without explaining anything about them. In

a similar style to that employed in Haneke's films the camera stays at a 'big brother' distance, creating human landscapes in which action unfolds, exposing the hidden inner darkness implicit in a mediatised culture.

On a hot summer's night in the suburbs the television buzzes and the image distorts, we get up, walk over to the television and hit the box to try to control the image. Then one of us takes the aerial and holds it up in the air to try to find the signal, each time we find it we are standing on tiptoes, arms in the air, awkwardly poised and someone yells "wait". We wonder if we could stay like this, just for a few minutes, just 'til the end of the joke, until the next ad break, until the end of the show. As a child it makes you see the signal as an invisible stream floating into your house, carrying the channels in its dark electromagnetic flow. When we turn the knob and switch the channel, the stream moves again, doubles back on itself and its almost as though we are dancing around the room, we hold our arms up to find it, when we find it we hold our position until the image rolls into view and then its gone again. We continue to wave the aerial about, we move around the room, we are over on the other side now and the image is holding steady, we erect a tower with an ironing board and a chair. We dangle the aerial from the top, trying to keep it in exactly the right place within the invisible stream.

¹ Tacita Dean 'Film' in *Film*, Tate Publishing, London, 2011 p 15.

² Florian Mundhenke 'Falseness of creativity – the hybrid cinematic approach of Ulrich Seidl', *The powers of the false*, Institute Francais & Cine Lumiere, London, May 2012.

Madeleine Hodge is an artist, writer and researcher who works through performance to create interdisciplinary research projects in public space. She is a founding member of the collective Field Theory and Mimic Mass, is part of the duo Panther and contributes to *Un Magazine*, *Realtime* and *Live Art List Australia*. Hodge's work has been supported internationally; in Australia at the Performance Space, Sydney, Arts House, Melbourne, and Melbourne International Arts Festival; South Project in Yogyakarta; The National Review of Live Art, UK; Anti-Contemporary Arts Festival in Finland and *Connexions Improbable*, Bilbao, Spain.

CHLOE COOPER



Digital Dawn (2012)

An experiential tour of Whitehaven - coming up to 2.00am - on Wednesday 17 October 2007.

Chloe Cooper uses tours and lectures to consider juxtapositions of space and time, tools of academia and re-presentations of cultural narratives. She has recently performed at Whitechapel Gallery, October Gallery and at various London monuments for Artsadmin/LIFT as part of artist collective DARTER. Her forthcoming activities include a contribution to Five Years' publication THIS IS NOT A SCHOOL, as well as exhibitions at the Sir John Soane's Museum and Tate Modern in July 2012.

www.chloecooper.co.uk

ELIZABETH CUFLEY



Finding Peter Brookes (2012)

Cufley presents a search for her former drama schoolteacher, previous to this an actor in the ITV soap *Crossroads*. Although famous for its wobbly sets and actors forgetting their lines, Brookes would regularly talk with great affection about being on the show, to a group of students too young to have seen him; being no longer aired at that time. Setting out on this quest, Cufley knows nothing of Brookes' current whereabouts, or if he will be found to relive these stories again - and let her know if one his scripts sent to Central television did make it onto the programme.

Elizabeth Cufley is a video artist and writer currently studying MRes Fine Art: Moving Image at Central Saint Martins in conjunction with LUX. She graduated with a BA in Fine Art from Middlesex University.

KATHERINE FISHMAN



Precise Manoeuvres (2012)

The game is high drama And this drama, unlike other forms of entertainment, is authentic. The performers - they actually feel hurt and elation.

Two completely unrelated activities - the screening, the spectating - have become inextricably intertwined. Your aim should be to put your viewer in the best seat for wherever the action is - and keep them there.

The fixed smile, the busy hands, the close-up shot that reveals the expression of the eyes, have become famous signs. She may seem poised according to some obvious cues. She may succeed giving an impression of ease, yet those nearby can see that her hands are shaking.

Katherine Fishman's video installations and performances present subtle occurrences of psychological complexity. Attention is drawn to odd hesitations and bizarre aspects of human etiquette that arise from the desire to adhere to a specific structure: the vivid gestures, the implicit theatricality, the complexity of roles. Through acknowledging this frequently overlooked tension, a commentary is formed, yet one with a questionable authority. Certain details do not quite fit, so assumptions must be continually re-assessed, and attempts to suspend disbelief are persistently ruptured.

katherinefishman.tumblr.com

RICHARD GRANGE



The Mr Bomer Comic (2012)

Hey, it is The Bomer. You love him because you remember from when you saw him that time. But what is he a-doing now?

The Mr Bomer Comic is based on the 'Bomer' Internet meme - odd drawings of TV's Homer Simpson.

When ideas move from one media to another there is inevitable mutation. A similar mutation also occurs when American pop-culture references in The Simpsons are viewed by an international audience. These foreign subtleties not only alienate the viewer, but give an awkward pacing to the rest of the show.

The Mr Bomer Comic brings these weird and bemusing encounters to the fore, with its inane content and unclear character motives.

So sit back and see all that is happening to The Mr Bomer in this week's The Mr Bomer Comic.

Richard Grange draws The Mr Bomer Comic from North London. He also makes video pieces and knits.

themrbomercomic.tumblr.com

SUSANNAH HEWLETT



VSS Homeshopping Channel - The Multi Spa with Amy Lamé; VSS product adverts - BRUSH, Snack Saver, Frugel Fruit and the Omni Clam (all 2011); Countdown (with Steve Nice) (2012)

Cynically targeting the poor, VSS brings topically themed slots to digital TV showcasing their patented Recession Busting Products through celebrity endorsed demonstrations, testimonials, infomercials and phone in competitions. VSS satirises the idea of capitalists capitalising on capitalism and highlights the exploitative nature of this type of show by the promotion of products through the VSS 'low cost premium rate number.'

Susannah Hewlett is a UK based artist and performer working in live art, comedy, installation, sound and video, exploring interbreeding Cousin High-Art and Uncle Light-Entertainment in site-specific live events, which borrow and subvert emblematic moments from popular culture in darkly humorous works. She is particularly interested in how humour gives way to discomfort which is also played out in her character based comedy. She has devised projects and performed for Live Art UK, Duckie, Barbican, Tate Britain, The Live Art Development Agency, Latitude Festival and Beaconsfield Gallery and is one half of comedy / horror duo Hewlett & Eaton. She runs Motel de Nowhere - a time share studio place for live art, comedy, visual art, performance, music and all manner of creative activities - where humans make creative things happen.

www.susannahewlett.com

NICHOLAS OWEN JONES



Dents (2012)

A series of short videos using found footage of British television channel identification.

Nicholas Owen Jones lives and works in London, primarily in video, digital media, pen and ink.

STEVE NICE



Toilet Time and Relative Dimension in Video Space; Countdown (with Susannah Hewlett) (both 2012)

In this knock off telefantasy adventure, traditional analogue special effects are reformed for the digital age to depict both a regular day in Peckham and a one thousand year flush-back to the future!

Steve Nice is a multidimensional artist based in London. His video work typically uses science fictional tropes and techniques to explore conflated media and mindscapes.

www.stevenice.tv

HAROLD OFFEH

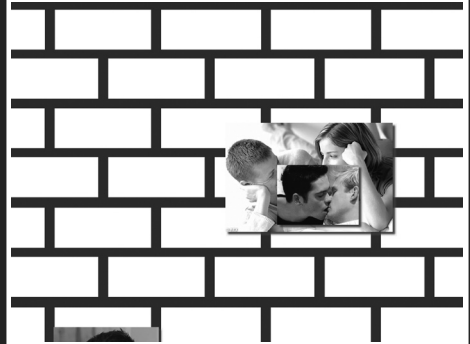


Soft and Bouncy; The Natural Truth; Soul Glo (all 2012)

In 3 performance interventions Offeh explores the dynamics and address of 70's and 80's American Black hair and beauty advertising. The works, based on existing adverts, explore the language, rhetoric and gesture of the original adverts and seeks to highlight the absurdity of the aspirational desire they evoke.

Harold Offeh works in a range of media including performance, video, photography and interactive and digital media, employing humour as a means to confront the viewer with an assessment of contemporary popular culture. Recently Offeh has approached the themes of futurism and hair through collective live engagements with other artists, performers and community participation. He studied at the University of Brighton and the Royal College of Art, London; now lives in London and works in Leeds where he is a senior lecturer in Contemporary Art Practices at Leeds Metropolitan University.

MATHEW PARKIN



Visual essay on personal and political gaze in relation to television; Various theme tunes played whenever; How does it go again? (all 2012)

Parkin's work presents positions and relationships available for use and rehearsal through the act of looking. Using the format of a visual essay of mainly found imagery he underlines the idea that identity is not something internal, but an amalgamation of external sources. Repetition of language, situations and music makes the representation become real, echoing the reality viewed through the distortion of television.

Mathew Parkin lives and works in Norwich. His work is a combination of contemporary abstract sculpture and installation. His work attempts to address concerns around his authorial voice or ownership of the work. Recent work has explored gay chav-subculture, the character of Del Boy, arenas for performance, fashion logos and poster design. Recent projects have included work for a digital exhibition The Sunday Curator by itsour-playground.com, You'll Get Used To It by Oliver Braid for New Work Symposium, Tramway, Glasgow and Dubble Trovble, CCA, Glasgow.

www.mathewparkin.co.uk

ALIA PATHAN



Empty Vessels (2010)

Empty Vessels follows four characters; two detectives, a film editor and a producer, who each attempt to piece together a mystery. The video draws references to organisational corruption and governmental secrecy. Technically the video embraces digital advancements with high production values whilst exploring the tropes of dramatic dialogue and narrative structures. Empty Vessels sets up the expectation for conventional broadcast by formally alluding to a linear narrative but simultaneously breaks this by exposing the production and the post-production as happening concurrently. Empty Vessels was selected for the 2010 Tethervision Commissions with the intention to be broadcast on Tether's online television platform to signify the changing distribution of film and television through increasingly available online channels.

Alia Pathan is an artist based in London. Her practice examines the manipulation of language through audio, video and performance. She studied Fine Art at Nottingham Trent University and is currently pursuing an MFA at Goldsmiths University, London. Recent exhibitions include The Manchester Contemporary, New Art Exchange and Vita Kuben in Umea, Sweden. Empty Vessels was her first film commission awarded by Tethervision which had its inaugural international screening at Loop Festival, Barcelona in 2011.

www.aliapathan.com

MATTHEW RANDLE



the Rose or die Rose - Turn it on Again (2012)

Randle presents a sound installation in which Rose, an assistant, can be summoned upon pressing the red button. Rose is a fictional character from the BBC television series Doctor Who, in which a time travelling figure encounters and negotiates situations. In a recent adaptation, Rose 'dies' after she is transported to a parallel universe. For her to return would compromise the world's existence. The Doctor loves Rose but cannot say it.

For example, a horse eats grass: the horse changes the grass into itself; the grass as such does not persist in the horse, but some aspect of it—its Matt-R—does. The Matt-R is not specifically described (e.g., as atoms), but consists of whatever persists in the change of substance from grass to horse. Matt-R in this understanding does not exist independently (i.e., as a substance), but exists interdependently (i.e., as a "principle") with form and only insofar as it underlies change. It can be helpful to conceive of the relationship of Matt-R and form as very similar to that between parts and whole. For Aristotle, Matt-R as such can only receive actuality from form; it has no activity or actuality in itself, similar to the way that parts as such only have their existence in a whole (otherwise they would be independent wholes.)

(a piece of text about matter in Aristotle's eyes taken from Wikipedia, edited insofar as 'matter' is replaced with 'Matt-R')

drawing.tumblr.com

NINA WAKEFORD



'Bob, Danny, Mike, Steve...'. (2012)

This 5 minute video loop takes the Internet genre of the 'unboxing' event as its starting point, using footage from male consumers who have filmed themselves unwrapping Free-view digital boxes.

Nina Wakeford is an artist based in London. She teaches Visual Sociology at Goldsmiths College.

www.ninawakeford.com

4:3

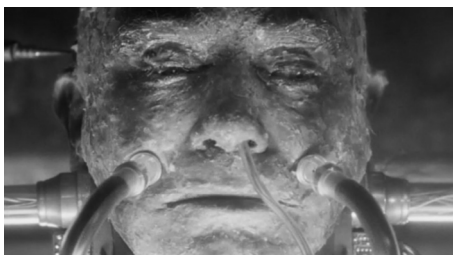
16:9



Watching habits, the 24th century, and the existence of television in a better world.

I want to talk about two science fiction television programmes that, in different ways, touch on the criticism TV has faced during its very short lifetime. Both of these are set in the 24th Century yet portray vastly different futures.

Cold Lazarus is a bleak depiction of what the future can be. The UK television drama written by Dennis Potter shortly before the writer's death, is set in the year 2368. It follows a group of scientists who have successfully found a way to tap into the memories of Daniel Feeld, a man who had his head cryogenically preserved following his death in the 1990's. Cryogenics is the process by which people spend a huge amount of money to have their bodies put into a rapid deep-freeze at, or shortly following their death. This is done in the expectation that future advances in medical science will cure them of whatever ailment killed them and further extend their life at a later date. In the world of fact cryogenics is a non-sense based on bad scientific theory but as a device in Sci-fi it has been quite useful. In this fiction social divisions have become so severe that violence (in its many forms) is experienced daily, the police are militaristic in the extreme and personal freedom is curtailed to the point of being completely overbearing. What's more important though is that entertainment networks are under the centralized control of a small handful of super-wealthy media magnates.



David Siltz, one such magnate learns of the scientists' research and immediately sees the potential benefit these ancient memories will have for his entertainment empire. And whilst the research is promised an effectively unlimited budget, in return he gets to

own the rights to use these memories for his network. As Emma Porlock describes to her colleague Fyodor - "He gets the rights to take the memories of Daniel Feeld. Edit them, and transmit them all over the world, on his TV, his cable, his videos, his VR's, his whole crock of shit."



Nevertheless, the scientists are aware of an alternate response to these memories. "Maybe [Siltz] is too smart for his own good, maybe, maybe... You see he's right in a way...how stupendous to see the real past through the eyes and the feeling of someone who lived in it, oh God!...and escape, I can just imagine how avidly people would lap it up. And then people would look at the world around them, the world as it is now and start to ask questions. Why do we have to live like this? Why cannot we walk in the streets? Why can't we mingle and touch and hope in the way our fore-fathers used to? why, why why?"

In the Dennis Potter fiction this potential mis-reading of television invites the possibility of questioning a world that is far from ideal, imagining a better future through the plundered memories of a frozen head. Television in the 24th century suddenly has the potential to bring about social change by using its mass appeal and promoting a vision of something better.

By this point, here in 2012, the highly centralised entertainment industry depicted in Potter's fiction already has its shortcomings when compared to how television is now disseminated and watched. Yet are these differences merely cosmetic? Do we inhabit a world in which 'The Broadcast' (in the widest sense of the term) is still the prerogative of a small powerful elite?

Firstly let's have a quick look at what the changes in television have been,

both in terms of the dissemination of content and the physical character of the devices on which it is viewed. In many areas it has shifted to the point that soon it may no longer be called 'television', or if it still is, it will look very different.

Habits in television watching have created an almost wholesale move towards platforms that give viewers increasing control over when and where they consume programmes. It would be a task in itself to list them all, so...um...here we go; 4od, iPlayer, ITVplayer, youtube, daily motion, tv databases hosting episodes illegally, DVD and VHS, iTunes purchases, Lovefilm hire and netflix....the list goes on and on. A great deal of these platforms are, as you will have noticed, web-based. But there is something else going on here as well. Much of the popularity of many contemporary television shows has come about through the consumption of DVD boxsets rather than viewing figures at the point of broadcast, a notable example is the re-imagining-as-critique of the war on terror - '*Battlestar Galactica*' whose popularity and viewership increased some time after the show was first aired in 2003. The 20/30-something demographic is often cited as the 'boxset generation' for its habit of consuming television primarily through DVD's and I would also like to note here HBO's (Home Box Office) tag-line, 'It's not TV, It's HBO', used between 1996 and 2009 that seems to prophesy the cable-network's role in facilitating much of this shift in viewing habits through its DVD distribution.

Parallel to the shift in how people consume television, the devices used to watch it have multiplied too: laptop and desktop computers, smartphones, tablets, dedicated media players, games consoles, portable games consoles, projectors, iPods and of course the television set itself. Whilst this has created a wide spread of how programmes can be watched, giving viewers much greater choice over when and where they see television, it has also created what Jostein Gripsrud termed 'convergence'.¹ In the past people had many different

devices, each serving a particular role, a TV set for viewing a broadcast schedule, VHS player for watching films and recording programmes, a telephone for calling a repair person when a tape is stuck in the VHS and a desktop computer on which to play minesweeper. Convergence means that many devices serving these roles now do many of the other tasks, making obsolete the need for equipment that serves a single purpose. Games consoles are now used to surf the Internet, access on-demand television services, watch Blu-ray and DVDs whilst mobile telephones can do much of the same.

But where does this leave my previous question? The one about whether broadcasting is still the prerogative of a small powerful elite. The question largely revolves around the relationship between conventional television and trends in user generated media on the Internet.

2005 was an exciting year. With Dailymotion and YouTube appearing on the Internet it became possible for anyone with access to a camcorder, computer and an internet connection to create a video and "Broadcast Yourself". It was a thrilling time, opening up the possibility of a real dialogue, breaking down the previously rigid distinction between 'producer' and 'audience'. Most importantly in terms of this essay, users were able to critique, adopt, question or respond to the modes of address used in conventional television broadcasting in an incredibly direct way, making a previously centralised medium more democratic. It was a process that people like Raymond Williams talked about in the 1970's, identifying the increased availability of home-production equipment eventually making it possible for viewers to interact with their tele-visual culture.²

This was the expectation anyway. The promise of uploading and viewing home-made or low-budget videos 'freely' (the term 'free' in relation to the Internet is, to my mind, highly contentious) still holds, but in the years since the creation of these sites, the land-

scape in which the content is shown has started to echo that of commercial television with many videos on monetised channels being preceded or interrupted by advertising. This isn't necessarily a complaint; server space, staffing and office rental to run websites all cost money. But the question I'm trying to raise is how far can broadcasting become truly user generated when its platform is run by a large centralised company such as Google?

I could have a go at answering this question right now, but you'd rather read about some more Sci-fi instead, right?

The *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode 'The Neutral Zone', like *Cold Lazarus* is also set in the 24th century. Unlike the Potter fiction, this future is an idealized model of human achievement; putting aside concerns for the accumulation of wealth, overcoming poverty and generally creating a better world to live in.

'The Neutral Zone' (first broadcast in 1988) pre-empted the end of television by the year 2040.

The episode starts with the USS Enterprise-D and its crew awaiting the arrival of their Captain, Jean-Luc Picard from Starbase-718 following a conference. Whilst doing so they encounter an 'ancient capsule' originating from Earth in the late 20th century. Lieutenant Commander Data (an android) and Lieutenant Worf (a Klingon) go to investigate.



They find three human bodies preserved in the fashion of that 'fad in the late 20th century': Cryogenic freezing.

Following their revival, on board the Enterprise-D, there is an exchange whilst stood next to a control panel between "Sonny" Clemonds (one of these frozen bodies), Commander Riker, and Data :

Clemonds: "Let's see if The Braves are on...how do you cut on this TV?"

Riker: "TV?"

C: "er...yeah, the boob tube. I'd like to see how The Braves are doing after all this time. Probably still finding ways to lose."

Data: (to Riker) "I believe he means television Sir. (to Clemonds) That particular form of entertainment did not last much beyond the year 2040."

C: well... what do you guys do? I mean you don't drink and you ain't got no TV. Must be kinda boring, ain't it?"



In Gene Roddenberry's (*Star Trek's* creator) projected future there is no place for television. It's incompatible with a model of human progress in which "people are no longer obsessed with the accumulation of things" and hunger, want and the need for possessions have been eliminated. Maybe the main reason that it is incompatible is because a great deal of television broadcasting at present is still sustained by the delusive promises offered by consumer capitalism. The most visible form of this is television advertising, the revenue of which goes into sustaining the schedule of commercial channels. Of course there are publicly owned broadcasting companies such as the BBC, which aren't sustained in this way. Nevertheless, the content of most mainstream television still projects what I'd call a normative or single depiction of how

society can be organised, a depiction that rarely questions openly whether a world in which “material needs no longer exist” is possible.

So, before any smart guy gives me grief on my Yahoo news group forum, saying, “hey giles arent u just compltly controdicteing yrself by describng a TV show that challenges many f these socail problems you’v’e detailed above?”

well just shut-it and read on.

Star Trek: The Next Generation TV programmes set an uncommon example through their unwavering commitment to addressing the problems of our age. It’s important to note here that DVD consumers and British viewers of the show, when it was broadcast on BBC 2 during the 1990’s would see these 45 minute episodes uninterrupted. US viewers, on the other hand, would have had the weekly moral dilemmas of this multi-ethnicity, multi-species, gender-equal crew (this last point is contentious) put into stark relief against a number of regular advert interruptions. It calls to mind Mimi White’s analysis of television as producing artifacts which primarily reflect ‘dominant class interests’. Her accusation continues; ‘[t]elevision - a heavily capitalised and industrialised branch of the entertainment industry - would necessarily reflect the belief system of the dominant class. Viewers, then, are buying into beliefs and meanings expounded on television, no matter what their positions within the economic system.’³

It’s difficult to imagine our tele-vi-sual and Internet video landscape as anything other than being owned by and reflecting the interests of a small powerful elite. Nevertheless a better way for me to answer the questions I set myself earlier, whilst concluding this piece would be to imagine a future fiction of my own. How will broadcasting change? What will it be in 2040? What will it be in 2368?

The first consideration that comes to mind when envisioning a possible future is the fact that humans, at

present, are flaming drunk on oil and other natural resources needed to push technological advancement. I once saw a digital clock powered by two potatoes. The clock was given the energy to function through electrical impulses in these tubers. Maybe these could be used as an alternate source of electrical power and future television equipment powered by these starchy root vegetables? Before long potatoes will be selectively bred so that their conductive qualities are utilised to form large information networks using their organic circuitry. The tubers could eventually become information storage devices that, in turn connect to other potatoes in the area.

Lived experience in 2012 is mediated in one form or another - recorded, scripted, performed, edited, and so on to form television programmes. In the future this will change as the potato tuber network, or ‘YouTuber’⁴ increases in sophistication, becoming capable of recording and transmitting human experience. Eventually humans will download ‘programmes’ (edited memories of lived experience) and watch the content of other users through an extra-sensory interface located in their feet. Most viewing will be done in large potato fields spanning many hundreds of square-miles.

But something else will happen. Very soon after these developments, a small group of individuals will become aware of the potato network’s increasing ‘intelligence’ and questions will emerge about the rights of this root vegetable. The potato network will accumulate so much knowledge and intellectual sophistication from its users that it will become sentient; a consciousness exhibiting self-awareness and will. Following campaigns and legal negotiations it will be deemed unlawful to use these potatoes for entertainment purposes. The sudden awareness of sentient life separate to that of humans will give rise to the idea that we are ‘not alone in the universe’ and herald a new period of Earth’s history. In having to cohabit with another sentient life on the planet, humans will learn to become more

compassionate and poverty, hunger and the many forms of injustice will disappear.

Television will bring about the ideal world.

¹Jostein Gripsrud, “Broadcast television: the chances of its survival in a digital age”, *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, Lyn Spigel and Jan Olsson, p.213.

²Raymond Williams preempts many of the technological forms found in broadcast media today in the final chapter of his *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*.

³Mimi White, “Ideological Analysis and Television”, *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television And Contemporary Criticism*, Robert C. Allen, p.212.

⁴Richard Grange is to thank for this name following a conversation in which I described the premise of the concluding section of the piece.

Giles Bunch works as a video artist, performer and writer, focusing on the ways in which people engage with their cultural landscape. His practice responds largely to specific contexts, the results of which emerge from a process of development in which collaboration, use of cultural artefact and an openness to unforeseen outcomes is integral.

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Schedule

From 8.00pm, and throughout the evening

Richard Grange: The Mr Bomer Comic
Susannah Hewlett: VSS Homeshopping Channel - The Multi Spa with Amy Lamé (31:08 loop)
Mathew Parkin: Visual essay on personal and political gaze in relation to television; Various theme tunes played whenever (inserted into a musical selection by Giles Bunch and Hayley Dixon); How does it go again?
Alia Pathan: Empty Vessels (4:38 loop)
Matthew Randle: the Rose or die Rose - Turn it on Again
Nina Wakeford: Bob, Danny, Mike, Steve... (5:00 loop)

The Motel de Nowhere bar will be open throughout the evening also.

Performance and video schedule, starting from 8.45pm

Harold Offeh: Soft and Bouncy
Richard Grange: reading from The Mr Bomer Comic

- break -

Harold Offeh: The Natural Truth
Susannah Hewlett and Steve Nice: Countdown

- break -

Susannah Hewlett: VSS product adverts - BRUSH (1:04)
Nicholas Owen Jones: Dents (0:30)
Katherine Fishman: Precise Manoeuvres (5:03)
Susannah Hewlett: VSS product adverts - Snack Saver (1:10)
Nicholas Owen Jones: Dents (0:30)
Elizabeth Cufley: Finding Peter Brookes (8:00)
Susannah Hewlett: VSS product adverts - Frugel Fruit (1:30)
Nicholas Owen Jones: Dents (0:30)
Steve Nice: Toilet Time and Relative Dimension in Video Space (2:17)
Susannah Hewlett: VSS product adverts - the Omni Clam (1:20)

- break -

Harold Offeh: Soul Glo
Chloe Cooper: Digital Dawn