

of his output, and worked out the equations required to hypothetically send such a mean-sized Picasso into orbit around the earth. It is unlikely that a painting of that specific size exists, although Curry presents a framed canvas conforming to those specifications, fabric-covered to conceal any image, alongside the completed equations. Although at first glance the work is almost dryly theoretical, Curry plays with notions of chance, the minuscule probability that there is a Picasso painting beneath the cloth and the surreal image of it floating in space, pushing the hypothetical to its limits.

In the midst of such conceptual works, Olivia Hodder and Aitor Gonzales us remind that formalism is not yet dead. Gonzales's assemblages of found objects are tactile in the extreme, removing the material from its context to focus on contrasting texture. The juxtapositions are precise and minimal, requiring close inspection. Hodder, by contrast, makes the biggest visual impact of the show with her *Pinkberry Passion*, 2015, a translation of Matisse-esque cut-out drawings into three-dimensions. Brightly coloured fabric-covered forms are stacked seemingly precariously on top of one another, climbing up the wall. The colours, like Gonzales's materials, are 'found', industrially mass produced, removed from their context and combined with one another. The precarious composition displays fragility and possible movement, and is echoed by Hodder in a small collage. This more saleable version of the large-scale installation touches on another issue on the minds of recent graduates – the art market and how to survive financially as a young artist. Perhaps more explicitly, Smith's hand-drawn definition, 'All things considered, how to price a work', is freely available to take away as a photocopy, while the original is also available, at a price.

*Untitled*, 2015, by Meg Brain subtly asserts its presence by forming a rectangle of light, intangible, shifting, as visitors move among it. Its edges neatly correspond to architectural features of the gallery, throwing attention onto the space around it while implicating the viewer as both a co-creator of this work in flux and a performer moving about the show. Smith's multiple definitions of his new noun similarly elicit engagement, asking the viewer not only to take the definition home with them but also to discuss the necessity and significance of the institution (however broad that may be). He ends on a question: 'What's next and what's the new contemporary?' This question seems to eschew the need to thematise links between the works on display. The exhibition functions instead like a 'New Contemporaries' in miniature and geographically specific, showing within it a broad and bold variety of current artistic concerns. ■

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## The Inoperative Community

Raven Row London 3 December to 14 February

Raven Row's 'The Inoperative Community' gifts viewers with the exorbitant possibility of freely devouring over 50 hours of experimental film and video. The customary impossibility of 'seeing everything' or viewing a work from beginning to end – increasingly the experience of large-scale shows and biennales – is mitigated by set screening times that allow visitors to go specifically for a desired work or ideally to return to see others. With the majority of rooms being transformed into cinema-like spaces, Raven Row has metamorphosed into something of a film festival housed within a multiplex cinema. The cognisance of multiple films simultaneously playing within the building, however, produces a spatially analogous form of anxiety to that of watching something online, with the next delight always just a click away. Indeed, the spectators that I witnessed – evoking an indoor version of André Breton's cinema-hopping in Nantes – were equally likely to navigate the gallery as a gallery; its paradigmatic mode of attention being a dialectic of boredom and distraction, with the former quickly prompting swift movement to the next instance of the latter. In his curatorial statement Dan Kidner framed this experience as a neither/nor logic: neither the fetish of 'film projection and cinema' nor the 'distracted viewing' of the gallery. Yet rather than registering these 'interchanges' in any 'complex' fashion, the exhibition instead offers viewers too neat an either/or choice. As Erika Balsom contends, cinema 'has migrated to numerous new exhibition situations, changing these sites by its presence and being changed by them in turn'. In the past two decades the space of art has been a key and contradictory site in its interrogation of not only the dispersal of moving-image across various platforms and technologies, but also its museumification. Film is treated as a medium to be commemorated and protected – the museum as mausoleum. Akin to DN Rodowick's portrayal of the millennial cinephile who 'swings between mourning and melancholia' over their desire for a lost – or radically dispersed – object (the traditions of cinema and experimental film), the show has a tendency to repress such issues rather than work them through.

The organising theme of the show, 'The Inoperative Community', is borrowed from Jean-Luc Nancy's 1983 essay of the same name. All the works are said to 'bear witness' to what Nancy terms the 'dissolution, the dislocation, or the conflagration of community', which is given historical particularisation by Kidner through a focus on the period of the so-called Long 1970s (1968-84). There are only three installation-oriented works in the show: Stuart Marshall's 1984 *Journal of the Plague Year* (displayed on five wall-embedded

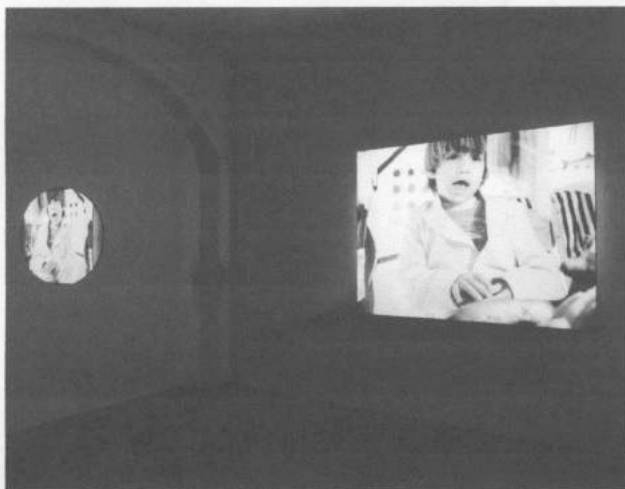


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AT THE THRESHOLD

30 JANUARY – 13 MARCH 2016



Leslie Thornton

*Peggy and Fred in Hell: Folding* 1984-2015 film

Ericka Beckman

*You the Better* 1983 film installation

television monitors), Erika Beckman's 1983 *You The Better* (a film which could be watched through a large door frame while on a bench outside the room featuring a large lightbox/prop) and Leslie Thornton's 1984-2015 *Peggy and Fred in Hell: Folding* (projected in a space cut across by a wall featuring a circular one-way mirror, so that people viewing the film could be glimpsed from outside but not vice versa). *Journal of the Plague Year*, a response to the UK media's reporting of the AIDS crisis, and *You The Better*, which depicts an exaggerated world in which individuals compete in games against the 'House', give concrete expressions to what Jean-Paul Sartre called a 'group-in-fusion': individuals who unify around an external threat, here specific vectors of spreading social disintegration. Thornton's beautifully shot film about a post-apocalyptic world where the only survivors are real-life siblings Janis and Donald Reading was over 30 years in the making, and is a practical example of what I took to be the most interesting thread throughout the show: the idea of duration and its connection to community as both a historical and filmic problem. Historically, Luke Fowler's 2014 *Dispositions* – a compilation film of footage of travelling communities in the Scottish highlands – documents what German sociologists term the erosion of traditional communities (*Gemeinschaft*) by impersonal modern society (*Gesellschaft*). Albert Serra's three-hour video *The Names of Christ*, 2010, is one of three works which temporally test the viewer. Serra's ideas, for me, are always more interesting than their realisations, which tend to take the form of tortuously dull conversations, here around the subject of the 14 scriptural names of Christ. Anne Charlotte Robertson's 1981-97 *Five Year Diary*, which was originally filmed on Super 8 and runs for over 37 hours (here four hours are shown in digital), constructs an often humorous first-person tale of both real and invented characters in her life. The longest film on show (so long that it forced Raven Row to extend its opening hours) is Lav Diaz's 2008 eight-hour film *Melancholia*, in which three protagonists are revealed to be playing personas as part of a strange coping exercise to deal with the loss of loved ones disappeared by the Philippine military. We are made to feel the creeping slowness of time and history.

It is in the screening room downstairs, however, with its overambitious morning-till-evening programme of different film series for each day of the week, where things become especially problematic. The already attenuated coherence of the gallery works is further strained by this deluge of often more familiar films. One has to admire Kidner's comprehensive research into radical and experimental film history, and equal appreciation is due to Raven Row's construction of such a handsomely built space to view them in, but like *e-flux's* irritatingly excessive Supercommunity newsletter over the summer, I couldn't help but wonder what community would be able to experience it all. The idea of films playing to nobody, as well as the fragmentation of an audience whose experience of the show is likely to be widely divergent, produces a strangely atomising effect. The discursive community that typically forms post-film-screening – whether in an actual cinema space or even an online platform – or the possible sociality that the space of art affords are both markedly absent. But perhaps such a schizophrenic indigestibility was precisely the point. The community is inoperative, after all – or, as Nancy would put it, our finitude was certainly exposed. ■

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## Christine Sun Kim: Rustle Tussle

Carroll / Fletcher London

27 November to 30 January

When she first began working with sound, Christine Sun Kim, who was born deaf, wondered: 'What would others think? What would they feel?' Sound was in other people's ownership. With Kim's debut exhibition in the UK, 'Rustle Tussle', sound was dealt with on her own terms, questioning its conceptual and aesthetic expression. Unpicking 'sound etiquette', the show challenged social expectations of what comprises our sense of hearing.