



EXPOSURE

“What should I build or write, Against the fall of night?”

“What should I build or write, against the fall of night?” - this extract is from the poem ‘XLV. “*Smooth between sea and land*”’ by Alfred. E. Housman (1859-1936). It inspired Arthur C. Clarke’s science fiction novel ‘*Against the Fall of Night*’ and ‘*The City and The Stars*’. The narrative includes a unique character’s discovery of magnificent truths. Not only does he reveal the fear that ancient man had of the unknown - the stars ...and anything else outside their city - but he realises that the history of man, as they had known it, had been false. The discovery of the emerging truth of history revealed that these insular, enclosed worlds were sustained by their doctored histories and their oppressive cultures: “sagas” being total-immersion virtual reality entertainments that induce you into losing all your knowledge of anything outside, which was usual -- at least until Clarke’s unique character created a culture of exposure. This reference acts as the departure point for the exhibition and for further exploration.

Louisa Adam, Curator

A Note on Sustain: *Sustain* was created by re-photographing the final sequence of Stanley Kubrick’s 2001: *A Space Odyssey* with a still camera and effectively collapsing the movie’s frames onto a single image plane. The title recalls the musical term for a prolonged tone and the consequent piling of notes on top of one other. The work also makes reference to Hiroshi Sugimoto’s *Theatres* series in which the projection of an entire motion picture was reduced to a single white, rectangular light.

Central double page image courtesy of the artist. David Birkin, *Sustain*, 75” x 39”, gelatin silver prints mounted on aluminium.

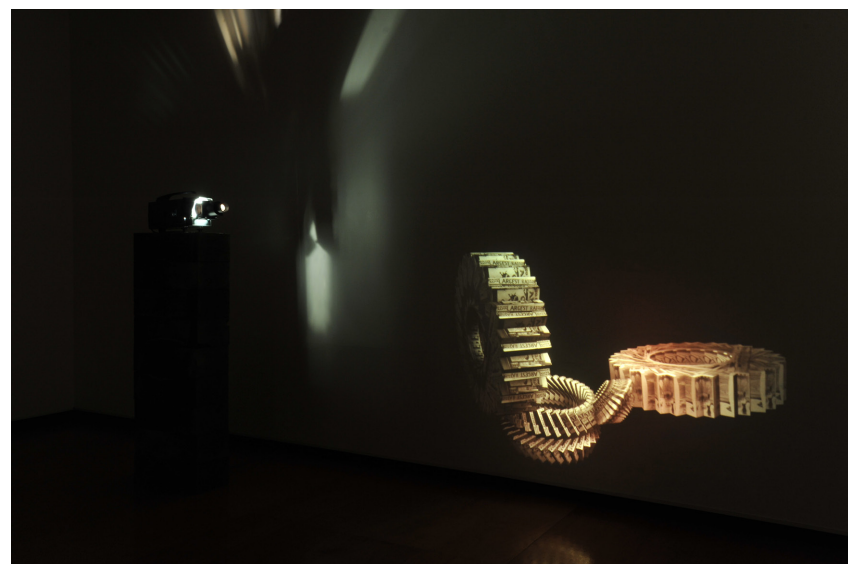
HotShoe Gallery supports experimentation within photographic art, film, video and installation. This exhibition will pay particular attention to the concept of 'exposure', introducing new work by Torsten Lauschmann, David Birkin and Benjamin de Burca. Exposure refers both to the photographic technique of exposing light and to the idea of exposing the mind of the photographer and his subject.

In his new series, *The Darker Ages*, Torsten Lauschmann employs image-making techniques from the past and the present, in order to explore the tensions in the relationships between old and new technology. In *Contemporary Gear Box*, a slide projector is used to present a computer-generated image of a system of cogs. In this image Lauschmann uses 20th-century digital technology to re-create one of the oldest forms of labour-saving technology known to mankind. In his experimentations, with these technologies, he exposes "invisible" aspects of image making; framing, perspective, depth of space, perceivable illusions and narratives.

David Birkin's work is informed by the history of photography and its relationship to performance in contemporary art. For the series *Confessions*, Birkin invited members of his family to confess a secret they had never previously revealed. When they felt ready, they opened the shutter, and when finished they closed it again, so that each photograph's exposure was determined by the duration of its subject's confession. For the series *Form*, the exposures corresponded to the length of time the artist could maintain a 'stress position': an interrogatory technique employed by military personnel to forcibly extract a confession or other information. The works relate to certain aestheticised images of suffering in the Christian art historical tradition and Modernist preoccupations with objectifying the body.

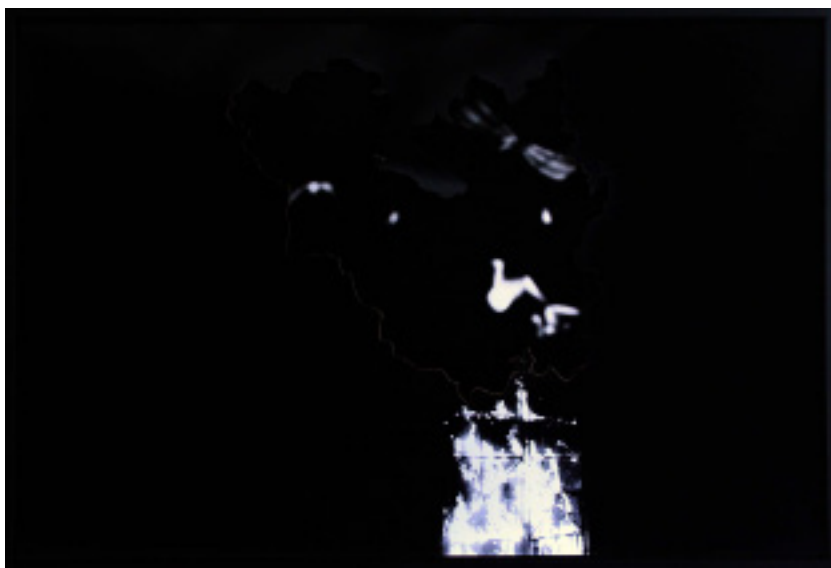
Benjamin de Burca uses light in more than one way in the creation of his work. He has taken photographs of fire, at night, in the dark. The prints of these images are then sliced into using a laser cutter - the light of the laser literally burns the print apart - and the pieces are rearranged into new configurations. The resulting collages oscillate between representation and abstraction; and the means by which the images are produced evoke the fundamental properties of fire: destruction and creation.

Torsten Lauschmann was born in 1970. He currently lives & works in Glasgow, Scotland. He has an MA from Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, Karlsruhe and BA (hons) in Fine Art Photography at the Glasgow School of Art. Recent exhibitions include: 'Votice' at the CCA, Glasgow and 'Zero to Sixty' at the ICA, London and Arnolfini, Bristol.



Torsten Lauschmann
Contemporary Gear Box 2009,
The Darker Ages series, Slide projection,
dimensions variable Edition 1 of 5
Installation image courtesy of Mary Mary, Glasgow.

Benjamin De Burca was born in 1975. He currently lives and works in Berlin. He completed his MFA in Fine Art at the University of Ulster, Belfast, Northern Ireland and has BA (Hons) Degree in Fine Art, Glasgow School of Art. Recent exhibitions include: Irish Embassy, Berlin, Germany; Temporary IV, Wedding, Berlin, Germany; 'The trouble with context' The Context Gallery, N. Ireland and Thread Gallery, N. Ireland. His work can be found in many private collections. Public collections include the collection of the University of Ulster. Later this year he will be showing works at Koelnberg Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany.



Benjamin De Burca
Arise Simurgh (2010) 80 x 100cms; ed. of 5+2AP
Framed, laser cut Lambda prints
Image courtesy of the artist

David Birkin was born in 1977 and lives & works in London. He is completing an MA at the Slade School of Fine Art and has a BA in anthropology from the University of Oxford. Recent exhibitions include 'Starting with a Photograph' at Michael Hoppen Gallery (curated by Rebecca Wilson, Saatchi Gallery), 'Play' at Paradise Row, 'Natural Wonders: New Art from London' at Baibakov Art Projects in Moscow and the East Wing biennial exhibition at the Courtauld Institute of Art. Birkin received a 2009 bursary from the National Media Museum to begin a new series of 'Confessions' of priests and has been nominated for this year's Sovereign European Art Prize. He will be exhibiting at the Barbican in June 2010.



David Birkin
Confessions #7 & #8 from the series Confessions (2010)
(Top)
60" x 40" inches each; Edition of 5 + 2AP



“I Throw Light...” Three different modes of ‘exposure’ are encountered in the practice of the artists in this show - of the subject portrayed, of the object depicted and of the medium itself. David Birkin exposes his sitters after having led them to a specific state of mind, Benji de Burca exposes the transmutability of the objects he shoots and Torsten Lauschmann exposes the mechanics of experiencing an image.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary includes all of the above modes as possible definitions of the word ‘expose’ – I quote from it, correspondingly to the aforementioned artistic practices: “the revelation of identity or fact, especially when concealed or likely to find disapproval”, “a physical condition resulting from being exposed to the elements” and “the act or condition of exposing or being exposed”.

All of the three artists experiment with the photographic medium’s qualities, perceiving the image as a multivalent entity, susceptible to manipulation; they all seek the Flusserian quality of information, namely improbable situations. De Burca operates this search on the level of form, rearranging the image’s structure. Birkin produces it on the level of content, by implying the depiction of the whole narrative of a confession captured/condensed in a still frame. Lauschmann attempts it on the level of the apparatus, by self-referencing the medium’s infrastructure.

Birkin’s series, *Confessions*, host an interesting contradiction. On the one hand his project appears to offer an insight, a disclosure, a visual rendering, of an individual during a confessional state. On the other hand, his choice of medium - photography - deprives the viewer from knowing what the subjects really do/ say/look like. The photographic camera cannot record the sitter’s confessions neither as thoughts nor as sayings; nevertheless it can capture gestures and postures. But even again in this case, the traits/symptoms/appearance that refer to the state in which the sitter exists during this process, would be more discernible if the images had clarity and even better if given in a multitude - maybe as a sequence. It seems that the medium chosen to articulate this state of mind is not the one expected - video. By its nature, the photographic frame denies a concrete narration. It denies the passage of time. It hides what happened before and after the moment depicted. It serves the lack of narration, offering space for

information, by his choice to prolong the time through long exposures. These two technical choices act like a safety net for the subjects, protecting them from being seen / read / ‘heard’. The camera in this case does not act only as a silent witness, but foremost as a secure secret-holder.

[I am exposing you - to the camera, on the photograph, to the viewer- through trying not to expose you; I am blurring the image - disavowal: exposing you and not exposing you at the same time]

This feeling of disavowal, namely a state of simultaneous denial and belief in something, is present not only in Birkin’s other piece entitled *Sustain* - this time produced by the mixing of images - but also in De Burca’s work. The coexistence of darkness and light, both as depicted elements and as form-shaping materials in a post production process, along with the blending of representational and abstract elements on the same surface, produced after the image’s deconstruction and recomposition, create an ambivalent state of reading; the viewer is invited in a field where “memory and imagination coincide”, as he states. De Burca’s working method classifies him in Flusserian terminology as a new imaginalist, namely one who attempts to turn automatic apparatuses against automation. In the artist’s own words, “The concept applied is twofold: the images are created and then literally deconstructed by slicing out elements with a laser cutter, i.e. using the power of light itself to burn and cut, while referencing simultaneously the photographic process of recording light, in this instance that of fire itself. The cut-out pieces are in turn transformed and re-introduced to interrelate evocatively with their counterparts, i.e. as their negative shadows thereby reversing the photo-grammatical process.”

It is projection of light that generates the photogramme, and Lauschmann seems to direct his inquisitiveness exactly in this working strategy. His work articulates visual ways of expressing in a rhetorical manner the mechanics of imagery production, reproduction and perception of narration. Inviting the spectator to read/ perceive his study on visual ergonomics - eg. strategies through which nature is represented in the non-plastic arts - Lauschmann experiments on visual representations of culture and the technologies created to produce them. It is rather the same comment, that Warren Neidich has aptly put into words: “each image relates to the image that just preceded it”. Lauschmann’s rhetoric is based on

and obsolete technologies. In this way he addresses creativity, which again in Flusserian thought is defined as the production of previously non-existent information; as the latter explains, “all new items of information are based on preceding ones, and they are new because they restructure the preceding items and/or insert foreign informational elements – ‘noises’- into them.”

While a camera’s ‘hotshoe’ hosts the means through which ‘exposure’ can be facilitated - a flash - the HotShoe gallery hosts experimental ways through which ‘exposure’ can be articulated - a discourse, and a disclosure. Exposure displays experimental ways of making/showing imagery. It forms a dialogue between what Vilem Flusser calls the traditional and technical images, namely between “views of objects and computation of concepts; the former are reproduction of scenes, the latter of calculations”. Birkin’s, De Burca’s and Lauschmann’s practices aim to reproduce calculated concepts, by the act of ‘exposure’. Their work seems to reply to this exhibition’s inquiry what should I build or write against the fall of night, by saying: I throw light.

Written by Vasileios Kantas

Exposure, curated by Louisa Adam: 13 Feb – 9 April 2010.

A special thankyou to those who helped make this exhibition possible.

HotShoe Gallery
29-31 Saffron Hill, Farringdon (Tube)
London EC1N 8SW, UK
T +44 (0)20 7421 6009

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www.hotshoegallery.com
www.hotshoeinternational.com
www.louisaadam.tumblr.com

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Opening Hours
Wed-Fri, 10-5pm. Sat, 12-5pm.

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General Enquiries: [info \[at\] hotshoegallery.com](mailto:info@hotshoegallery.com)
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All artworks are for sale. For enquiries, including private appointments and the price list, please contact: sales@hotshoegallery.com Hotshoe Magazine is for sale in the gallery, a number of bookstores in London and New York, and through subscription via the website.

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Cover Illustration: *Perpetual Adoration*, Torsten Lauschmann
From The Darker Ages series, 2009. Slide projection. dimensions variable
Installation image courtesy of Mary Mary, Glasgow.