Panel discussion on the occasion of the publication and exhibition launch of FINAL MACHINE. LGP invited Bridget Crone and Robin Mackay to respond to the work in discussion with Amanda Beech, drawing upon current debates in culture, politics and philosophy. The discussion was chaired by Marie-Anne McQuay.

FINAL MACHINE is a three-channel video and architectural installation by Amanda Beech. It continues Beech's examination into the nexus of art, politics, fiction and philosophy, and interrogates the realist status of the image and the contract this holds with systems of power.

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STOPWAITGO
MARIE-ANNE MCQUAY

A circle focuses our attention, tracks across the screen, across the surface of images. At once the lens of a camera and a sniper rifle, a graphic template and a planetary body, an eye and a void, the contracting and expanding circle highlights and then obscures details as rapid fire scenes change more quickly and more urgently than our ability to comprehend them. We are looking for clues in the verdant jungles of the Dominican Republic, the nighttime highways of Miami and the rocky terrain of the Mojave Desert. The closer we look, however, the less we see: the big reveal is that there is no reveal. Each location, although seductively shot and cinematically evocative, ultimately offers up nothing more, or less, than its own depiction; a radical realism that resists symbolism, that resists meaning, that resists narrative.

As the three videos which comprise Amanda Beech's *Final Machine* (2013) play out in turn, each with its own affective colour filter - red, amber, green - we orientate our bodies between freestanding sculptural projection walls. A forceful soundtrack and voiceover commands our attention. The latter is a monologue spoken by a seasoned operative, a skillful montage of CIA recruitment manuals, dialogue from *Miami Vice,* blogger speculation and extracts from philosopher Louis Althusser's lectures, *The Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists,* lectures delivered across 1968-9 to non-philosophers which attempted to envision a politics free from normative values presented as universal truth. These texts become one script in which the operative's paranoiac voice tells us that all we know is a sham, urging us to take action and abandon our dearly held belief in good politics. We are offered no space to think, to challenge, to even breathe.

The sense of unease and anticipation produced by the intensity of his delivery and rhetoric is also induced at a more subliminal level through the continual bringing together of images and words that refuse to entirely coalesce. This relentless synchronicity uncompromisingly drives *Final Machine* forward, producing in the viewer a form of cognitive dissonance as our desire for linguistic consistency is thwarted. The uncompromising editing style of *Final Machine* is indicative

of Amanda Beech's wider project; as she states in her paper which expands on the making of *Final* Machine, Beech continually seeks to challenge through her art work and writing, "the idea that certain images connect to certain meanings – the idea of causation and certainty, trust in language". At stake here for Beech is the very "condition of our reality" since, if we accept that causation and certainty are merely illusions, then "the question of what constitutes our reality, the question of how meaning matters is then opened up to investigation". Thus Beech puts under scrutiny what she terms "our bad habit": our faith in critique, in art's claim to present reality through established visual codes, codes already embedded within other ideological systems of power.

Beech's interest in puncturing art's own mythology, in puncturing the "spontaneous philosophy of artists" is picked up in Robin MacKay's contribution to the panel discussion. As MacKay notes in his response to *Final Machine*, Beech's work "doesn't assume the power of art to rise above and critique the world of the image, the materials it uses". He further defines *Final Machine* as a "kind of sculpture", a sculpture that uses the objectness of material culture which has been "patiently manipulated and blended". Crucially for MacKay, Beech's merging of "pulp crime novels and critical theory, cop shows and political philosophy, slick thrillers and philosopher's sombre meditations on human destiny" is achieved without recourse to irony or hierarchy: she takes her materials and their properties, their pervasive affect, seriously. In his exploration of the critical effects of Beech's formal decisions, Mackay also highlights, amongst other discussions of the work, her sampling of the dynamic properties of Powerpoint, that most ubiquitous presentation tools which generates its own system of logic through the sheer force of momentum. As he points out "You can't reason with bulletpoints" and thus we, the viewer, are "constrained to act, to operate on the information available to us"; there are no other narratives here, no outside to the *Final Machine* to appeal to.

That 'us' highlighted by MacKay is a "complicit 'us' ", a subject position established by the voiceover's almost hypnotic power. As MacKay reminds the reader, "in order to endure, the political body has to convince, seduce, it has to mobilise desire towards law....Power can only be installed intimately through the use of force, pleasure and desire." Crucially this "complicit us" is thrilling rather than fearful and thus Beech's work, which exhorts 'us' to abandon our liberal ideals, it produces in the viewer the very effects of the operations of power. The performative nature of the work, the way in which it produces certain effects to critical ends, is additionally highlighted by writer and curator Bridget Crone. Her response to *Final Machine* is a breathlessly intense script entitled IMAGE-MACHINE which, like Beech's own work, forces together seemingly diverse subjects to produce a cascade of image/text associations as if edited together by an inorganic life-force; as Crone states "All are images into the mix. They're just fleeting impressions driving by, and witnessed by nothing in particular: all a part of the flow." Specific references include Russell Hoban's novel *Fremder* (1996) with its "flicker drive", Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari *Anti-Oedipus*; molecular science; James Cameron's descent into the Mariana Trench; Felix Baumgartner's fall through space; typography and squid guts. Crone creates her own 'flicker' effect as fiction and fact, philosophy and molecular science, the deep and the atmosphere, form and formlessness all flow and clash together: "This is fast forward on a massive scale: speeding through time, the drive is the flicker, flicker, flicker, flicker – always linear, driving forward or backwards on a wave." Thus Crone evokes the feeling generated by Beech's work that there is "no space between images in the image machine"; that there is no outside, that no one is coming to rescue us, that this is our reality.

FINAL MACHINE
AMANDA BEECH

I thought that it would be pertinent to get to the nitty gritty in the work and so this afternoon, I'll be discussing both my practice in general and the work FINAL MACHINE.

My work has consistently looked at narratives of power and agency and how they are delivered in politics, history, culture and philosophy. An important current through my practice is how these representations of decision, that exist in these forms and discourses, produce experiences of force in different ways. This has led me to look at the condition of the language of force and the force of language and to explore that dynamic. Within these concerns, I've made video, prints, drawings and so on and today I will focus on my most recent work, the three channel video installation FINAL MACHINE.

There are three strands in the work that I'd like to concentrate on, which is difficult as it's such a new work and the first time it's been seen, and in many senses it's the first time I've seen it properly as a finished piece.

The first being the premise that certain images connect to certain meaning. I've been interested in exploring the idea of causation and certainty and the idea that we have trust in language, in that there are grounds to meaning that allow us to make sense of what we say to each other. In many ways we know that not to be true, the guarantee that we can mean what we say is not intact, and although we can say that it's not intact, we often go to work as if it is. In general thinking, we trust that people will hear us and understand us.

I wanted to think about how we invoke a background theory to meaning, what we may call a principle of sufficient reason. What happens to meaning when we take away the support that might guarantee the unilateral connection between what we see and what we understand? How that can be seen to create a crisis, when we can't mean what we say and can't guarantee our actions?

My main complaint over the last ten years is that art has loved this crisis way too much for its own good and a lot of art practice has seen itself in crisis, and revelled in it to produce work about its own failure and impossibility, the uncertainty of the image, ambiguity and so on.. It's done this with great confidence, ironically. I have a problem with that contradiction and it was important for me to think about that in making this work.

This crisis would be based on the idea that we had something intact and trustable and then we lost it: an unrecoverable truth. However, if we said that the condition of our reality was such, that this type of ground never existed in the first place, the question about what constitutes our reality, the question about how meaning matters, is then opened up to investigation.

This idea of overcoming, or not being concerned with, the crisis, is not just central to this work but has been a continual focus in my practice. The way in which I've dealt with this has been the place and experience of force in this question, and how an art-work might exact the type of force that we might normally find it incapable of, or at least untypical of.

But heading back to this question of meaning, language and reality…

The ways in which the work looked to this question was by imagining the flow of narrative to work across the work in both horizontal and vertical axis. What I mean by this is how the images, the score and the voiceover make connections from one screen to another, across the space of the gallery; the way language loops back within each section but does not repeat itself, and the

way in which the spoken voice does not match in any straight or simple terms, the image that you see in front of you. Central to the work is this idea of connection, synch, being in synch. What does it mean to produce a sense of drive, a sense of a world without crisis where we can get things done, a sense of force and mobilisation, when the objects and images are not in synch? Or more correctly I should say, there is no such thing as a conceptual scheme to produce synch in the first place.

For me, constructing the video was not about deliberately making things out of synch, to make some dissonant art aesthetic or to produce a post-structuralist idea of the fragmentary, but rather this was a question of the nuances of force and how force can be delivered by and through images – a kind of force that we do not understand from our common sense languages.

I wanted to imagine within this, the aspirations for an egalitarian and non-hierarchical approach to language, knowing that forms of language that are considered 'harmless' 'neutral' and 'tolerant', are as equally pervasive and rhetorical as those that are visibly violent. The power of language is asserted contingently so it is important to level out these forms, perspectives, tonalities and shapes and to imagine them as part of a larger operation. Is it possible to think about a non-hierarchical notion of language?

An example of how I approach these ideas is by using the format of the lecture as a minimal non-frame to the work; the lecture is claimed quite a lot in the work but is rarely delivered in a standard or recognisable form. To push this further, the images in the work often connect to the banal motivations and distractions of a power-point presentation - there are a lot of graphic shapes in there that don't seem to be doing too much. These are manifest as representations in action and their power is secured through their placement within, what I would call, the non-sequence. In this sense it was important to me that the work had to risk being meaningless or meaningful, it had to not care so much about it working, it had to give up on its own causation for it to do what it wanted to do, and it had to risk losing the viewer. I think that's an important part of the practice, in that it might disconnect to the degree that the work creates its own internal language system.

I used the location of the work as another mechanism to think through the equality of the image. The work was filmed in the Dominican Republic, Miami, and the Mojave Desert. However, it was important that the work did not focus on location as the background to its ability to be meaningful. I was intent on making sure that the work did not rely on any claims to a specific truth that would defend it. For example, there is no pedagogical or allegorical claim made in the story that you see and there is nothing to learn here about the site in question. There was no empirical research project. I was also motivated further in this by the fact that many movies as we know are filmed in locations that have very little, or nothing in fact, to do with their truth effects. E.g. *Law and Order* is filmed in LA not in NY; *Apocalypse Now* is filmed in Thailand and *Miami Vice* was filmed in the Dominican Republic… and so on.

This integration of artistic rhetorical language in the service of another force – another argument - was also true for the references in the work to pop and minimalism alike. The graphic elements of the work, as well as the object-hood of the sculptural screen walls, is central to this condition of our relation to genre. Here also the circle that operates as a lens, an instrument, a hole, graphic representational code and almost planetary object, is essential to the work, in that it is capable of being *all these things*. It can traverse its own paradigm, its own condition.
In this, I wanted to look to how these forms collide to produce a new structural integrity. They are not their parts, they are not pieces collaged together, rather I'd like to see them as montage with direction and as another kind of statement.

The thing that ties these structural strands together was the imagining of a kind of post-political reality, that would be the effect of taking some theoretical ideas seriously, as if a philosophy was a pure and accurate description of a reality, (as if!) whether we liked it or not. This would be a realist state in which the comprehension of reality was achieved at the level of action. This world-landscape is therefore a fiction that describes a certain reality attitude. The coalescence of language and thought, the mobility of thought, and the materiality of thought, were all central to the imagining of such a space. The place where people came out of the bunkers, as Althusser would say, with a refreshed and accurate conception of what constitutes reality.

In terms of that philosophical motivation, the question *What's crime got to do with it?* is certainly important to me and a lot of the narratives I work with are concerned with crime and knowledge. The sense of a crime based narrative, tales of special ops, corruption, coups and cadres… these are the kinds of agents that see past the system to deeper machinations of force.

Crucial to the work is the idea that any attempt to see through, or move past, a system of codes, power, institutions and agencies, might mean that we must not trust what we see and that we must escape the world of language altogether.
Bearing this in mind, what is important to the work is that it tries to understand the place of the visible in the context of this unbinding of relations, the overcoming of our habits, and the move towards a correct understanding of power.

In that sense, the work tries to craft a thesis that weaves through CIA recruitment speeches, US history, blog punditry on Hollywood realism, and Althusser's famous lecture series *Spontaneous Philosophy of Scientists*, 1967. Bringing all these elements together to make one story, or rather one argument, as live across the three screens, allowed me to see the idealism and paranoia that lies at the heart of these questions of what is true and what is false and perhaps to ask what a form of art might be like that manages to overcome these problems.

So finally, I'd like to end with saying something about art in general and I think it's important to discuss how the world of the image and the art-world, connects to the philosophical question of reality and to the political question of meaning. For now, I'm going to separate these two elements out. I wanted to think about how art's tradition of escaping mythology as a means to turn towards 'reality' has produced the biggest myth of all. This includes the way art has tried to locate itself as a fact, as object, as reality itself. This is the way art has often tried to find itself as some form of science, capable of telling and producing truths.

The way in which art has seen itself as capable of making these escape attempts from myth and towards fact, has resulted in, what we could call, the spontaneous philosophy of artists. This spontaneous philosophy means that art has invested in the belief that it is myth-free. Problematically here, language is wrongly connected to myth and I think that it's an incorrect assumption that all language is mythological.

Ironically, a kind of mysticism is used to support art's claim that it can produce facts. So this final strand, this question of art in general, made me question the kind of images that we could make as artists that could exceed this problem, that could overcome this habit, this clone to science and to fact, but on the basis of meek science and fact and mysticism.

So for me, the answer to this question was, and is, not about inventing new forms in the way that we might look to art to always provide the new or the different. The question is larger than that, since it is about changing the system itself: About changing the principles that we go to work with. Our first principles if you like.

The circle became a central pivot to exploring this through this work. Circles as entities can be understood as figures of constraint, they are the stamp of the same: a ritualistic or mystical mark of the force of a paradigm of enclosure. But I hope that the work also envisages the idea of the act of drawing a circle – of producing the curve itself, making the line of demarcation that is manifest as power. The circle described in these two ways, understands the circle as figural element in the work but also as a kind of action or experience of the work itself. This captures the play between and collapse of these two conditions as forces in the world and which are manifest and exercised in the work.

Particularly in FINAL MACHINE, it was important that the sentiment was not ironic, nor discursive and that it directly addressed the nature of art practice. There is plenty to say about the condition of art and so why not ask an art work to speak to this directly in a form of dogmatism, that does not hold back in its general complaint about art in general? These thoughts had often been there for me, but rarely situated in the work itself, *as the work*. Whilst I do panel discussions and talk with colleagues and friends saying isn't the art-world terrible, I have never made an artwork that said anything like that, so what would happen if I did that directly? Would it be made ironic by the fact that an artwork is saying it? And I hoped that it would and I hope that it would achieve the same kind of directness as saying it here, just in another form of mediation of that voice.

With this, the work does not so much reflect on its own position as an art work, it does not reflect upon itself.

IMAGE-MACHINE
A response to Amanda Beech's *Final Machine*
BRIDGET CRONE

We've gone through it and we're inside the machine…We are waking up to a
shadow that engulfs and negates our selfhood. We are truly in the dark.

Amanda Beech, *Final Machine* (2013): 58 min, three channel video projection, 16:9, score by Joe
McMonagle.

PART ONE. There is no place beyond the machine.
Inside the machine, the concept of selfhood arises from the machine itself, through one of its structural articulations: desire, production, anti-production. This means that we are produced through and by the machine. We are spit out as the machine churns, folds and breaks… and then refolds us back in its machinic-guts.

Machinery turns.
There's no outside, no entry, no exit.

We are machines in the machine in the machine. Strung out, horizontally, body to body, we maximise productivity and the machine likes this. We please the machine. We gratify ourselves, we machines of the machine.

Auto-production. Satisfaction.

PART TWO. The screen.
I feel my body move towards the screen. It feels like floating so perhaps I can say that I *float* towards the screen. Yellow circle. Yellow circle on screen attracts. Motion not my own. (What is self and skin anyway? I seem porous.) Nose touches yellow.

I find that I am standing with the tip of my nose against the screen so that yellow circle and this thing called, I, meet. Co-join. And, I glow… Yellow.

Have you ever tried to beat your head violently against a wall? Smash it repeatedly. Do it again. Violate flesh. Rip it. Shred it. Make it meet matter. Meat. Matter.

Try doing that with a projection screen. Slippery. Amorphous. I want to violently rip into my body to feel its fleshy meat. Tear. Rip and feel the sinuous meaty material of my muscles, fatty undersides of skin. Flesh. Meat.

Instead, the image takes me in.
Instead, the image takes me into the screen, and into the flow of its machinery.

…Am I flesh no longer?

…Only image.

I float through yellow. Basking, I am yellow. I be yellow. I do yellow. I make yellow.

"Every machine is a machine of a machine". (So wrote Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* in 1972.)

Body-machines.
But I am image.

PART THREE. Flicker-drives.
Fremder Elijah Gorn is lost in space.

Russell Hoban's novel *Fremder* (1996), begins with its protagonist floating in the Fourth Galaxy.

Fremder Gorn's ship, the Clever Daughter, and his crewmates have all disappeared, and his survival suprises: Fremder is found with no space suit, oxygen or helmet, floating in deepest space with only "pictures frozen in his mind". (Russell Hoban, *Fremder* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), 1.)

Fremder Gorn is a flickerhead, a deepspacer. The son of famous scientist, Helen Gorn, he is born ex-utero as she has already attempted to exit to another dimension. With an oscillator implanted in his head, the flickerdrive enables flickerheads like Fremder to undertake Intergalactic travel. This feat, which would otherwise be impossible in the space of a regular human lifetime, is made possible because the flickerdrive enables a distortion of time through the speeding up and blurring of images.

This is fast forward on a massive scale: speeding through time, the drive is the flicker, flicker, flicker, flicker – always linear, driving forward or backwards on a wave. Fremder exists in a vast universe, a galaxy of images, a galaxy that he is transmitted through and around by the flicker.

Flickerdrive enables a vast interconnected system. Fremder doesn't exit the machine, he just ventures into its farthest reaches transported by the flicker. But Fremder's mother Helen, wanted to find a way out. She wanted to escape into the Black between the flickering images. Before her death (and Fremder's birth), we discover that she is attempting to teleport herself to another dimension: into the Black, into the space outside of the machine. By utilising the flickering nature of reality, "the black between the pictures", she believes that she can escape into this in-between space. (Russell Hoban, *Fremder*, 126.)

Into the Interval.
Into the Cut. The Wipe… The Splice.

Can we make a similar escape from the image-machine? Can we escape the continuous, continual flow of images around us and of which we are one? Can we separate ourselves from the constant movement of images by entering into the space between images? Does this space even exist or is it an anachronism from a time of frames and shutters?

Helen Gorn looked for a break, a cut, a splice: the black between the pictures, she said.

PART FOUR. Deep sea squid: a phase problem.
Deep space. On the 26 March 2012, Hollywood Film Director, James Cameron descends to the Mariana Trench. It's the first manned voyage into the trench. 10km down. He enjoys the ride. He just sits back and looks out the window, he says. But what does he see? What does he see out that window? How do we see what he sees in the deep sea?

Deep space. On the 14 October 2012, Felix Baumgartner falls through space becoming the first person to break the sound barrier in freefall. It's a jump of an estimated 39km at a speed of 1458km per hour. How do we feel what he feels in freefall?

In the molecular sciences, solving a "phase problem" means obtaining enough information to enable the mapping and interpretation of a molecule. It's the act of proving what you've seen against the data already collected and that is held in massive databases. Solving a phase problem is therefore the act of collecting new data but this data can only be understood against that already collected. The new, therefore, is degrees of variation from what has already been agreed and seen as being "real".

Deep Space. Free Fall. Smooth space. Falling. Descending into the depths. Ground flattens out. Flat space. Flicker drive moves sequentially. Co-joined. Falling. Traversing. Flicker drive. No space between images in the image machine.

Deep space. Deep sea. To sea. To see.

Have you ever tried to gut a squid? First, you reach your hand inside and try to grip and pull out its guts taking care not to break the ink sack. It's squelchy and gooey. Brown, yellow, brownie-yellow ooze oozes. It oozes over your hands. There are pieces of sinewy flesh inside the squid, and you must try to hold onto this gooey mess as you pull and twist it out. Not too hard! Remember the ink sack!

Squid. Kraken. To sea. To see.

Splat. The goo flops onto the newspaper that I've carefully laid out in readiness. And it sits there not quite inert. Jelly like and flaccid but as if it could ooze away. I look at it up close. To watch it

quiver. Its wetness sinks into the paper and spreads. Its total mass starts to deflate and it seems uncontainable.

The guts ooze along letterforms occupying both the black outlines of alphabetic shapes and the white spaces that give the shape shape. I feel as if I might morph and move into this mess. It improves the typeface no end, a bit of yellow gutsy stuff dangles over a T, black squid scat makes its way down the letter A. I, myself, might just slip down a letter "I", and squelch through an "O". Why not? Motion not my own. (What is self and skin anyway? I seem porous.)

Squid, guts, body and the alphabet combine, flatten out and join together to enter into the flow. More images more images. White noise, the alarms on the scaffolding going off outside my window again, faint voices from upstairs… perhaps a siren. All are images into the mix. They're just fleeting impressions driving by, and witnessed by nothing in particular: all a part of the flow. Image machine.

We're all body, all feeling, but not body at all. For I am image.

Body has been suspended in a state of continual movement. Image machine.

We are moved in accordance with the currents – hot streams, cool streams. …bodies and images moving together. We are disembodied.

Our bodies are suspended in the split that divides us into meat and that which we name 'I'. For I am image.

We can no longer rip into the meat of our flesh, nor can we be called by name, for we have been abstracted into this swarm and are no longer singular but only polyphonic. The odds are set against us. The body, the matrix, the name…all discarded for the circle: our circuit. Image machine.

A response to FINAL MACHINE
ROBIN MACKAY

A memorable and surprising moment from the last year, for me, was attending a seminar with the philosopher François Laruelle—a very serious, venerable septuagenarian Parisian thinker whose writing is extremely dense, abstract and complex—and his giving a PowerPoint presentation. It really is a universal language! And thus deserves more attention from artists—so it's interesting to see that as one of the components in the work today.

What I'd like to talk about is the following: One of the most tempting, but also the most difficult, things to do when you're faced with work that seems interesting and complex, is to try and understand the procedure, the way in which it's been put together. And I think one of the things I always found remarkable about Amanda's work is the way in which she assembles and deploys her materials—in a broad sense, cultural materials.

Being here today, this is the first time I've seen the work—I've seen early drafts of the video component on one screen at home, but it was very striking to me how here the gallery space and the city of Coventry itself had also become cultural materials which was deployed in the

installation. Amanda has a very interesting way of sampling, citing, distilling, refracting, and collapsing different cultures into one other: pulp crime novels and critical theory, cop shows and political philosophy, slick thrillers and philosopher's sombre meditations on human destiny…but without this ever being reductive or ironic: this is neither juxtaposition (a comedy of high and low culture) nor simple superposition (as if popular fictions or political sequences merely dramatised or illustrated what had already been argued discursively). Nor does it attempt to produce a neat, didactic image of the 'whole' of a culture in which multiple forms of media exert their forces on us, vying for our attention, trying to make some kind of global presentation of it. That is, it doesn't assume the power of art to rise above and critique the world of the image, the materials it uses.

I would call this a kind of sculpture. I was tempted to say that what Amanda does is a sort of *abstract* sculpture, but this is not really the case, because although these are cultural materials, they're all very concrete. But it's a kind of sculpture in which these cultural materials are patiently manipulated and blended—a scene from *Columbo*, a politician's speech, an episode in international affairs or intellectual history, a figure of speech from a philosophical essay, a concept, a camera angle, a colour…sculpted them into something that has consistency but is not homogeneous—the tonalities of all these different discourses and modes of presentation still remain discernible in the work, their rough edges can still be felt; but somehow at the core, parts of them lock together tightly, and something else comes into view.

The work delivers a new kind of experience of images and of words, or rather, an experiment which, by heightening and layering normal services, disrupts them. An experiment that preserves the motive force of the constituent elements while smearing their contents, through an intemperate acceleration.

So what is it that allows these popular fictions, theoretical programmes, and political rhetorics, to lock together at escape velocity? The fact of their performatively producing of a constituency, an 'us': their seductive addressing of the audience, the receptive and active subject positions they invite, enjoin, and urge us to inhabit. And this touches on the central question of political philosophy: how do we reconcile the subject to the political metasubject, the Leviathan, how do we bring an 'us' together? For in order to endure, the political body has to convince, seduce, it has to mobilise desire towards law—it has, in a certain way, to deliver pleasure in the convergence of subjective freedom and the law. Power can only be installed intimately through the use of force, pleasure and desire.

So, when theory, TV, or movies excite us, why are we so compelled by the moment when the TV detective, whether it's Inspector Morse or Jack Bauer, where their personal life locks in completely to their pursuit of justice, so there is no remainder and they are flush up against the law? Why do we enjoy so much the thrill of knocking down the phony edicts of those penpushers down at city hall, and facing up to the real down and dirty reality of the street, this moment when institutions, rules, principles are thrown aside and the protagonist comes face to face with the real, there are no choices to be made, only actions to be taken. These maverick redescriptions of the world, these ways in which the world is presented to us and we are invited to inhabit it as a certain type of subject, deploy the rhetoric of force to ensure the force of rhetoric, deploying images of force which are also images that convey force. To what end?

Specifically in *Final Machine*, we find locked-into each other (just to mention a few of the component parts) French Marxist Louis Althusser, some kind of shady CIA recruitment campaign or peptalk, a PowerPoint-style presentation, and a Miami Vice movie—and then this dehumanised, stark landscape that we only ever view selectively, through circles, bulletpoints, coldly and from a distance.

In 1967, Althusser had gathered an audience of specialists from other fields into the lecture theatre for his 'Philosophy Course for Scientists,' which he described as an 'initiation into philosophy': he wanted to teach them how philosophy was able to excise itself, and them, from the matrix of ideology. All the time circumspectly examining his own discourse, what he said in the previous sentence. He issues warnings, caveats, points out snares, reaffirms the correctness of the path followed.

'We entered into the necessary circle deliberately,' he says; he is initiating them into what was already running them: we all start from inside the game, half-blind; we are all prey to what he calls 'spontaneous philosophy'—that set of ideological demarcations that cut up and parcel out the world behind our back, into what will then appear, in front of our eyes, magically, as 'natural'. As he says, a nature that 'is spontaneous *because it is not'*. But we shall operate cuts in this body of cuts, because only we—the philosophers—recognise that the cut is all that is real…*we, the specialists.*

The audience the Parisian sage addresses and engenders and, indeed, hypnotizes with his endless circling, now become Westpoint rookies in thrall to a post cold-war military strategist: *there is nothing behind the curtain*; *the gloves are off*; *the cards are on the table*. In a world where there is no common foundation for the political, there is only force; and I am reluctantly obliged to use the force of these words to drag you sorry-ass muthafuckas into the real world—a world with no need for ideas, self-conscious reflection, or political representation. *These operations*—it is driven home again and again—are *necessary and beyond reproach*. You can't reason with bulletpoints. We are constrained to act, to operate on the information available to us.

This new state of play conveyed by this aggressive peptalk is now taken up by a disenchanted movie director. *For chrissakes* we need to move beyond lame conceptions of 'realism' onscreen: the audiences' conviction can only be engendered by searing reality itself into the celluloid.

So what do we want from the real? A feel for the outside, something sharp and cold, like a desert night? Just what is it that will find itself enabled by this conviction? What do these narratives of the real tell us about what we want?—bullet points from a world in which ideological BS walks when the motivational speaker talks; a world in which incomplete information and insuperable contingency demand our capitulation to a unilateral power.

Beech doesn't offer easy answers or an escape from this forcefield. In fact the major operation of the work is to avoid the fallacies of critique, the fallacies of art's self-importance, which could be enumerated as follows:
1) Claiming a higher ground, claiming freedom from the affects mobilised in these motivational sequences, by mocking, ironising or condescending to them.
2) Retreating into paranoia and suspicion, into a sclerosis of circumspection, only to wait in poetic hope for a break in the transmission.
3) Thinking that one could represent this world of contingent forces *as a whole*, in some higher register, thereby somehow mastering and giving a final account, a global image, of it, making things final.

Beech's handling of her materials and their assemblage within her work instead heightens and radicalize their operations. It exposes us to the ubiquitous force of both ideas and images by interrogating and experimenting with diverse ideas and images of force. It intensifies their tendencies to the point of rendering them oppressive, overdemanding, opaque—to the point, as Amanda was saying, of potentially losing the audience.

But then something locks in at the core of the work: the very mechanism that endlessly switches up enjoyment and subjection, freedom and passivity, the delirious rush of the real and the immobile authority of the ideal.

BIOGRAPHIES

AMANDA BEECH

Amanda Beech makes artworks, writes and collaborates on curatorial projects. Her research looks to the possibilities of a realist critique in the context of neoliberal democracy by examining the tenability of a politics in the context of contingency. Her work is a research of art's material and forceful claims both in the architecture of exhibition making and in discrete works, constructing narratives that take in particular biographies, social mythologies, philosophical inquiry and political argument. Operating as a space of seductive power, will and force, the work looks to a world that emphasises decisiveness as its guiding principle and that deals with our share in it.

Her work in video, drawing, print and sculpture has been exhibited internationally, including solo exhibits: Final Machine, Lanchester Gallery Projects, Coventry, UK and Ha Gamle Prestagard, Stavanger, Norway, 2013, The Church, The Bank, The Art Gallery, Banner Repeater, London, 2012, Sanity Assassin, The Armoury Show, Los Angeles, 2011, and Spike Island Bristol, 2010.

Group exhibits include: Urbicide, Workshop, Venice, Italy, 2012, The Real Thing, Tate Britain, 2010, Predators and Pests, (with Diann Bauer) 2011, LoBe Gallery, Berlin and Greetings Comrades, The Image Has Now Changed its Status, Occular Lab, Melbourne, Australia, 2010.

Recent writing includes: Concept without Difference, Realism, Materialism, Art, Sternberg Press, 2013; An Exercise in Fatality (an essay on image-power-knowledge in the TV series Columbo), Burnt

Wood Stories, Anthony Gross, ed., The Agency Gallery, London, 2011; Transmission: Hospitality, Artwords, 2010, The Friend Artwords, 2010 and Body Count, Parallax Journal, April, 2010 (co authored with Robin Mackay).

Recent publishing includes: Final Machine, 2013 Urbanomic Press; Episode, Pleasure

and Persuasion in Lens- based Media, Artwords, 2008 and Sanity Assassin, 2010 Urbanomic Press.

Amanda Beech regularly speaks at conferences and symposia including a keynote at Exhibiting Video, Westminster University, London 2012, Object Oriented Thinking, The Royal Geological Society, London 2012, and the CAA and AHH conferences.

She is a member of the steering committee for The Political Currency of Art Research Group and is Dean of Critical Studies at CalArts, California.

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BRIDGET CRONE

Bridget Crone is a curator, writer and lecturer based in London and working across the UK and internationally. Most recently, she has been the Artistic Director of Media Art Bath (2006-11), where she commissioned, produced and curated work for exhibition at the ICA, London and Arnolfini, Bristol as well as non-art sites.

Previously, a lecturer for the MA Critical Writing and Curatorial Practice, University of the Arts London (2007-10), Bridget has taught BA courses in Fine Art and Visual Cultures including at the University of Kent, London Metropolitan University and Goldsmiths, University of London. Also committed to encouraging critical enquiry and debate through informal pedagogical projects, Bridget convenes the monthly experimental film and discussion programme, FILM EXERCISE, at the Arnolfini (2009 -).

Bridget has an ongoing interest in ideas and practices revolving around the concepts of staging and theatricality, in particular artist moving image and performance practice. She has pursued ideas of staging and theatricality in relation to time and subjectivity through a series of curatorial projects since 2007; these projects, The Sensible Stage (2007-12) and A Theatre to Address (2010) have been realised through a series of projects across the UK such as Arnolfini, Bristol and the Whitechapel, London.

The result of Bridget's ongoing research project into the collision and collusion of image and performance based practices in producing a speculative "real", the recently published book, The Sensible Stage: Staging and the Moving Image (Picture This / Cornerhouse) is an edited collection that discusses the concept of

"staging" in relation to time and the event, and includes an interview with Professor Alain Badiou as well as essays by practitioners and theorists working with performance and moving image practice.
http://www.plentyprojects.org/

ROBIN MACKAY

Robin Mackay is a philosopher and director of UK arts organisation Urbanomic, which promotes research activities addressing crucial issues in philosophy and science and their relation to contemporary art practice, and aims to engender interdisciplinary thinking and production. His research interests focus on the 'gap' between scientific knowledge and humans' spontaneous self-understanding, and the aesthetic and political ramifications of philosophical positions that attempt to resolve this disparity – in particular, new variants of 'geophilosophy', which negotiate the relationship between philosophical thought and the contingency history of the earth, in dialogue with geology, chemistry, and physics. As well as directing Urbanomic's publishing operation and curatorial activities, Mackay is editor of Urbanomic's publication Collapse: Journal of Philosophical Research and Development, each volume of which brings together philosophers, thinkers from other disciplines, and contemporary artists. He writes and speaks regularly on art and philosophy and has worked with several artists, including Florian Hecker, John Gerrard and Conrad Shawcross, developing cross-disciplinary projects. He has also translated various works of French philosophy, including Alain Badiou's Number and Numbers, FranÀ§ois Laruelle's The Concept of Non-Photography and Anti-Badiou, and Quentin Meillassoux's The Number and the Siren.
http://www.urbanomic.com/

MARIE-ANNE MCQUAY

Marie-Anne McQuay is a curator and writer based in Bristol.
From 2000–2005 she worked at FACT, Liverpool, developing commissions with artists that include Stephen Willats, Superflex and Nick Crowe before studying MFA Curating at Goldsmiths College, University of London.
In 2007 she was appointed as Spike Island's first curator where she has developed solo shows of new work with, amongst others, Cezary Bodzianowski, Elizabeth Price, Craig Mulholland, Can Altay, Sean Edwards, Amanda Beech, Laure Prouvost, Uriel Orlow, Jesse Jones and Melissa Gordon. She was instrumental in setting up Spike Associates, an informal post-graduate programme aiming to generate critical debate and collaboration between artists, writers and curators across regional, national and international contexts.
Marie-Anne maintains an independent practice as a writer with a particular interest in the narrative strategies of Speculative and Slipstream Fiction. She is a visiting lecturer on a number of Fine Art and Curating courses including the University of the West of England, Reading University and Kingston University.
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