

## **Pairs: - / -**

*Pairs* is a new series of film programmes that feature two artists who have shared or contrasting approaches to their mediums. Each artist will present a selection of their recent work alongside other work that has inspired them. The series is a conversation between diverse film and video practices, concerning different modes of production, influential precedents and new ideas.

### **Jennifer Nightingale / Simon Payne**

*The Depot, 38 Upper Clapton Rd, London, E5 8BQ*  
19 June, 7:30pm, £5/3

Jennifer Nightingale's films broadly fall into two categories of 'pinhole films' and 'knitting films'. The pinhole films that she has selected to show here include a new two-screen configuration of *West Window*, *East Window*. Other films include pieces from her *Cornish Knitting Pattern* series, which document the coastal locations where the knitting patterns derive from.

Simon Payne's video works are often orientated around hard-edged graphic shapes and transitions. In contrast, the first two works here are 'mixed media' pieces. The new work, *Intersections*, documents the performance of a recent piece of music for two bass clarinets, composed by Michael Parsons.

*Pinhole Film no. 1* (2001) JN, 3mins, 16mm

*West Window, East Window* (2013) JN, 6 mins, 16mm (two screen version)

*Angles of Incidence* (1973) William Raban, 10mins, 16mm

*NOT AND OR* (2014) SP, 18mins, video

*Knitting a Frame* (2008) JN, 8mins, 16mm

*Cornish Knitting Pattern Series* ('St Ives', 'Vicar of Morwenstow', 'Newlyn') (2017) JN, 3mins, 16mm

*Surface Composition* (2004) Stephen Littman, 2 mins, video

*Cut Out* (2013) SP, 3mins, video

*Intersections* (2017) SP, 9mins, video

### **Jennifer Nightingale / Simon Payne in conversation**

SP: Jenny, when I spoke to you about these screenings originally, I suggested that you'd be paired with Cathy Rogers, but after some consideration we thought it might be more interesting to put your work and mine together. Is that ok with you?

JN: Yes, I have always enjoyed our work being screened in the same programme. One aspect in particular is the relationship between the graphic form of the screen that work such as *NOT AND OR* seems to me to highlight and the windows in my pinhole films.

SP: HA! I'd not thought of the rectangular shape in that piece as a window at all. Or maybe I did and then forgot. Anyway, it makes absolute sense to see it that way. Often the most pertinent observations rest on seemingly simple observations. *Cut Out* obviously involves frames as well, but I've not been used to thinking about my work as involving anything to do with frames as something one looks through. In contrast, that's been central to your pinhole films ...

JN: Your comment on simple observations made me recall a very apt observation you made on my film *Knitting a Frame*. You commented on the visibility of the yarn in the film – linking the camera to the subject (me as knitter) – as being similar way to that of the string in William Raban's *Angles of Incidence*. What struck me about that comment was how formative the film was for me in the development of my film practice. It was the first film that offered a way of thinking about working with film that wasn't narrative. It was part of

a programme screened by Nicky Hamlyn at the Kent Institute of Art and Design. I like to think it might have percolated for all those years expressing itself as inspiration in the making of *Knitting a Frame*. Up until your comment I never considered the connection to my film.

Windows as a metaphor have been central in the pinhole films and looking through is an important element of the metaphor. When I first considered the use of windows as subject in the films I was interested in the link to the camera obscura and its history, which brings about the metaphor for camera as room. The projection event and screening space by extension are also important, not just as metaphor...

SP: Quite. Not just as metaphor! I think one always aims to make coherent work, so that its parts (medium and technology, form and content, or whatever) are essentially related. At the same time, an analogy between the camera and the screening space (in your case), or a rectangle and the edge of the screen (in my case) isn't enough to make for an interesting film. There has to be something more, but that's something notoriously difficult to put into words. One of the reasons why I think we were paired for this screening is because of our different approaches to time. In the making of your pinhole films, the register of time is very fluid, given that you avoid the metre of the camera's motor. Of course, the projector imposes a pulse. In most of my recent video pieces, I've imposed a metre by cutting very decisively, and in some ways, that's filmic thinking. I think it's interesting to look at our work side by side because of the ways we've structured time in different pieces.

JN: Yes, there is an elastic sense of time in the pinhole films and in the knitting patterns too, coming from me interfering with the motor of the camera (by hand- cranking or single frame production). But, when I am making the work I feel a very strongly a sense of metre and my decisions to do with editing in-camera feel very concrete. I would say this happens when making an exposure. Plus, I am very aware of the length of the filmstrip and the parameters that relate to the film's duration (as dependent on a knitting pattern). In making a film without the camera's motor, I think I am being more precise, or a perhaps a better word would be direct.

I wondered what your thoughts are on the role you play as a maker? Do you feel the 'film fear' for example (the anxiety of production, is it going to work!) or is it a calm, rigorous working through? I am interested in your term 'filmic thinking' to describe your work, could you define how that works with your video pieces?

SP: Regarding Filmic Thinking - there are certainly digital characteristics and processes that suggest to me ways of thinking about what I've done. For example, the colour fields and forms that I've tended to use are thoroughly opaque and abstract in a way that seems quite specific to digital imaging. At the same time, I have tended to think of cutting as the most emphatic means of structuring time, because it offers a way of immediately overturning, undermining, contrasting or concluding what's come before. Of course, filmmaking might not privilege cutting at all - your pinhole films don't - but it seems to me that cutting/editing is a paradigm that derives from filmmaking, rather than video or digital media.

The role played as maker - happily, I don't have the fear that you refer to. I've not normally made work on location, or with other people (though that's different for this new piece, *Intersections*, which has involved working with two musicians and a composer). Usually, I just get on with making something and see if it works out as I go along. It's not an anxious experience, though I don't ever know if something's going to come together in the end, and one's judgement is always open to revision. I guess there's the issue of the degree to which you or I are either present or anonymous in their work....

JN: I suppose I present myself as maker through the processes I choose to use. Putting myself in the film, as in *Knitting a Frame*, is the most obvious example. In the past, I've considered my approach to be about reconfiguring the relationship between the camera, the maker and the subject, but the more I think about it the more I'm suspicious of how that supposes a correct configuration or convention. I look forward to thinking about all of the above further in the screening!

Special thanks to Guy Sherwin, Maria Anastassiou and Tilley Harris and Anglia Ruskin University

**Next programme, 26 June, Nick Collins / Cathy Rogers**

For more details [www.contactscreenings.co.uk](http://www.contactscreenings.co.uk)