Are You There: the relationship between film and screen

Lizzie Sykes,
Snr Lecturer,
Screen Based Media,
Bournemouth University,
lisykes@bournemouth.ac.uk

*Are You There* is a site specific dancefilm that is exhibited via a glass panel sculpture made in response to the film, extending the themes of the film into the form through which the work is shown.

dance film, dance for camera, site specific, sculpture, glass, video installation, artwork, digital art

*Figure 1: Are You There*
1. ABOUT THE ARTWORK

In 2014 Lizzie Sykes was awarded an Arts Council funded residency at Mottisfont, a National Trust property in Hampshire. Are You There is one of the outcomes of this residency.

Are You There is a dance film response to the interior of this historic home. The dancer is the embodiment of the feeling of perpetually performing, or being trapped in a kind of stasis, an artefact herself.

At the time of making the work, Mottisfont was undergoing a process of cataloguing, cleaning and archiving objects that had been in storage. Objects ranged from teapots to stuffed animals. These objects formed the basis for a set of new exhibitions in the building.

In a National Trust house, just like in film, time is distorted and managed – narratives are reformed and some slices of history and experience become forefronted, and others are quieter, camouflaged, unresolved or invisible stories that are edited out. As visitors, are we part of this shifting flux of presence and interpretation. Are You There aims to explore this feeling of being stuck, and shifted around in time.

2. ABOUT THE INSTALLATION

This work is the first of a new collaboration with sculptor Rebecca Newnham. Our aim was to extend the themes of proximity, texture and the tactile yet ephemeral nature of the piece into the form the film is shown onto.

We wanted to take the notion of the dance film and place the end result in a physical context that encourages the audience to be ‘mobile watchers’. We began to explore how artists use screens the look at the impact of the glass surface on art film, as well as considering how a work can travel, once it moves away from it’s original site specific location.

Rebecca has scratched into the glass and used shapes, form and coloured glass in direct response to Are You There. The result is a piece where the image is further obscured. Our next collaboration involves a closer embedding of forms from the outset. However, this response encompasses the ideas of revealing identity and distance, and the cyclical, internal world of the dancer.

3. ABOUT THE ARTIST

Lizzie Sykes’ work is about how we relate to our environment physically, through performance and installation, visually, through film and sonically, through sound design. Lizzie is concerned with proximity, intimacy, texture, landscape, touch, and creating new works that reveal themselves through responding to how space makes us feel. She often subverts or reshapes existing and emerging moving image technology in the work itself. Projects are both collaborative and site specific – the outcomes are sometimes filmic, sometimes live.

3. ONLINE DOCUMENTATION

Excerpts of work: vimeo.com/lizziesykes
Exhibition info: http://uk.linkedin.com/in/lizziesykes
Images: https://www.flickr.com/photos/lizziesykes/
rebeccanewnham.com

4. TECHNICAL DETAILS

The work is a series of HD looped files, linked to a PA and projector. Rebecca begins by painting a response to the colour, sound and movement of the work; her written response to the film is then scratched into these layers of glass enamel which are floated, sprayed and painted onto a sheet of window glass. The panel is fired in a kiln to create a permanent layer of glass colour before the whole is cut into sections which appear like facets or pixels. The whole is arched so that a flat screen becomes a free standing curve, to be observed from every angle.

The fused glass screen is created by imploding glass bottles, then grading them and tack fusing into a flat sheet which is then refined and slumped over a former, to give 2 surfaces - a fire polished face and a textured back.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Are You There was performed by Louise Tanoto, and was shown at Mottisfont May – July 2015. Also shown at Trans(m)it International Film Festival (Philadelphia and online), Aberystwyth’s MECCA symposium and in The Black Box at Aberystwyth Art Centre. Rebecca Newnham designed and constructed glass panels. The Mottisfont residency was funded by Arts Council England and supported by Bournemouth University. Sound design by Gary Hayton, grading by Kibby Newman, camera operator Mo Guy.