

# The Luminous View

by George Clark

**Tate Britain is staging an ambitious survey of artists' film and video which reflects the extraordinary blossoming and diversity of production over the past six years, as the co-curator of the programme explains**

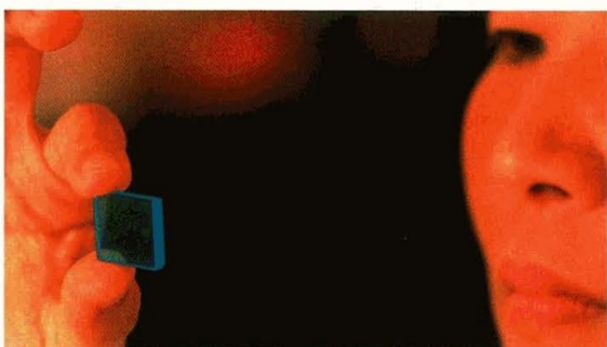
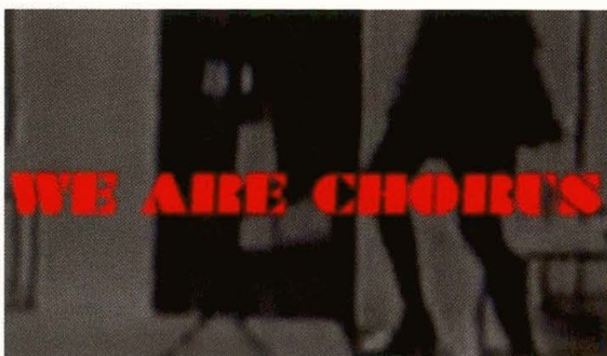
Every survey begs the question: why now? What is at stake at this moment that encourages us to reflect on and take stock of the past? The new weekly screening series 'Assembly: A Survey of Recent Artists' Film and Video in Britain 2008–2013' can answer this pragmatically – its launch coincided with the reopening of Tate Britain. But further than that, it comes at a crucial point in the development of film and video, a point marked by the increasing ambition and scale of artists' projects, highlighted by the strand of feature-length films, from Ben Rivers's award-winning *Two Years at Sea* (2011) to The Otolith Group's *The Radiant* (2012), an essay film about the aftermath of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. The complexity of recent practice can also be seen in the staggering diversity of works, from modest but exacting films such as Peter Gidal's 100-second *Coda I* and *Coda II* (2013) to the performances of Heather Phillipson; from Anthea Hamilton's playful retro collages to Duncan Campbell's vivisection of the media portrayal of political activist Bernadette Devlin.

'Assembly' comes on the back of seismic shifts in the nature of producing and circulating images. The liberating promise of the internet seemed to be realised in the role of technology in the popular uprisings of the Arab Spring, but this optimism has been tempered with revelations of the widespread culture of surveillance enabled by the same technology. This dark underbelly of oppressive nationhood is explored in works by Jananne Al-Ani, George Barber, Seamus Harahan and John Smith.

Two London exhibitions of unparalleled ambition illustrated the divergent practice of the past five years, proposing equally momentous and complex possibilities for the future of the moving image. Tacita Dean's Turbine Hall commission *FILM* (2011) helped to spearhead arguments against digital acceleration and for the future of analogue film. But rather than celebrating film as a "simple" or "authentic" medium, the project shows how technologically entwined film actually is – at its heart it is a hybrid medium capable of creating illusions and synthetic worlds. In emphasising the act of creation and construction over a passive recording of the world, Dean – represented in 'Assembly' with her *Craneway Event* (2009) – positioned the artist as central to film, over and above the technology.

Installation view of  
Tacita Dean's Turbine  
Hall commission *FILM*  
(2011) at Tate Modern





From top: Beatrice Gibson, still from *The Tiger's Mind* (2012), 16mm film transferred to HD, 23min; Elizabeth Price, still from *The Woolworth's Choir of 1979* (2012), HD video, 20min; The Otolith Group, still from *The Radiant* (2012), 64min; Hannah Sawtell, *Entrolude 4, Means* (2010), single channel video, 11min

From top: James Richards, still from *Rosebud* (2013), HD video, 13min; Laure Prouvost, still from *IT, HIT, HEAT* (2010), video, 7min 20sec; Cara Tolmie, still from *Pley* (2013), single screen video projection, 19min; Jennet Thomas, still from *All Suffering SOON TO END!* (2010), colour, sound, 13min

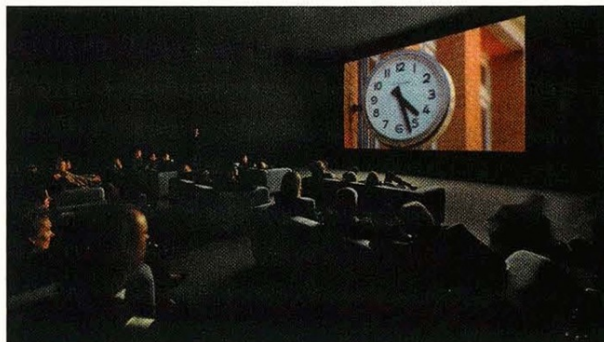


Christian Marclay's 24-hour video *The Clock* (2010) was similarly fascinated by the history and illusory power of the moving image. Produced and first exhibited in London in 2010, it was collated over three years from masses of footage. After relocating to London from New York, Marclay left the majority of his analogue equipment and source material behind, leading him to embark on an "immaterial" project. Edited with Final Cut Pro, *The Clock* draws on a collection of more than 10,000 clips and is actually assembled live by a computer program drawing on the video and sound files, allowing it to be accurate to the microsecond of the current time wherever it is shown.

Rather than setting up in opposition, these two works propound distinct future trajectories that find numerous analogies, companions and counter-proposals across 'Assembly'. A rich new strand of digital works by artists as varied as Ed Atkins, Elizabeth Price, Laure Prouvost and James Richards explore the material properties of video, but are distinguished by their fascination with the fragility of experience and the body. The 16mm films by Samantha Rebello and Emily Wardill explore the texture and material of film through its relation to objects, a theme addressed in Mark Leckey's Turner Prize-winning video *Cinema in the Round* (2008).

Performance is a central element of current practice and continues to inform how artists as diverse as Pablo Bronstein, Redmond Entwistle, Anja Kirschner & David Panos, Jennet Thomas and Gillian Wearing work, drawing on Shakespeare, Bertolt Brecht and Hollywood B-movies. Music from Detroit techno to Cornelius Cardew is a starting point, inspiration or process in the art of Paul Abbot, Beatrice Gibson, Hannah Sawtell and Cara Tolmie. And beyond the auditorium the 'Assembly' programme will feature two evenings incorporating images, objects and performance. Approaches to this expanded field range from Gail Pickering and Charlotte Prodger's investigation of our relation to technology – from television to YouTube – to the multi-projection 16mm films of artists such as Guy Sherwin & Lynn Loo and Sally Golding.

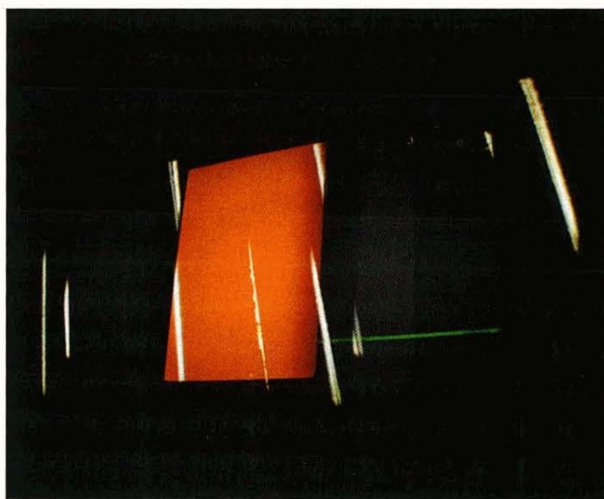
'Assembly: A Survey of Recent Artists' Film and Video in Britain 2008–2013', Tate Britain, until 15 March. Full details at [www.tate.org.uk/film](http://www.tate.org.uk/film). Drawn from the nominations of 36 experts in the field, 'Assembly' is curated by Stuart Comer, chief curator media and performance, MoMA, New York, George Clark, assistant curator film, Tate Modern, and Melissa Blanchflower, assistant curator modern and contemporary art, Tate Britain, with independent curators Simon Payne and Andrew Vallance. Tate Film is supported by Maja-Hoffmann/LUMA Foundation, with additional support for 'Assembly' from Bilge Ogut-Cumbusyan and Haro Cumbusyan.



Christian Marclay, *The Clock* (2010), single channel video with sound, 24 hours



Mark Leckey, still from *Cinema in the Round* (2008), video, colour, sound, 42min



Guy Sherwin, *Sound Cuts* (2008), video installation, six-screen, 16mm projection with sound