

Talbot Rice Gallery – Jason Dee exhibition



The University of Edinburgh's Talbot Rice Gallery is to be filled with shadows, echoes and reflections for the largest exhibition to date of Kent-based artist Jason Dee which opens on 31 May 2014. Pursuit of a Shadow, featuring never-seen-before work, is a captivating exposé of the underlying changes in our relationship to moving images. From spectacular, theatrical works, to subtle visual illusions, Dee creates a fascinating and timely dialogue with the history of cinema.

Jason Dee's work reflects the transformation of cinema's material origins, revealing the uncanny effects of a contemporary medium still haunted by its past. Where celluloid film was dictated by the mechanical time of the Modern World, digital technology allows images to be frozen, scaled, reversed and displaced; Dee uses these possibilities to form enigmatic, autonomous story worlds caught between reality and illusion.

At the centre of the exhibition is 24 Times (2007/12), a large-scale installation comprising of 24 monitors facing inwards in a circle. Film clips taken from movies featuring flash photographers play upon the monitors, cutting from one clip to the next as a flash consumes the screen. As the monitors are synchronised one frame apart, the white light – and each frame – dances round the circle. As viewers are caught in the bright light, as apparent subjects of the photographer's shots, their shadows are then cast across the space so they become part of a rudimentary shadow animation.

Other works featured in Pursuit of a Shadow are made by

projecting onto bespoke 3-dimensional screens, subverting the flat space required for cinematic illusion. *First and Last Sounds* (2011) is made from a short sequence from *Goodbye Mr Chips* (Wood and Franklin, 1939), projected onto a folded screen that presents 2 triangular planes. On the first plane, one of the film's characters shouts into the mountains, whilst documentary footage of the Alps is simultaneously shown on a larger triangular fold behind. As the projection spills over the two screens it creates a third plane in the Gallery space, with bold mountainous shadows. With his echoing voice, the small figure seems to be trying to bridge the gap between discrete representational spaces and historic cinematic modes. In *Cataract* (2011) Dee leaves Buster Keaton hanging precariously over a perpetual waterfall, projected onto a cut out fabric section of a standing screen, cascading down over the floor. And *Dune* (2011) sees a female character seemingly struggling not to lose her position up the side of a bowl-shaped screen, struggling against a desert pit that descends down into a dark hole. Dee remarks, "The figures, cut off from their original narrative roles, forlornly attempt to escape a never ending looped present suspended somewhere between the film and the gallery space. Their struggles suggest a futile attempt to maintain position within media which are themselves constantly shifting flows of information".

More recent works in the exhibition are based on *A Matter of Life and Death* (Pressburger and Powell, 1946) a film that sees the main character, Peter (David Niven), caught between life and afterlife. *Intermission I* (2012) and *Intermission II* (2013) manipulate the strange transitional scenes that see Peter caught in limbo between the real (film) world, his own subconscious mind, and heaven. This balance, between the world of illusion and a critical analysis of the technologies of vision underpinning such narratives, is reflective of Dee's broader practice, which is always beguiling and alienating in equal measure.

Jason Dee is currently in the final stages of a Fine Art PhD at Newcastle University. His practice-led research focuses on the perceptual realignments that occur when celluloid films are transferred to digital formats. His work has been exhibited in solo and group shows throughout the world, and also included in numerous film and media festivals including: Transmediale (Berlin), Rencontres Internationales (Berlin, Paris, Madrid) and a commissioned work for Berwick Film Festival.

Dee has also presented papers at several film conferences. His paper Celluloid's Digital Other won the main prize at last year's Avanca|Cinema (Portugal) where he will be a panel member for this year's conference. He has completed a number of residencies including Stills Gallery (Edinburgh) Squeaky Wheel (Buffalo) and the Scottish Arts Council New Media Residency.

Jason Dee

Pursuit of a Shadow

31 May – 5 July 2014

Exhibition Open | Tues – Fri 10am–5pm, Sat 12–5pm | Admission Free