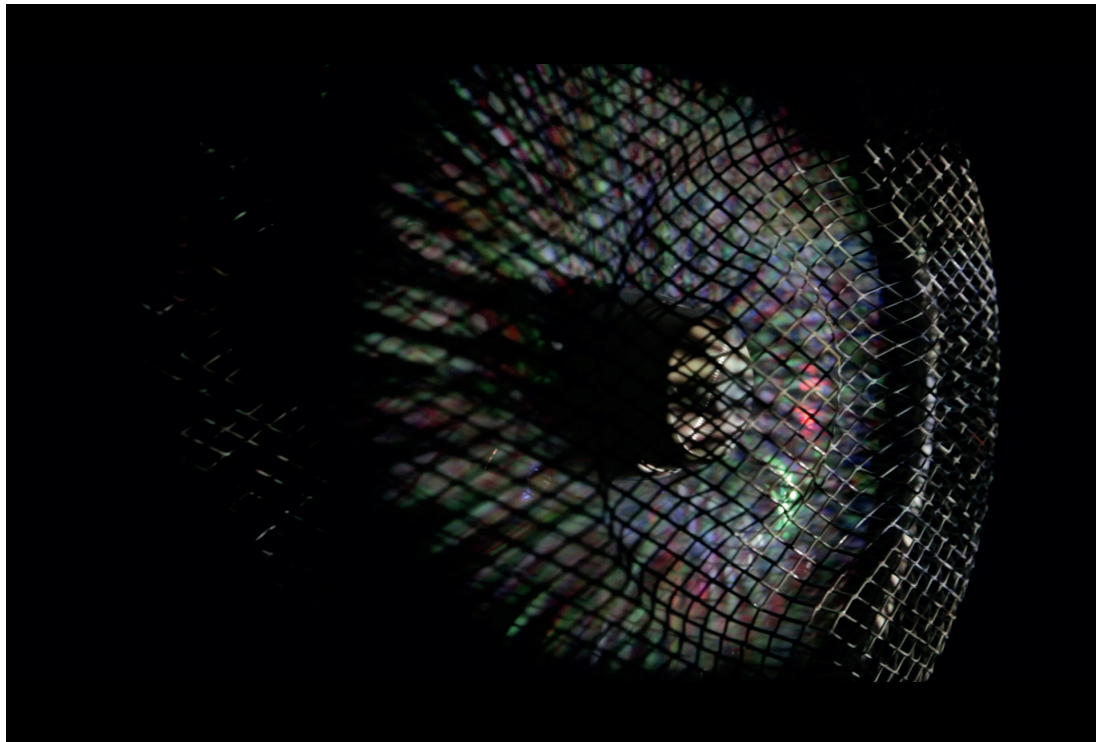# Graham Kelly

figurehead, reflection, firework, fan, miracle
Three channel video installation (loop)
2014

We are what we are and what we are next to
Graham Kelly [GK] with Steve Rushton [SR]

SR   Your work, *figurehead, reflection, firework, fan, miracle*
seems to invite new relations between images, spaces, and
people.

GK   It originates from thinking about moving images as oper-
ating on multiple levels. A video sequence can be split
between numerous physical and abstract states of tempo-
rality, associative memory, its subject, audio, light, color
etc. It can be interpreted as an object or as phenomena.
By expanding this method of looking and thinking to
encompass everything around us, our perceived reality
becomes a potential site for connections between objects,
images and people that all coexist in multiple physical and
metaphysical states.
     I consider this installation as a series of provisional
junctions or edits between these redefined material and
immaterial states. For instance, the 'miracle' in the title
of this work refers to a found sequence of the sun being
obscured by a black spot. Presented online as a miracle in
the form of a second sun, the black shape in the center of
the image is, in actuality, formed by the camera sensor's
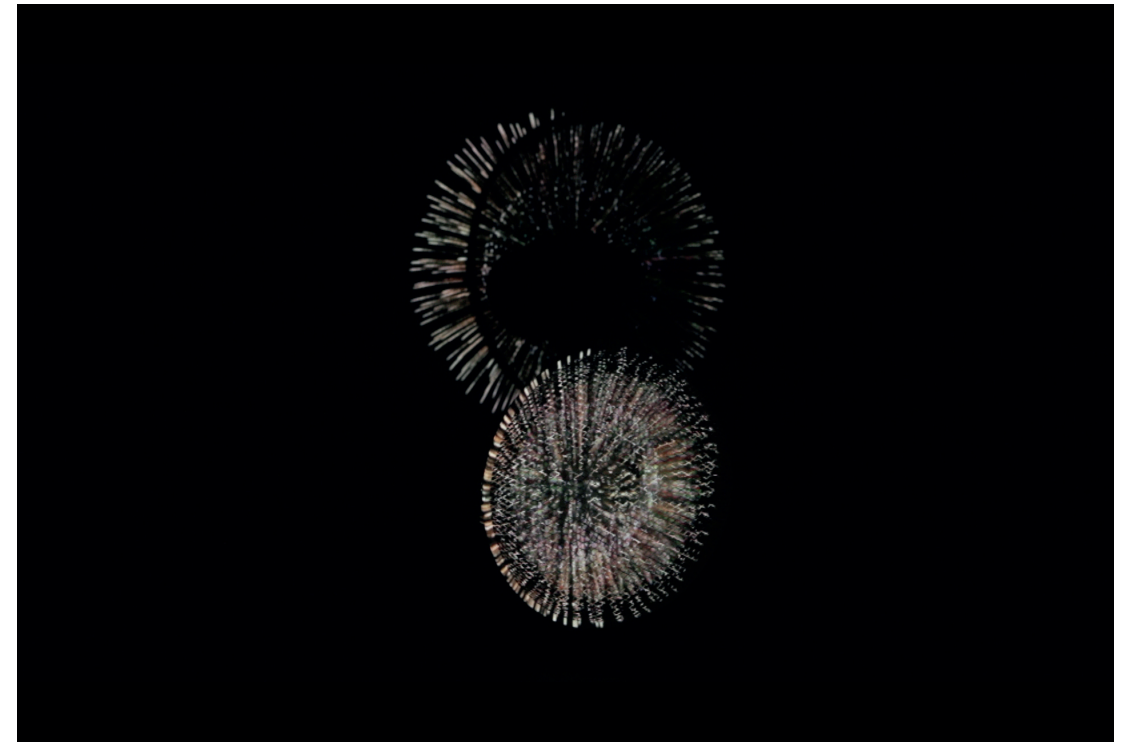
inability to register the intensity of the light from the center
of the sun. It is essentially a hole in the image. These
contrasting readings allow the clip to connect to the other
components of the work on numerous levels. It is a miracle,
a second sun, a void and a technical malfunction all at the
same time, yet it is also something neither camera nor the
eye can perceive. The eye and lens align, the viewer and
image meet at a point of equivalence through their shared
cognitive limitations.

SR   So what's happening to the viewer in both of these instances,
what processes do you think the viewer is going through?

GK   The first room acts as a foyer. It is both the physical point
of transition between the external environment into the
second darkened projection room and also an abstract tran-
sition in which an image of sunglasses is given an impossi-
ble physical trait, the capacity to reflect. This places both
the viewer and image in a hybridized context. The image
displays reflective properties of surfaces in the palpable
environment and, through their absence in this synthesized
reflection; the viewer becomes part of the image.
     In the second room the image is given precedence
and the viewer loses further awareness of their body in the

darkness. The tabletop fan in the video acts as a container for, or filter between, the clips of the firework and the sun. It becomes a transitional effect and also a means of giving the sequence an abstract form. The fan blades fleetingly cut through the projected image, refracting its light to manifest it in front of the screen.

SR You use the word foyer. You have written elsewhere about the spaces in which we view different images. What are you setting up?

GK I keep returning to Hollywood editor Walter Murch's idea that blinking and film editing are closely correlated. He suggests that a blink denotes the end of a thought and the start of another, acting as a perpetual stream of punctuation throughout our waking lives. According to Murch, a good actor immersed in their role will blink at the same point the editor chooses to cut and, in turn, an audience immersed in a film will blink in unison with the actor and the cuts.

So the point of interaction or interface in the cinema is not limited to the surface of the screen. It is a perpetually shifting system that extends through different spaces and times from within the subjects of the image out into the minds of the audience. The viewer meets the image in a shared context, somewhere in-between.

By applying this notion to a now evolved mobile image embedded within the constructed environment, outside of the cinema, the eyelid acts as a splicer that is constantly separating our thought processes within the rolling timeline we construct from the overwhelming volume of visual and audible stimuli that surrounds us. We have entered a continual process of biological post-production between depiction and actual, unique to every individual. We live in a constant state of transition, an eternal foyer.

SR The economy of an image is central to your work. You encourage an understanding of an image as an object (as opposed to a carrier of a subject). Can you talk a little more about the types of images you use and their different status?

GK A found image is displaced from its origin. It does not come from my own direct experience. This separation is something that I share with the viewer since neither of us was there when it was captured. In that sense it acts as a link, not just to the actual subject or event it depicts but also to the associative memories that it triggers.
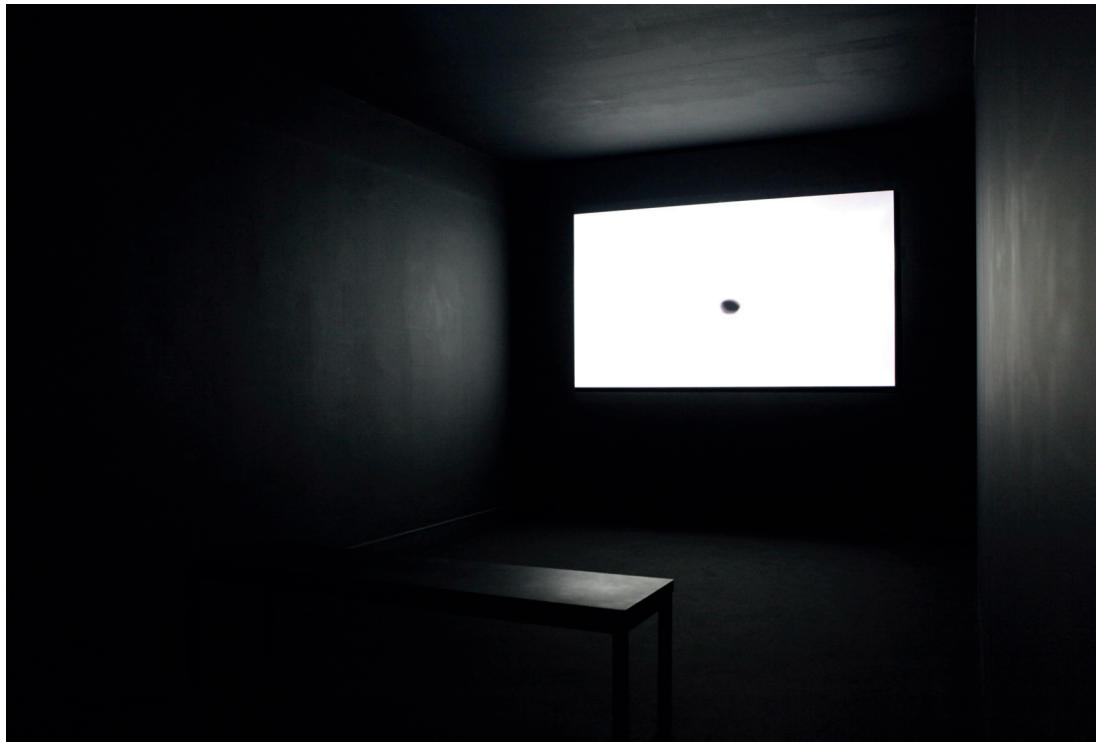
A mass produced object presented in a gallery acts in a similar way. The viewer is usually unaware of its exact origins and in most cases you cannot touch it, so you have to rely on your sensorial memory to interpret it beyond its purely visual characteristics. It can be something you have come across, own, or have owned. At the point of interpretation it is unique to each individual. You have to recontextualize it based on what now surrounds it and your past experience of similar objects. The mass produced object exists in multiple states as does an image and what it depicts, depending on who is looking at it. A passage through a gallery or a video sequence acts as a sort of hall of mirrors, presenting us with a series of distorted reflected recollections of past versions of ourselves.

SR   Following from this I'm interested in the role actual objects play in your work. There is a play between the image, which is virtually immaterial, and the object.

GK   Filming an object and combining it with other footage allows me to capitalize on its multilayered status. A technique I have used in previous works is to use a filmed object such as a burning mosquito coil as both a visual and abstract armature for a sequence. This allowed the resulting work to

take on a composite spatial and notional form. The shape of the deteriorating coil returns to the sequence with the movement of multiple cameras descending a spiral staircase and with footage of bathers drifting down circular water slides.

In the work in 'Kairos Time', the filmed table fan and the sunglasses act as alternative frames or containers for found images. Image and object are presented on the same plane allowing each to take on characteristics of the other. They are edited together somewhere between the medium and its context.

SR   Following on from the role of objects in your work: The video or film image can be repeated whereas the candle, in one of your pieces for instance, is finite. Similarly, we see celebrities ageing in some of your work. The record of their ageing is eternal, particularly now that images are infinitely reproducible and re-tweetable. An image is now eternally preserved through the agency of algorithms. Can you talk a little about the durability of an image in relation to the frailty of flesh and the limited duration of objects – or am I flying off at a tangent?

GK   An encounter with a cinematic moving image creates a mesh of intertwining timelines. There is the temporality of

the filmic sequence and the narrative timeline constructed through editing, but there are also many others in operation. The sets, the props and the cast are all in various states of decay. The edit has allowed a rewiring of this natural progression. An actor, viewed at the beginning of a film, may actually be older than when they are seen at the end.

Taking into account this notion of the image being a systematic exchange that encompasses its viewer, the audience then also becomes implicated within this temporal juncture. The formation of the constant image provides us with a relative position to measure ourselves against, we are different the next time we see it. The ageing of the body is also the progression of a sequence. In film, it has often been used as a narrative device through the use of ageing makeup and is also something I have referenced in my work. The artificially ageing actor becomes a timecode incarnate, allowing time to become a visible material through its effect on the subject.

Frailty is also a relative position. The strength and resilience of a material can only be measured in relation to the properties of other materials. Steel is considered strong when it is set against a more fragile substance such as glass. The digital capture of the subject's body at a point in time provides a separation of their self into the finite and

potentially infinite. It identifies the frailty of their physical makeup and surroundings in relation to their relentlessly durable counterpart. This again places them in a transitional state. It allows an edit between their current and former selves, between their ephemeral and eternal embodiments, each looking at the other over the generative territory that separates them.