



Hannah Perry interviewed by
Ellen Mara De Wachter

Ellen Mara De Wachter:
Your installation *Wonderful While It Lasts* contains moving image, photography, collage and sculpture. You mentioned that one concern was to try and bring film out of the screen into a sculptural arrangement. The installation spatialises the moving image, expanding it physically. Can you talk a bit about that process and what effect you are aiming at?

Hannah Perry: The idea is to take the film out of the frame and to create a cinematic environment. The way film is presented is important to me. In the past I've made sculptural objects incorporating video, for example a smashed up boy racer car with a video projected onto the back seat. This is the first time I have had to deal with creating a work for a whole room and I wanted the space to be all-encompassing. The most challenging decision was how to use the 2-D material, which I'm working with for the first time. These are the images, photographs and coloured panels that are hanging within the scaffolding pole structures. I wanted to work with the photographs and snippets of newspapers that I collect, and install them alongside my videos. I tried to work with these elements in the same way I work with video, mirroring the editing processes I use. For example, I played with texture in the same way I would with video footage. With video I might work with VHS or HD and process it to create different qualities. And with the 2-D material, I used different kinds of printing processes and materials, for example silk-screening onto galvanised steel, vinyl printing onto coloured acrylics, or digital printing onto backlit paper and gels. With this installation I wanted to create an organised chaos that sort of swallows you up.

EMDW: Your work comes out of a continuous practice of collecting materials: footage, sound clips, images, which develop into a sprawling network of references. Can you describe some of the images that were fundamental to the

development of this installation and discuss how you have used or manipulated them?

HP: I took a photograph about six years ago, of a young boy holding a massive weed leaf, and it said 'Just Do It' on his t-shirt. There was a sense of conviction in the look on his face and in his pose. Something about that image really struck me and although I haven't worked with it until now, it has always been present for me. I also saw a photograph in a Richard Prince book, which showed a girl holding an ice lolly, and she had a look which really echoed my picture of the boy. These two things had a connection for me, and this is really the point of the collecting process. Whether it's immediate or not, connections between things emerge. When I presented these two images to other people, there was a quick consensus that they were both saying 'Fuck off'. But for me there was a lot more in the imagery. It said something else to me, in particular with the young boy, who had a vulnerability and naivety in his eyes, and who was clearly trying to act tougher and bigger than he was.

For this installation, those two images acted like triggers. I wanted to bring out what they said to me through the video. Other bits I have collected around the themes of self-worth, and the idea of looking up to something or wanting to be someone, have also found their way into the installation. I was interested in the idea of taking a simple thing and making sense of what it might mean to me, but also socially and culturally.

The fundamental video footage for this piece comes from interviews I shot a few months ago with my nieces who are 3 and 10 years old. I've put the sound through an audio production software called Ableton and I've made loops and samples and distorted the audio clips. I've also put the video through VHS mixers to give it a particular quality.

The written elements are things I have written myself or found; bits and pieces which have existed as a collage on my wall for the past few months. The intro to the new film is a text sequence which includes a quote from a Slavoj Žižek book, followed by text I've written, a transcript from a documentary and news headlines. But I have edited it in such a way that it reads as a sequence of sentences.

EMDW: The videos you compose and edit have a clear structure of beats, breaks and repeats, as well as moments of stuttering, like music has. They often have rhythms guided by the music or speech in the clips, which you cut, mix or loop. What is it about this kind of structured repetition that appeals to you?

HP: My influences are quite expansive; I am very influenced by music, from hip hop sampling to dance music looping, but also by the compositional techniques of people like Steve Reich. I like the fact that he works with rhythm in hypnotic ways. It's an approach I use to a certain degree, but I also try to break it up so that it becomes a presentation of a series of "now" moments. It's like a relentless shattering of these momentary illusions. It's like being at the cinema and a bird flying into the screen. You would immediately know that the moment was lost, but with such fast paced-editing, you would be grabbed hold of by another moment; the next "now".

EMDW: The people in your videos often appear to be at the forefront of teen culture, whether they've been sampled from music videos or news programmes. They behave with confidence, authority and power, despite their youth and seem to display a kind of pure potential. What is it about this moment in the development of an individual that appeals to you?

HP: This is really crucial to the work; this moment in the building of one's identity.

It is intensely powerful and beautiful; it's a time that's full of energy and enthusiasm, and a sort of optimism, full of possibilities. But it's also coupled with anxiety and vulnerability that come before an inevitable disillusionment. This period, with its teen spirit attitude, is when you think that you can do anything. But it eventually demands that you resign yourself to reality. The moment between childhood and adulthood is one during which there's a lot of conflict, which sometimes doesn't go away. I like to play around with these discrepancies. In the videos, especially, I'm trying to bring across a sentiment which enables you to reconnect with what you might have had at that age, which I think is something in everyone that never really leaves, even though a lot of people push it away. And it's strongest at that age, which is why it's such a powerful time.

EMDW: You mentioned that some of the imagery that inspired this work was footage you shot of your nieces, which raises the question of the gaze and voyeurism, as well as the ethics of using domestic vs. public footage. Do these issues of power relationships arise for you, and if so, how do you deal with them?

HP: I see family or people close to me as projections of who I am and where I am from, which I think is especially important when you're a bit of a hybrid, being from one demographic and ending up in another. When you're at home, you don't particularly think of yourself as anything but when you remove yourself you notice that others don't have the same background, beliefs, values or behaviour. Then you start to realise where you've come from, but you're stuck in this in between place where you're neither one nor the other. In *Distinction*, Pierre Bourdieu talks about these issues in relation to taste and how we become predisposed to liking certain things by being born into a certain field, dictated by one's family. And no matter how

much you may be exposed to difference you never completely change your attitude to certain things. I'm using snippets from my family, and they are very much part of what I am trying to do. I work from what I know and what I understand, which is an abundant resource. But this personal footage is often processed and its origins start to appear confused. For example I may process it in such a way that it looks like something from YouTube or like old VHS footage, whereas actually it's shot on my camera and is brand new. The personal is also played out through popular culture so they are not just my memories, but they are collective national memories in some way.



Artist's presentation

Hannah Perry
Thursday 22 March, 7pm

Zabludowicz Collection Invites is a new initiative dedicated to presenting young, UK-based artists who do not currently have representation by a commercial gallery in the UK. Taking the form of monthly solo presentations, exhibitions will result from an open-ended invitation to exhibit new work.

Reverse: detail from
Wonderful While It Lasts, 2011
Mixed media installation
Courtesy the artist

176 Prince of Wales Road
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Opening times
Thursday–Sunday, 12–6pm
Other times by appointment
FREE ENTRY

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