



Lucy Woodhouse interviewed by Ellen Mara De Wachter on 26 March 2012

Ellen Mara De Wachter:

In April 2012, the TV signal will switch over from analogue to digital. Your installation, *Global Local Transition Transmission Connection Centre*, addresses this switchover by staging a setup that involves both Internet-based broadcasts and local transmission of live video feed. What is it about the switchover that interests you; do you see the switchover as a symbolic moment or is it the concrete and practical side of it that interests you?

Lucy Woodhouse: I started to think about the analogue broadcasting equipment that is currently set up all over the country that will now become a commercially obsolete technology and how the switchover would open up the possibility of a new space to use and in which to interact. This broadcast space connects everyone and the technology setup in people's houses, for a short time after the transition, will act like the ultimate empty building. It will be a disused space that pirate TV stations, for example could operate in more easily, but actually what is happening is that this space is being sold off to communication and mobile phone networks, and it's turning into a more restricted space in many ways. It's the end of a kind of wild communication space.

The work began with the idea of creating a portrait of this abstract space that connects us, and the idea that this is a symbolic moment. There's a constantly evolving technology and new ways of communicating through which we send and receive information globally. There's an expansive quality to the way in which we communicate and television is now not as important a medium as it was. These new communication technologies, such as mobile phones and the Internet, signify a certain personal freedom. And in many ways, individuality itself has become a new language, in the form of data that is sent around the world via our phones and Internet usage. It's symbolic because something is

ending but also because we're at the beginning of something and we don't really know how it is going to affect us, locally, globally, or in terms of the ways we interact, our consciousness, our freedom or sense of community.

EMDW: For this work, you went to a number of shops in Chalk Farm and Haverstock that have public TVs and you gathered footage from those TVs. You worked in the field, collecting data in a similar way to how an ethnographer or a sociologist would gather data. What is it about involving local people and the ways they use TVs that you were trying to capture? And how important is it to you to involve local people who aren't already working in the arts?

LW: Technology is becoming more and more interactive, which produces a fragmented connectivity. I sometimes think about this in relation to marketing or the way a journalist might take fragments of fact and gather them together to make a 'truth', which is just another abstract thing. It's interesting to notice what is kept and what is left out. I'm interested in creating a system in which things can happen and then noticing the ways in which they have happened. I like thinking about the way communities rub up against each other in the street and the influences they all have on each other in ways you could never predict or imagine. In the area around the gallery, I was particularly interested in public TVs, because I wanted to make a broadcast using this wild communication space. I walked a circle around the gallery which described the distance I could broadcast to, and I used that as my field. I was thinking about how TVs are becoming obsolete as the main feed of information, and how information is becoming disseminated via other media. I see this project as a sort of documentary, for which I filmed only the public TV screens that I found in the area. I like that this activity then becomes a record of the here and now. I like working in the local area,

because it's like a physical fractal. It's also an analogue process – this going around and collecting things – and it is a very rich an experience compared to the immediacy of the Internet.

EMDW: How did people respond to your request to film their TVs? You didn't tell them you were an artist, so I wonder whether they suspected you might be, or whether they simply took you at face value.

LW: I think they took me at face value. That initial contact is important; I don't want to scupper my chances of interacting with people in the way that I want to do it. So if I am going to come in and film in a pub, or hairdresser's, then I want people to say yes. I want to portray what is local by using what is there, but in a new way. I made a survey as a means of doing this and to help discover an individuality in the area, and to make a portrait with it. I wanted to make people conscious of the space above our heads that connects us all, and how it's full of data buzzing around us all the time. The survey was a way of shaping the work I made.

EMDW: Part of the installation is a live mix of streamed video from 'Chatroulette'. Wikipedia says that "Chatroulette is an online chat website that pairs strangers from around the world together for webcam-based conversations. Visitors to the website begin an online chat (text, audio, and video) with another visitor who is chosen at random. At any point, either user may leave the current chat by initiating another random connection." What you get with Chatroulette is really immediate; it's voyeuristic, Peeping Tom, a bit dirty. It's quite feral. Whereas what you get with TV is the state- or corporation-sanctioned broadcast, something that is tailored to a public that supposedly exists, with an assumption of what the mind-set is of the people who will receive it. Chatroulette is mediated, via the technology that enables it but it's not part

of the traditional media. What function do you think this kind of online forum will have once the TV switchover is complete? Do you think they generate a different kind of communication or transmission?

LW: It's more about using the technology that exists. It's about people looking at a screen: they are either watching or they want to be watched. It's the ultimate global flicking of channels, but instead of things that are intentionally broadcast, it's a real individuality that comes across, and you're seeing straight into people's bedrooms, into their schools or wherever – and seeing whatever they want to show you from all over the world. There's something attractive about that real-time moment and the freedom with which people can communicate. The Internet is really exciting because it can enable individuality, but the other side is that all your information is going out in a second language, as data that you don't really understand, and you can't access. We're all becoming sorts of holograms of ourselves in these moments. It's this transformation that I wanted to capture. For the project, I wanted to create a piece that would continually change; a live system that can re-create itself, like a fractal, using these two components: the watchers/watchees and the local white noise. This will create a live image that is always changing. I also liked the idea of the exchange that Chatroulette produces: the local portrait I'm creating will also be transmitted around the world from the installation here at the gallery. To be looking in real time at people from around the world looking at the white noise filmed at the Coral betting shop down the road!

EMDW: For the event you are planning as part of your Invites show, you will be broadcasting live from the gallery to a nearby location. This broadcast will be independent of any of the major TV transmissions, and sit outside the sanctioned TV channels, by being on its

own frequency. What are your thoughts on this kind of clandestine activity, and where it fits with your creative practice?

LW: I was interested in reclaiming the public communication space to create a live local space within which the work I make will be broadcast back to the community. I will broadcast to the local pub which is 100 metres down the road using a CCTV transmitter and receiver and a couple of aerials. It is very directional and this setup uses the legal wireless broadband frequencies, and it's also an analogue technology. I like the fact that I will be picking up interference from local communication data, such as other CCTVs and wireless Internet and that there are other receivers in the area that will pick up my signal. This broadcast is important as it will take the work back to one point in the local area, which will be the only place you can see this event. I think some of the people I interacted with early on will come, maybe the guy from the local kebab shop, which is just down the road.



Artist's presentation
Lucy Woodhouse
Saturday 21 April, 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
Global Local Transition Transmission Connection Centre, 2012
Mixed media installation
Courtesy the artist

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Opening times
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Other times by appointment
FREE ENTRY

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Upcoming Invites

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Jason Dungan
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Yelena Popova
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Leah Capaldi
22 November–16 December

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