

THE GREEN RAY

Curated by Andrew Hunt

Danai Anesiadou, Anna Barriball, Ant Farm, Juliette Bonneviot, Matt Copson, Phil Coy, Jeffrey Dennis, Adham Faramawy, Travis Jeppesen, Nicholas Mangan, Xavier Mary, Mike Nelson, Lisa Oppenheim, Daniel O'Sullivan (Sunn O))) / Ulver), Katrina Palmer, Yuri Pattison, Elizabeth Price, Sophie Sleigh-Johnson, Mathew Sawyer, and Michelle Ussher

27 February to 10 April 2016

'The Green Ray' takes its starting point from French new wave director Eric Rohmer's 1986 film *Le Rayon Vert* (The Green Ray). Rohmer's film connects thematically with Jules Verne's 1882 novel by the same name, and both film and book deal with a search for the scientific phenomenon of a rare green flash at sunset, which Verne interprets as revealing our thoughts and those of others 'as if by magic'.

Taking these two aforementioned historical moments, this group exhibition, which takes place over Wilkinson's two galleries, presents a wide variety of material in 2016 that deals with contemporary subjects of literature, cinema, painting, writing and the post-digital sublime.

Yuri Pattison's construction that contains moving image and vaporised melatonin, for example, considers the phenomenon of the 'MIT henge sunset celebration' within 'The Infinite Corridor', a hallway 251 metres long that runs through the main buildings of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Twice each year, in mid-November and in late January, MIT's corridor aligns with the plane of the ecliptic, causing sunlight to fill the entire passage, an event that's celebrated by students and staff at the institution alike, and among other subjects, Pattison's work deals with this natural spectacle to dwell on the psychological effects of sleep deprivation induced by digital screens.

Similarly, a component of Mike Nelson's installation *A7* presents a blown-out tyre found on the main transport corridor leading into the French city of Lyon, a road that is known as *l'autoroute du Soleil* (the Motorway of the Sun). Nelson's dark, violently shattered prototype sculpture is similar in form to a 'black sun', a melancholy yet energetic symbol that refers to accelerated local consumption (in this case, in central France), the destruction of natural resources, and the long global politics of oil, colonialism, religion and war.

Lisa Oppenheim's series of unique abstract photograms entitled *The Language of Flowers* is an indirect reference to the essay of the same name by Georges Bataille, who used his text to point out that 'even the most beautiful flowers are spoiled in the centres by [what appear to be] hairy sexual organs... after a very short period of glory the marvellous corolla rots indecently in the Sun, thus becoming, for the plant, a garish withering.' Oppenheim's photo-works operate within this levelled hierarchy of beauty and taste to display the simple power of natural light in angular and erotic patterns.

Bataille's interest in the Sun in his writings produced between 1927 and 1930, such as 'The Solar Anus' and 'Rotten Sun', also describe our star as a symbol of generosity without the expectation of a return: the Sun provides immense power and light, yet expects nothing in exchange. This sublime potential for expenditure can be described as a need for limitless loss, like the gambler who cannot

stop, and frenziedly destroys everything including herself. Within this context, Nicholas Mangan's *Friday the 13th, 2009*, a photograph of the Sun in the aftermath of the worst Australian bush fires in recent memory called 'Black Saturday', presents a similar image of uncompromising natural ferocity, this time from the other side of the planet.

Writing, text and spoken word is represented in works by Travis Jeppesen, Katrina Palmer and Sophie Sleigh-Johnson. Palmer and Sleigh-Johnson's small installations raise the transformative potential of the glimpse, while Jeppesen's body of work aims to address a style that he calls 'object oriented calligraphy' through his acts of painting, drawing and writing directly onto large scrolls of paper.

Rohmer's film famously portrays its main character Delphine's solitary travels in summer after the end of a relationship. Beneath her boredom is a genuine anger at the roles that single women are sometimes expected to play. In many respects, this exhibition aims to mirror Delphine's journey, in part through an additional text by Jeppesen and a sound work by Michelle Ussher made in collaboration with Huw Hallam, as well as through the improvised dialogue by artists similar to those adopted by the actors in Rohmer's production.

Importantly the exhibition also examines the historical role of the film director as auteur and contemporary curatorial discourse's relationship to existing literary and cinematic themes. This is a trope that's enhanced by the inclusion of artefacts relating to Rohmer's original work, next to copies of the French film magazine *Cahiers du Cinema* – which Rohmer wrote for in the 1950s alongside Jean-Luc Godard and Francois Truffaut – as well as posters, cards and other printed material, so as to provide a homage to the 'original' work and create an interpretative loop of authorship between Verne's book, Rohmer's film and the contemporary group exhibition.

In line with the exhibition's printed ephemera, a free limited invitation booklet containing unique images by the artists in the exhibition will be available at the gallery. A number of performances will also take place directly after the exhibition opening by artists and musicians who have been invited to respond to the film's theme.