



Cover: still from Christoph Girardet's *Release*, 1996, from the Hirshhorn's collection. Image courtesy the artist; center page: still from Rodney Graham's *Rheinmetall/Victoria 8*, 2003. Image courtesy Donald Young Gallery, Chicago; above: still from Teresa Hubbard/Alexander Birchler's *Eight*, 2001. Image courtesy the artists and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

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 Smithsonian  
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

## The Cinema Effect

Illusion, Reality, and the Moving Image

Part I: *Dreams* will be on view February 14–May 11, 2008

Part II: *Realisms* will be on view June 19–September 7, 2008

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### Programs

February 14, 7 pm, Ring Auditorium

Meet the Artist: **Tony Oursler**

February 15, 12:30 pm, Ring Auditorium

In Conversation: co-curator **Kelly Gordon** with artist **Kelly Richardson**

February 23, 2 pm, Ring Auditorium

Co-curator **Kerry Brougher** on *The Cinema Effect*

March 7, 12:30 pm, meet at the Information Desk

Friday Gallery Talk: **American University** media professor **Randall Packer**

March 27, 7 pm, Ring Auditorium

Meet the Artist: **Teresa Hubbard/Alexander Birchler**

April 12, 2 pm, Ring Auditorium

**Dietrich Neumann** on the *Illuminated Building*

May 9, 12:30 pm, meet at the Information Desk

Friday Gallery Talk: artist **Michael Bell-Smith**

May–June, AFI Silver Theatre, Silver Spring, MD

To coincide with the exhibition, **AFI Silver Theatre** will screen a survey of **Jean-Luc Godard's** influential works, including *Alphaville*, 1965.

For more details, visit [www.AFI.com/Silver](http://www.AFI.com/Silver)

For more information, please visit our website at [www.hirshhorn.si.edu](http://www.hirshhorn.si.edu)

## The Cinema Effect *Dreams*

Darren Almond  
Chiho Aoshima  
Michael Bell-Smith  
Bruce Conner  
Tacita Dean  
Stan Douglas  
Harun Farocki  
Christoph Girardet  
Douglas Gordon  
Rodney Graham  
Gary Hill  
Hubbard/Birchler  
Anthony McCall  
Steve McQueen  
Saskia Olde Wolbers  
Tony Oursler  
Kelly Richardson  
Wolfgang Staehle  
Siebren Versteeg  
Andy Warhol

**“When you walk along the street, you’re in a movie; when you have a row, you’re in a movie.... When you skim stones over the water, buy a newspaper, park your car, line up in a McDonald’s, stand on a rooftop looking down, meet a friend, joke in the pub, wake suddenly in the night or fall asleep dead drunk, you’re in a movie.”**

—Stephen Fry, *Making History*

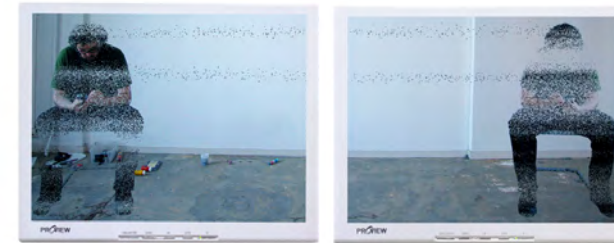


The cinema was the unrivaled art form of the twentieth century. Film, as well as later incarnations like television and the internet, has penetrated to the culture’s core so that the very boundaries between “real life” and make-believe have become at least blurred, if not indecipherable. Today, the cinema is everywhere—it is in the way we perceive our world, in the way we speak, in the way we dream. We have no need of entering a movie theater to experience cinema; life itself is just like a movie.

Artists have increasingly explored this phenomenon in their film and video work, and use film language and devices to explore the impact of the cinematic on our perceptions of what is real and what is illusion.

In *Dreams*, artists employ and evoke the technology and techniques of the cinema to recall the dream-like state induced by film viewing, transporting viewers out of their daily lives to a place where definitions and understandings of reality are questioned. Akin to the kind of journey visitors to an amusement park might take on a dark ride—in which they willingly suspend disbelief and immerse themselves in the fantasy presented—or to a voyeuristic step through a curtain into another world, like Alice entering Wonderland, the cinema has always had the ability to affect viewers in powerful ways.

Some artists focus their attention on the very apparatus of filmmaking and how it has the potential to become “such stuff as dreams are made on”—like when Douglas Gordon quite literally provides a chance to go behind the curtain and both establishes and challenges illusion with his projection of a red stage curtain onto fabric that viewers may pass through; when Rodney Graham



Inside: still from Douglas Gordon’s *Off Screen*, 1998. Image © Douglas Gordon and Fundação Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon. Courtesy Museu Berardo, Lisbon. Photo by Simon Starling; still from Steve McQueen’s *Bear*, 1993, from the Hirshhorn’s collection. Image courtesy the artist; still from Siebren Versteeg’s *Neither There Nor There*, 2005, from the Hirshhorn’s collection. Image courtesy Rhona Hoffman Gallery, New York.

concentrates on the notion of obsolescence with his mesmerizing elegy to the Rheinmetall typewriter shown using a massive Victoria 8 projector, itself already an artifact of cinema’s past; when Bruce Conner creates his reverie-inducing film montages; or when Anthony McCall makes viewers part of his film as they are immersed within a white beam of projected light and their shadows interact with the lines and shapes on the wall. Harun Farocki and Gary Hill each direct attention to the power of the small screen—through a set of television monitors—to shift images and viewers’ perceptions of reality across both time and space: Farocki with a series of excerpts showing workers leaving a factory in each of eleven decades and Hill with intertwining footage shot at different dates on two coasts of his own body and that of his girlfriend.

For others, it is the experience of dreams—the journey from waking to sleeping and dreaming and, finally, the return to consciousness—that is at the core of their work. Andy Warhol overtly explored the relationship between film and sleep as well as film’s ability both to document and to manipulate elements of everyday life, like a night’s sleep (his film, composed of edited segments of John Giorno sleeping, extending to nearly five and a half hours). Both Stan Douglas and Darren Almond explicitly take visitors on this dream journey in their films. Douglas emphasizes the associations between dreams and trains as well as those between cinema and trains by using existing footage of an engine weaving its way through the Canadian Rockies and superimposing over it narrative excerpts from Marcel Proust’s novel *Remembrance of Things Past* that echo the transporting qualities of both film and dreams. Almond quite literally propels



Still from Saskia Olde Wolbers’s *Trailer*, 2005. Image courtesy Maureen Paley, London; detail of still from Michael Bell-Smith’s *Up and Away*, 2006, from the Hirshhorn’s collection. Image courtesy the artist and Foxy Production, New York.

viewers on a ride in his frantic, strobe-lit, techno-pop journey through an actual dark ride at an amusement park. Mining the darker recesses of the dream state, Steve McQueen, Christoph Girardet, and Tony Oursler convey viewers to a place where ambiguous encounters wait around every corner. McQueen layers a complex set of potential meanings onto what, on the surface, appears to be a shadowy wrestling match between two men; Girardet appropriates an iconic moment from *King Kong* and suspends Fay Wray at the height of her hysteria, that nightmarish moment when she first views Kong; and Tony Oursler fabricates creatures that appear at unexpected moments to haunt and taunt viewers.

It is the disjointed narratives so common to dreams that seem to have engaged artists like Teresa Hubbard/Alexander Birchler and Saskia Olde Wolbers, who communicate their own distinctive stories, while others such as Chiho Aoshima, Kelly Richardson, Michael Bell-Smith, and Siebren Versteeg manipulate digital technology to present their own wonderlands—each adding their own twist to seemingly recognizable scenery, entrancing viewers by offering something familiar in a new form. Even as they wake, viewers emerging to see the “actual” landscapes of Berlin, presented by Tacita Dean, or Niagara Falls, as captured by Wolfgang Staehle, must question their degree of consciousness with the realization that Dean’s footage is of the now demolished Palast building and Staehle’s Falls—which appear to be a streaming, “real time” view—are not cascading in real time at all, but are actually recorded images that now only continue to exist through film and imagination.

Deborah Horowitz  
Based on essays by Kerry Brougher and Kelly Gordon in the exhibition catalogue