

The title of this exhibition, **Ipsos Video**, is derived from the term 'ipso facto' a Latin turn of phrase most commonly used in law that simply means that the facts speak for themselves. In evoking this term I wish to allude to a group of video based practices defined as much by the medium itself as by the relationship of their content to that medium. Or more simply, video that 'speaks' for itself. What the word 'speaks' can mean in this context is perhaps where the proposition of the title lies. Here video is considered to take on an annunciative function, perhaps through spoken language or perhaps not.

In one of the opening scenes of Jean Luc Godard's 1962 film *Vivre Sa Vie* a conversation takes place between a couple in a café. Outside the narrative confines of the film the content of the conversation and the setting are hardly noteworthy. However, what is remarkable is that the entire conversation is filmed from behind leaving the viewer to stare at the back of the actors' heads. The "acting" frustratingly out of ocular reach, at best, glanced in the out of focus reflection in the bar mirror. As the emotional current of their conversation rises the viewer is denied the visual underpinning of the actors faces, forced at once to consider their own position as an interloper, an eavesdropper and through an act of sheer projection provide the missing details. Indeed, this can be read as a case in point of Godard's ongoing interrogation of both the formal and conceptual underpinnings of cinematic language. But contained within this gesture of negation is a tacit acknowledgement of the authority of the image and more explicitly the authority of the talking head as both a conduit and signifier of knowledge, if not truth.

Far removed from the hallowed realm of the 1960s *nouvelle vague* the authority assigned to the talking head in the contemporary mediascape is practically unassailable. As mutable as it has proved to be durable, the forms and uses of this simply framed speaking subject are at once multiple and unstable. Just as easily deployed in the construction of knowledge as celebrity, and more often than not used to do both simultaneously, the talking head at once engages a history of honorific portraiture as it appeals to the reason of speech. In each work included in *Ipsos Video* there is a recognition and engagement with the idea of the talking head as both a historically and media specific form that speaks through the televisual medium. From the explicit dialogues presented by Kylie Mckendary and Andrew Newman to the media based engagements of Kim Connerton and Jasmine Avrill, recourse is made to the authority of the talking head through its explicit presence or absence. While the range of methods and approaches employed by the artists preclude any idea of 'coherence' the distinct contours of a dialogue can be seen to merge from the clash of images and voices.

What then of Godard's gesture of looking (from) behind? While a somewhat audacious strategy in the context of narrative cinema one cannot be left unimpressed by the resonance such a seemingly simple gesture contains. By denying access to the actors' faces the filmmaker forestalls the process of participatory identification on which the cinematic experience hinges, at once creating a space from which to examine these very mechanics. While it is hardly a strategy that can be sustained for any period of time, it does more importantly suggest a terrain that each of these artists have traversed. A terrain in which each has sought to create a space to engage the perceived authority of the speaking subject.

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