



ELIZABETH PRICE: FELT TIP

16 Feb – 6 May 2019

FELT TIP is a highly ambitious solo-show from Elizabeth Price, featuring all-new works: two immersive video installations and a series of large-scale pinhole photographs.

The Turner Prize-winning artist's work combines archival materials, live-action footage, motion graphics and CGI, using rhythmic edits of music and image. Her richly layered narratives explore social histories and the shifting terrain of analogue and digital cultures. As Price has said, 'My work is about people and histories, but not individuals – it's about people as collective forces or voices and how we emerge as such through material culture.'

The exhibition at Nottingham Contemporary is curated by Sam Thorne, with Cédric Fauq. *FELT TIP* and *KOHL* premiered at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, in December 2018. This autumn, Price will have a survey exhibition at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, that will feature *FELT TIP*, *KOHL* and a third work – commissioned by Artangel and Whitworth – which will conclude the *SLOW DANCE* trilogy.

KOHL was supported using public funding by Arts Council England.

The artwork, *FELT TIP* has been commissioned by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Film and Video Umbrella and Nottingham Contemporary, with support from Arts Council England.

CG Animation by Anne Haaning and Gabriel Stones. Motion graphics, fabrication and live sound by Rose Goddard. Music by Andrew Dickens. 'FELT TIP' font by Spencer Fenton.

Admission to our exhibitions is free, however donations are encouraged. Suggested donation £3

THE GOVERNING BODY (2019)

Photographs and newsprint

A parade of dresses covers every wall, from floor to ceiling. *THE GOVERNING BODY* is a sequence of pinhole photographs, each one made by exposing a backlit stencil through a tiny aperture for up to an hour. These images were found in fashion magazines dating from the 1970–90s, but here they are made to tell stories other than their own. Postures related to luxury advertising become sorrowful expressions of something else. These resuscitated archival materials become supernatural and ghostly, rather than only historical. They have become enlarged and, in different senses, possessed.

KOHL (2018)

4 channel digital video projection. Duration 5.30 minutes.

When coal mines are abandoned, groundwater swiftly floods the underground tunnel systems. The title *KOHL* gives a name to this liquid. Within the fiction of the work, this liquid becomes a febrile medium of transmission. It connects all the tunnels, shafts and seams to create a single network. Sound travels through it, conveying voices, songs and jokes as expressive bodily emissions, related to tears and to spit.

The story opens in the subterranean spaces of recent urban developments: wine cellars, car parks, data centres. An inky liquid is bubbling up through the foundations. A chorus of four 'narrators' debate whether this is a supernatural phenomenon, a symptom or a warning. Each one 'speaks' through a different projection. At various points during the story, the four projections stand for data centres, flooded mine shafts, carboniferous swamps, ink wells, blackened lungs and digital caches.

KOHL features a collection of 35mm photographs by Albert Walker courtesy of the National Coal Mining Museum, Wakefield, UK. These depict mine-head architectures during the main period of mine abandonment in the UK, between the late 1970s and the late 80s. Within the video, the images of head-frames are inverted (made negative and turned upside-down) to suggest a spectral world, while also calling to mind the still present, albeit invisible, subterranean architectures of mining.

In *KOHL*, ancient histories of coal, ink, make-up and alcohol converge. The English word 'alcohol' is taken from the Arabic word 'kuhl', which denotes a black liquid used for eye make-up. Kohl itself was originally made in Egypt some 5,000 years ago using a poisonous trace metal called antimony, which is found in coal. Ink was first made using graphite (China c.2,300 BCE), the 'highest' (or hardest) form of coal.

FELT TIP (2018)

2 channel digital video projection. Duration 9 minutes.

FELT TIP is a science-fiction story that traces a social, sexual and technological history of the workplace. It is introduced by a female narrator, who is later joined by a chorus of three other computer-generated voices. They are the administrators of a large, unidentified institution. They tell of how they are required to store vast amounts of digital information within their own DNA, specifically in their fingertips, which have lost all sensation.

The work features an eccentric collection of men's neckties, symbols of masculine executive authority, drawn mostly from the 1970s and 80s. This was a period when office work was transformed by social mobility and electronic technologies. Many of the ties feature designs that recall circuit boards and computer chips. (Indeed, they were woven using the Jacquard loom, the 19th-century innovation that used punch-cards to record patterns – a precursor of today's digital storage.) This story is told from the perspective of an imagined future, one in which the wearing of ties has been revived as a feminist form of drag. Here, they have become known as 'FELT TIPS' or 'longue-tongues'.

FELT TIP's two projections are presented one on top of the other, creating a vertical strip. The upper screen is associated with language, speech and executive authority, as well as more mundane forms of bureaucratic expression. The lower screen is a subterranean space connected with storage, matter and waste; occasionally, it represents the cache of the actual computer used in the creation of this video. This screen is, by turns, the shaft of a coal mine, the belly of a body, the store of a museum.

Interview with Elizabeth Price:

'All fiction is promiscuous, in that you can have many kinds of things in a single story: discoveries, surprises, arrivals, events, etc. The scope is even wider in supernatural fiction, where you can break the laws of science, as well as probability. I use science-fiction and ghost stories as structural tools because they allow an accelerated move from one category of knowledge to another. You can make weird and inventive connections between subjects.

To some extent, the story doesn't matter in my films. It's a sort of MacGuffin, a medium used to hold very different things within it. It gets different things into a single world for a few minutes so we can think of them together. For me, the story is a kind of conceptual glue, a form of assembly or collage.

So I use the story as a way of connecting elements and making those elements available to the imagination of the viewer. The first time they watch it, they hear the story. The second time they watch it, they know the story, and that's when something else happens. My work is actually twice as long as its advertised time. That's why I make the videos short and fast, so you can watch them twice.'

– From an interview conducted by Pavel Pys, Curator of Visual Arts, Walker Art Center, December 2018