

THE RYDER

Deirdre Sargent, Maha Maamoun, Stephanie Comilang

Eyes above, bodies below

Curated by Erik Martinson

12 - 16 July 2017

Wednesday - Sunday, 12 - 6pm

This July The RYDER is pleased to present three video programmes, each running a week in the gallery.

Nine artists will present their works in:

- Resting Transmissions (5 – 9 July)
- Eyes Above, Bodies Below (12 – 16 July)
- Nice night for a walk (19 – 23 July)

Eyes Above, Bodies Below

On 26 November 1977 the Southern Television broadcast in the UK was interrupted. Audio from an unknown source broke through the local news presenter's routine reporting. A voice announcing itself as 'Vrillon, a representative of the Ashtar Galactic Command' presented viewers with a warning: 'All your weapons of evil must be removed.' After warning of 'false prophets' the voice urges the people of Earth 'to listen to the voice of truth which is within' that in turn will bring forth 'the path of evolution.' Before the transmission ends, Vrillon admits: 'We have watched you growing for many years as you too have watched our lights in your skies.' Regular audio resumed without further interference during an episode of Looney Tunes, just as it was ending. 'That's all, folks.' Widely considered a hoax, no one came forward to take responsibility. A call for action against self-destruction, the peaceful message of Vrillon also brings a kind of comfort: there is some being above, watching. Apparently, some below have even watched back.

There are many ways in which eyes may be separate from bodies. There are many ways bodies swap and narratives switch. The works in *Eyes Above, Bodies Below* present combinations of vision, bodies inscribed with self-actuated stories as well as scripted strands from above. Cartesian dualism is both affirmed and confronted, fluidity seeping up and emerging. Stories hop hosts, sending out beacons.

A YouTuber speaks of a divided America in *Traveling* (Deirdre Sargent). A divine message of warning is channeled for views, for spread; a drone eye floats above a flooded street scene bearing witness, surveying from a safe vantage point. A subject appears in *Ann Gillis*, her

body's opacity shifts revealing older and younger versions simultaneously occupying the same planar space, speaking a unified tale of migration in opposing languages. Next, temporal locality shifts to the future, which is the past to the protagonist's present in 2026 (Maha Maamoun). Drawing a scenario from *The Revolution of 2053* by Mahmoud Osman, a *La Jetée* style stationary time traveller is still in frame, eyes gauzed over, describing the frenetic movements near the site of the Pyramids. Non-temporal tourists, with their busy bodies populate the area, while behind a virtual wall buttressed by surveillance, a whole city crumbles and lives. With the final shift, a ghost-drone called *Paraiso* surveys Hong Kong, tracking and uploading missives from Filipina migrant workers in *Lumapit Sa Akin*, *Paraiso/Come To Me, Paradise* (Stephanie Comilang). For successful transmission of videos, photos, and messages home, *Paraiso* needs to find the subjects of this docu-fiction in one place. It seems bodies sharing space makes the signal stronger, while confronting the isolating effects of economic migration. Day-off gatherings of the workers provide content for the meandering and lonely eye-vessel, each a part in this equation becoming mutual nodes for the circulation of data, of home.

Programme

Traveling, Deirdre Sargent, 2016, 5:16

2026, Maha Maamoun, 2010, 9:00

Lumapit Sa Akin, Paraiso (Come To Me, Paradise), Stephanie Comilang, 2016, 25:46

Programme Notes

Traveling, Deirdre Sargent, 2016, 5:16

Traveling begins with a black screen and the voice of a middle-aged woman known as, GracieGirl7. A message of damnation that she believes she received from the divine is netted across the video and fractured by the story of two other female characters who act as one, an elderly and young version of the same woman. They tell life stories that become indecipherable from one another. The video presents life as a naturally psychedelic experience that spans multiple bodies and eras, swirling factual and fictional narratives. (DS)

Deirdre Sargent (b. 1985, Boston, MA, USA) is an artist living in Brooklyn, NY working with sculpture, photography, and video. She holds a MFA from Yale University and a BFA from Pratt Institute. Recent solo and two-person shows include *You Should Know When to Laugh*, 315 Gallery, NYC; *Island Girl on Video*, AC Institute, NYC; and *Usamlkpa*, The Sculpture Center, Cleveland, OH. Selected recent group shows include *Coping Copy*, Konstanet, Tallinn, Estonia; *From an Object Into an Active Subject*, Alexander's Garage, Brooklyn, NY; *The Sputtering, Human-Shaped Machine*, Good Work Gallery, Brooklyn, NY; *Noise*, ETAA Studio, Seoul, South Korea; *Providence & Co.*, Union Docs, Brooklyn, NY; and *Optic Nerve 14*, Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami.

2026, Maha Maamoun, 2010, 9:00

Based on a text from the novel *The Revolution of 2053*, by Egyptian writer Mahmoud Osman, and referencing a scene from Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962), a time-traveller recounts his vision of the future of the Pyramids area, and by extension Egypt, in the year 2026 - a vision that strains to reach beyond, yet remains severely confined by the present's imaginal constraints. (MM)

Maha Maamoun is a Cairo-based Egyptian artist. In addition, she works collaboratively on independent publishing and curatorial projects. Maamoun co-founded with Ala Younis the independent publishing platform called *Kayfa-ta* in 2012. She is also a founder and current board member of the Contemporary Image Collective (CiC). Maamoun's latest project, *The Subduer*, which combines photographs and literary texts to explore the power of the sublime in contemporary Egyptian bureaucracy, will be shown in *Art Basel's Statements*, June 2017. Her work was widely shown in exhibitions and biennials including: *The Time is Out of Joint – Sharjah Art Foundation* (2016); *Here and Elsewhere – New Museum* (2014); *Objects in Mirror are Closer than they Appear*, Tate Modern (2012); *9th Gwangju Biennale* (2012); *Mapping Subjectivity*, MoMA.

Lumapit Sa Akin, Paraiso (Come To Me, Paradise), Stephanie Comilang, 2016, 25:46

Lumapit Sa Akin, Paraiso (Come to Me Paradise) is a science fiction documentary that uses the backdrop of Hong Kong and the various ways in which the Filipina migrant worker occupies Central on Sundays. The film is narrated from the perspective of *Paraiso*, a ghost played by a drone who speaks of the isolation from being uprooted and thrown into a new place. *Paraiso's* reprieve comes when she is finally able to interact with the women and feel her purpose, which is to transmit their vlogs, photos, and messages back home. During the week she is forced back into isolation and is left in an existential rut.

The film uses Hong Kong's dystopian maze like structures that the Filipina migrants re-imagine and focuses on the beauty of care-giving but also explores how technology is used as a pivotal way for the women to connect - to each other but also to loved ones. Raising questions around modern isolation, economic migration and the role of public space in both urban and digital forms, the film transcends its various component parts to offer a startling commentary on the present, from the point of view of the future. (SC)

Stephanie Comilang is an artist living and working in Toronto and Berlin. She received her BFA from Ontario College of Art & Design. Her documentary based works create narratives that look at how our understandings of mobility, capital and labour on a global scale are shaped through various cultural and social factors. Her most recent films '*Lumapit Sa Akin, Paraiso*' (2016) is a science fiction documentary about Filipina migrant workers in Hong Kong. It has been screened at *Asia Art Archive* in America, New York; *S.A.L.T.S.*, Basel; *UCLA*, Los Angeles; *Images Festival*, Toronto; and *Art Athina* in Athens.

Erik Martinson (Canada/Latvia) is an independent curator and writer based in London. He worked in Toronto at *Vtape*, a not-for-profit video art distributor from 2005 - 2014, and was a member of the *Pleasure Dome* curatorial collective from 2006 - 2014. He has curated screenings and exhibitions for *The Images Festival* (2012); *A Space Gallery* (2012); *Art Gallery of Mississauga* (2013); *Institute of Contemporary Arts London* (2015); *Chalton Gallery* (2016); *DIY Space for London* (2016); *Contemporary Art Centre Vilnius* (2016); *LUX* (2016/2017); and *The RYDER* (2017). He participated in the *Independent Curators International (ICI) Curatorial Intensive on Time-Based Media*, New York (2013) and was on the selection jury for *Videonale.15* at *Kunstmuseum Bonn* (2015). Recently he completed his MFA *Curating* at *Goldsmiths, University of London* (2016) and was in residence at *Rupert, Vilnius* (2016).