

Elizabeth Price

(Bradford, UK, 1966)

Winner of the 2012 Turner Prize, Elizabeth Price works solely in video, the medium that allows her, within her markedly conceptual research, to employ representations that are recognizable for the public and, above all, emotionally gripping. The expertise Price brings to her works—from the editing to the choice of phrases and words that accompany the images, to the sound (very important for an artist who, after completing her studies, was a founding member and singer in the pop band Talulah Gosh)—makes their genesis particularly long and painstaking. Indeed she has said every video she produces requires at least a year of work. *Choir*, 2011, could be considered a theoretical antecedent of *The Woolworths Choir of 1979*, made the following year and which resulted in the artist being awarded the most prestigious British prize for contemporary artists.

In *Choir* the artist undertook a semantic and conceptual investigation, reflecting on the different meanings that a word—“choir” in this case—conveys.

In fact a specific architectural space in a church, located close to the high altar, is one meaning of “choir.” But by extension the work also refers to the hierarchical role that the faithful grant to those who have access to that space, namely prelates and officiants of the Mass. But “choir” also and above all connotes the body of singers, a group of different voices that work together to express a single melody, which in Christianity is the highest expression of the religious community and its emotions, even while kept separate from it during the ritual.

Through the juxtaposition and assembly of materials—practices that, in themselves, are a subtle reference to the idea of “choir,” the union of different elements for the creation of a unique work—Elizabeth Price reveals the concept’s intrinsic values. The excerpts she uses are recordings of popular or gospel music, juxtaposed with images of wooden decorations in elaborate Gothic choirs or digital renderings of church interiors. The artist’s conceptual speculation on the meaning of the word is constructed, during the video’s duration, through association, intuition, and proximity. The captivating editing enlightens the viewer about all the possible and contradictory significances, layered over the years and in the history of an apparently innocuous word that is discovered to have disquieting political importance, tied to power and its preservation. (EV)