

Diana Thater

(San Francisco, 1962)

Over the course of a thirty-year career, Diana Thater has managed to develop a highly recognisable formal language, characterised by luminous projections with hyper-saturated colours that expand through the environment. Without hierarchies between the front wall, the floor, the ceiling or the corners of the room, her videos are projected in a disorderly fashion in space, and redesign the perception of the architecture. Thater often makes use of atypical angles, close-up framings and sudden changes of scale, and with a sculptural sensitivity, occupies the whole of the space with old monitors, temporary walls and screens placed on the ground in a horizontal position. It's not rare for her images to reach the outside of the building through the windows and incorporate the viewers, who see themselves transformed into a projection surface which, with their mere presence, breaks up the uniformity of the cinematographic projection.

Her university studies in art history left a deep mark on Thater's visual production, which comes to the fore most of all in her great interest in optic theories and perceptive phenomena. After frequenting the Garden of Giverny for a number of months and investigating the separation of colours in impressionist brushstrokes, the artist produced the video projection *OO FiFi, Five Days in Claude Monet's Garden* (1992) in which the images of places appear separated into the three chromatic components of red, blue and green. With *The Best Animals are the Flat Animals* (1998) she instead latches onto the reflections on the verbal and iconic nomination of an object, yet tempering the analytical weight given by Magritte and Kosuth: on a monitor, a number of words in coloured letters go past; a division wall hosts footage of a trained zebra carrying out exercises of skill, and lastly, the back wall is taken up by the enlarged detail of its characteristic coat. Another version from the same year, titled *Bridget Riley Made a Painting* aims instead to allude to the formal likeness between the black-and-white stripes of the mammal and the famous optical explorations carried out by the British artist. Likewise, the work in the collection *The Caucus Race* (1998), which takes its title from the third chapter of *Alice in Wonderland*, tells of a haphazard marathon run by the strange creatures encountered by the protagonist on the shore. One at a time, Thater projects Lewis Carroll's words onto the wall, while beside it the images are screened of a school of dolphins filmed in the open sea, while a number of monitors at the centre of the room show footage of giraffes, hippopotami and orangutans. This work outlines a recurring theme in the artist's most recent works, such as *gorillagorillagorilla* (2009) and *As Radical as Reality* (2016), i.e. the presence of animals, in particular those at risk of extinction, of which the behaviour and intelligence are observed with great attention, both in their original environments and in contexts of their domestication.

RA