

## James Richards

(Cardiff, United Kingdom, 1983)

Although since his debut, his video installations have always included original self-produced footage, James Richards is known most of all for his activity of appropriation of pre-existing visual material from a wide range of sources. Old B movies, television programmes, porn videos, news reports and medical documentaries represent just a part of his vast personal archive, which on the basis of an initial set of videotapes and DVDs has been constantly increased over the years thanks to the abundance of contents offered by the web. The choice of going back after a certain length of time to the clips used in other works allows him what's more to maintain a high level of experimentation. The images are repeated, manipulated and modified; sometimes they are even printed, scanned and digitally post-produced even further. Just as important in Richards's practice is his exchange with other artists. Apart from never having passed up the chance to pay homage to those who provided a source of inspiration during the years of his studies, on various occasions he has organised group shows and video projection seasons together with filmmaker colleagues. From his first collaboration with his friend Steve Reinke (*Disambiguation*, 2009) to the more recent one with Leslie Thornton (*Crossings*, 2016), throughout his career there have been numerous works created in tandem from one side of the world to the other. These works, akin to *cadavres exquis* produced with moving images, are the upshot of a prolific crossover of materials which one of the two expands and modifies before passing them over to the other, and so on.

Whether it is original material or a compilation of found clips or a mix of both, for Richards the soundtrack has the same importance as his visual contents. Sometimes, the track seems to adhere perfectly to the image that passes by on the screen, while other times it breaks away to the point of creating a slight dissonance that radically alters the way in which the work is interpreted. In the brief video in the collection, *Radio at Night* (2015), an electronic base composed in C minor by the artist accompanies the female voices of the trio musicale Juice in the performance of a piece inspired by a poem written by the lesbian activist and feminist Judy Grahn. The work celebrates the multifaceted figure of Derek Jerman: the English painter, writer and director known for his experimental films shot using Super 8 and for the openness with which in the 1980s he spoke of his homosexuality and the fight against AIDS. Like other works by Richards, *Radio at Night* is also a diverse mixture of footage. Sensual and decadent shots of the Carnival of Venice taken from an old erotic French film, and the black-and-white details of eyes, crosshairs, surgical incisions and bullet holes. Through the blending of these elements, the artist investigates not only the conditions of seeing but also the capacity of the images to transmit physical sensations and to stimulate the imagination.

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