

## KUF PROJECT REPORT - S16/00596

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«Booklaunch for *Here is Information. Mobilise*»

### Background

In autumn 2016 a book which I had edited, *Here Is Information. Mobilise – Selected Writings by Ian White*, was co-published by LUX and Kunstakademiet/KHiO. White was an enormously influential artist (working with performance) and curator (primarily of the moving image), based in London and Berlin, and we had been longtime collaborators. The publication was the culmination of several years work on my part, initiated shortly before White's untimely death from cancer in 2013.

The release of the book was an important moment for me personally, as the book included texts relating to many shared projects. But it was also intended as a catalyst for a wider rethinking of the legacy of White's work and I actively sought to organise events around the publication. Eventually there were a number of launches internationally including: a [weekend of talks and performances in London](#) (LUX/ICA/Showroom, December 2016), an evening of [performative readings at Artists Space, New York](#) (January 2017), a talk at [Temple Bar Gallery in Dublin](#) (March 2017), [a workshop at Gallery TPW, Toronto](#) (March 2017), and a series of performances at [LUX Scotland](#) (March 2017).

I wanted to stage an event in Oslo around the book, not least because Kunstakademiet had been the co-publisher. White was not well known in Norway (although he had worked with OCA), but his ideas – particularly about artists' relationship to cinema – seemed relevant to the conversations I had been having with KHiO students and teachers, as well other artists in the city working with film and video. I wanted to contribute to the ongoing discussion in Oslo of the importance of a context for artists' film and the need to explore other formats, particularly the continuing importance of collective viewership.

### The event

The launch took the form of an event at Cinemateket in Oslo. The three works presented were Morgan Fisher's instruction-based 16mm film *Screening Room* (1968-present), Sharon Lockhart's 35mm film *Teatro Amazonas* (1999) and a live performance by Stockholm-based artist Cara Tolmie. All three artists had been important to White's curatorial and critical work.

It was an unusual and labour-intensive screening, because two of the three works were produced especially for that evening. Fisher's was by far the most complicated to realise: it is a conceptual film which exists in different iterations, because it comprises a single continuous five minute handheld camera shot entering the cinema space where it will be projected, and therefore must be remade for every cinema where it is shown. In practice this turned out to be quite complex, in the first place because it was not possible for Fisher himself to come to Oslo, so Greg Pope and I tried to carry it out based on Fisher's instructions. Fisher gave us feedback on our efforts and ultimately we did three separate shoots, with a number of different takes each time, until we were able to get a satisfactory version. For the final shoot, we hired a Steadicam gimbal for a smoother shot but the operator was ill, so Pope and I had to learn the device ourselves. The final video footage then had to be transferred to 16mm film for the

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screening (as this is part of Fisher's specifications) and I had to research film laboratories internationally, until eventually we found one in the U.S. which could do this for an affordable rate. (N.B. unfortunately I cannot provide video documentation of this work, as part of Fisher's instructions are that the work only exist in its final form as a 16mm film, to be seen only in the confines of that particular cinema space.)

When it was projected, the Fisher film confronted the audience with a reproduction of their own arrival in the auditorium at Cinemateket in which they were sitting, only empty. The second work in the programme, Sharon Lockhart's film *Teatro Amazonas*, then offered them the mirror of another audience: a crowd in an opera house listening to a minimalist choir composition, facing directly into the static camera.

For the final part of the programme Cara Tolmie presented a new performance, devised for the event. I had been in discussion with Tolmie, who had worked with White, about the development of the performance and it reflected her engagement with a particular text of White's from the book ('Is Allegory Material?'). With a pre-recorded soundtrack of music and speech played over the cinema's speaker system, Tolmie stood at the front of the auditorium in a costume and performed a series of choreographed actions (see images attached).

It was a challenging programme, in terms of the kind of attention it demanded from the audience, but I think it was very successful. The works seemed to resonate with one another and cumulatively created a feeling of the cinema auditorium as a space of performance, with the audience themselves as potential performers. The combined publicity of KHIO, Cinemateket and Kunsthall Oslo meant we had an almost capacity crowd for the event.

I gave a talk before the screening, introducing White and his work. Each member of the audience also received a specially produced booklet, with a short text by me on White and extracts from White's writings about the works which were being presented (see separate PDF).

I collaborated with a number of people and organisations to make the event possible, in particular Greg Pope (who curates the monthly screening series *The Dream That Kicks* at Cinemateket which hosted us). Pope did a huge amount of work on the Fisher film, including assisting with the shoot and the editing, as well as coordinating with Cinemateket on marketing and technical support for Tolmie's performance.

Kunsthall Oslo also supported the event, both marketing it and helping on the day with documentation etc, because we produced it under the umbrella of the *Sad Disco Fantasia* project I have been developing with them (see below).

KHIO in general was also an important resource. As well as Pope (who works in Medialab and was able to use the editing facilities there for the Fisher film), Martin Lundell from Design very generously designed the pamphlet, and two Kunstakademiet students (Youngshin Jeon and Anne Sophie Mathiesen) assisted with the final Fisher shoot.

### **Further outcomes and future projects**

The event helped a to develop aspects of my research and to build relationships for future projects.

In terms of my research on White, organising the launch allowed me to begin to think about the relevance of his thinking beyond his own work and especially in a Norwegian context. Some of the conversations with people who attended the event, for example, have continued into a broader discussion around what is

missing from the ecology of film and the visual arts in Norway in relation to artists' moving image. (In September 2017, I was invited by Knut Åsdam and Lene Berg to take part in a seminar in Kabelvåg around this topic.) I have since begun to research other writers who are especially interested in the site-specificity of film, such as Serge Daney and Boyd McDonagh, with a view to developing more writing of my own on this topic.

The project also marked the first outcome of a new curatorial strand I have been developing with Kunsthall Oslo called Sad Disco Fantasia (supported by funding from Kulturrådet). The strand (which will continue in 2018) is planned as a series of one-off events designed to explore artists' use of the moving image and situations of collective viewing. The launch event at Cinemateket helped to clarify aspects of this project and in particular the possible interplay between cinema and gallery spaces (I hope future events will be spread across different venues including the Kunsthall, Cinemateket and Kunsternes Hus Kino).

#### **Included with this report**

1. PDF & hard copies: pamphlet for Cinemateket screening
2. JPGs: images from Cara Tolmie performance
3. PDF: introduction from *Here is Information. Mobilise – Selected Writings by Ian White* (book)
4. PDFs: reviews of *Here is Information. Mobilise* from *Art Review*, *frieze* and *4Columns*

#### **Further links**

- Kunsthall Oslo: <http://kunsthall oslo.no>
- The Dream That Kicks (Greg Pope): <https://gregpope.org/tdtk-april-2017/>
- Sharon Lockhart: <http://www.lockhartstudio.com>
- Cara Tolmie: <http://caratolmie.tumblr.com>