

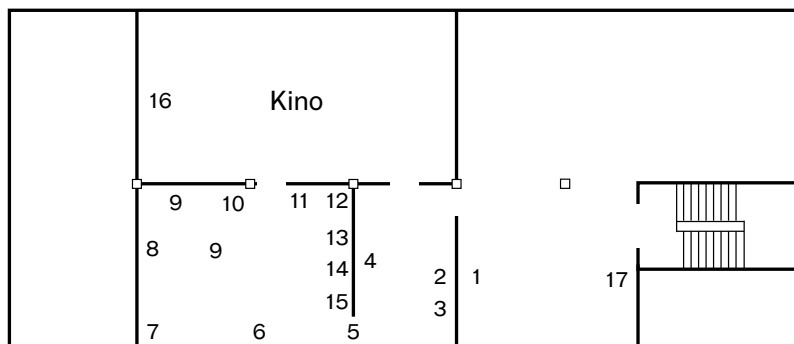
SPEED takes the form of two major new commissions by James Richards and Leslie Thornton, alongside a show-within-the-show convened by Richards with works by Horst Ademeit, Adelhyd van Bender, Bruce Conner, Emily Feather, Terence McCormack, Jeff Preiss and Jens Thornton.

In the making of SPEED, Richards and Thornton have been concerned with specific psychic and temporal states, rushes of interconnectedness and scientific wonder, as well as a sense of ecological dread and paranoia. The oscillation between an ordering impulse and the relinquishing of control is a central feature of SPEED, one that returns in the exhibition's different modes: cinema screening, video mural, reading room and group show.

Many of the works in the group exhibition were made against a backdrop of apprehension and self-destruction during the Cold War, with its at times uncanny resonances with the present moment. The atmosphere contains an obsessive energy, a recurring fascination with rays, mind-altering effects and rituals and the systematic sorting and recording of experience. It has a sense of frantic repetition and labour, which van Bender described as 'Divine Drudgery,' a spirit also present in Bruce Conner's psychedelic inkblot drawings.

There is an impulse of collaboration that brought about SPEED, one that renders the monologue of anxious speculation into a dialogic practice. The exhibition comprises discrete and individual new works, from Richards' large-scale video mural *Phrasing* to Thornton's cinema installation *Cut from Liquid to Snake*, and yet all elements have been generated from the third mind of collaboration, a channelling of and at times conscious unsettling of each other's sensitivities. The basic biographical contrasts between Richards and Thornton are apparent – gender, age and sexuality are all points of difference. What has drawn them together is an inclination they seem to share: that of grabbing charged material, and without apparent judgement or moralising, filling and emptying it. There is an attuned pitch for locating and unsettling any received and comfortable meaning. And at the same time, they produce works with a highly specific sense of the contemporary moment and the urgencies that it presents.

Level 2



- 1 Leslie Thornton, *WhatItIsToBePerfect*, 2018, HD video, 32 min, 47 sec
- 2 Jens Thornton, *Untitled (Hiroshima Bomb)*, 1957, oil on canvas, 36 x 46 cm
- 3 Horst Ademeit, vitrine with untitled objects, mixed media, undated
- 4 Horst Ademeit, *Observation Photos*, 1990–2003, inscribed polaroids, 11 x 9 cm
- 5 Vintage Stoelting polygraph examiner (lie detector)
- 6 Found objects and self-diagnosis kits
- 7 Leslie Thornton, *Untitled*, 2018, loop
- 8 Horst Ademeit, *Daily Photos*, 1990–2004, inscribed polaroids, 11 x 9 cm
- 9 Adelhyd van Bender, *Folders*, 1999–2014, 32 x 29 cm, mixed media on paper in plastic files
- 10 Anonymouse, *INKBLOT DRAWING*, 2000, ink, 24 x 25 cm
- 11 Emily Feather, *UNTITLED DECEMBER 12, 2003*, 2003, ink, 36.5 x 28.2 cm
- 12 Bruce Conner, *UNTITLED JULY 7, 1999*, 1999, ink, 35.2 x 38 cm
- 13 Emily Feather, *UNTITLED JANUARY 4, 2003*, 2003, ink, 13 x 12 cm
- 14 Bruce Conner, *DISSERTATION OCTOBER 5, 1994, 1994*, ink and pencil, 27 x 29.5 cm
- 15 Terence McCormack, *DECK*, 2018, projection 35mm slides
- 16 Leslie Thornton, *Cut from Liquid to Snake*, 2018, HD Video, 27 min
- 17 Jens Thornton, *Untitled (surrealist in Oak Ridge)*, 1943, oil on board, 31 x 24 cm



Anonymous staff artist, General Electric, 1964 on the occasion of Gunnar Thornton's departure from the Nuclear Powered Airplane Project, which he directed from 1952 to 1964

1 Leslie Thornton, *WhatItIsToBePerfect*, 2018

Found footage of installation of the Collimator, a device that narrows a beam of particles or waves, recorded at CERN's Large Hadron Collider in 2018.

2 Jens Thornton, *Untitled (Hiroshima Bomb)*, 1952

Jens Thornton was an electrical engineer working on the atomic bomb of World War II, and in his spare-time a Sunday painter. His painting of the mushroom cloud over Hiroshima is an unassuming and highly charged object and the triggering point for the process which became SPEED. An early experiment in the development of the show was subjecting this painting to radiographic imaging, a technology used in museum conservation to examine beneath a painting's surface and reveal hidden layers and information – a form of oscillation between biographical analysis and scientific abstraction that recurs throughout SPEED.

3,4,8 Horst Ademeit, *Daily Photos*, 1990–2004, *Observation Photos*, 1990–2003 and *Untitled*, objects

Horst Ademeit (1937–2010) dedicated himself to the documentation of the harmful influence of cold rays and invisible radiation on his being and his environment. Using Polaroid photography as well as analogue and digital photography, he kept records of his daily observations, also documenting descriptively the smells, sounds, and the atmosphere of his observations on the white frame of the Polaroids. The necessity of recording and the conclusive logic of his system required a routine that determined the structure of each day.

Ademeit's *Daily Photos* are arrangements with a fixed set of components: the newspaper *Bild Zeitung*, measuring instruments and a compass. Spread across loud *B.Z.* headlines are Geiger counters, thermometers and light meters, which Ademeit used to calculate the harmful effects inflicted by cold rays.

The second Polaroid display is focused on the *Observation Photos*, documents of the efficacy of this threatening power in his immediate life environment. Here certain motifs play a constant role: electricity meters, peepholes, building sites, electric cables, collections of bulky trash and bikes. Ademeit also regularly recorded the behaviour of spiders and fruit flies, painstakingly retaining the date of each observation, often over months. In general, the human figure tends to appear only accidentally or in passing in the over 6000 Polaroids, with an exception of a small group of intimate self-portraits, included in this presentation.

9 Adelhyd van Bender, *Folders*, 1999–2014

In 2014, the artist Adelhyd van Bender died of cancer at the age of 64; he had been living alone in a one-bedroom apartment in Berlin-Schöneberg since the late 1970s. His place contained hundreds of three-ring binders brimming with A3 and A4 papers neatly sorted and sequenced in individual plastic sleeves. On those thousands of pages – on a ground of black text typewritten and Xeroxed onto the white pages – the artist had collaged, drawn, and hand-coloured geometric diagrams.

Van Bender's drawings show a proclivity for the particles of the atom: protons, electrons, neutrons. They evoke the Bohr model of the atom, or the geocentric or heliocentric order of the universe and its revolving planets, and they emulate mystical diagrams, like the Sephiroth from the Kabbalah. A recurring source of van Bender's concentric diagrams are nuclear radiation maps and atomic diagrams. The artist's research and interest in nuclear power are evidenced in printouts, source materials, and references found in his binders. Rocket or missile shapes frequently consume a page of collaged diagrams and form a massive, upwardly pointed, projectile-like form.

Born Harald Bender in Bruchsal, Baden-Württemberg, he adopted the name Adelhyd van Bender, a variation on the female name Adelheid, taken from the old German Adalheidis. 'Adel' in German suggests 'from noble roots.' The recurrence of the word 'Geschlecht' (gender) signals a key element and a possible dilemma for van Bender, who seems to have identified as both male and female. In a self-portrait adaptation of *Lady Justice*, Ademeit modified her gown at the midsection with a suspended geometric cube housing the typewritten word 'atom' inside a simple circle. Here we recognise van Bender's private possession – his atomic secret – that must be kept hidden and protected from and against the world. As the simple equation defining van Bender's life purpose but also its dilemma, the task set before him as arbiter and judge was arduous: to give in to his fears or to protect the world from atomic dissolution.

10–14 Bruce Conner with Emily Feather and Anonymouse, *Inkblot Drawings*, 1993–2003

Bruce Conner (1933–2008) had a particular quality of moving between the recondite and the banal, from occult disciplines to popular culture, with an emphasis on shifting between microscopic and macroscopic vision. Although best known for his experimental films, Conner also worked with pen, ink, and paper to create drawings ranging from psychedelic patterns to repetitious inkblot compositions. This body of work began as a project inspired by poetry,

including his collaboration with San Francisco poet Michael McClure, and came to evolve into a consistent exercise. A particular fascination was the Rorschach test-like quality of the ink drawings, a kind of parallel reading against tendencies to diagnose – or pathologise – alternate experiences of reality.

In this presentation, Conner's work is shown alongside that of Emily Feather and Anonymouse. When the artist turned sixty-five and said that he had 'retired' from making art, works that were made in his studio were signed by Feather, Anonymouse and Anonymous – each artist with their own style and personality: "Emily Feather has an affinity for blue ink. Some of her drawings seem like the patterns of frost that appear during a cold winter night on a glass windowpane." Of his other alter-ego Conner remarked:

Anonymouse uses a more sinuous line and the inkblots are likely to be connected linearly from one vertical series to another. Anonymouse was listening to the radio on 9/11 when the two airplanes collided with the World Trade Center. Anonymouse created a scroll inkblot drawing with two leaves falling. There was another work later that day with three leaves. Then four leaves. More scrolls with more leaves were created in the weeks of crisis that followed. Falling leaves and leaving.

Bruce Conner, interviewed by Jack Rasmussen, 2005

15 Terence McCormack, *DECK*, 2018

During the time of developing *DECK*, McCormack was spending time with Audre Lorde's 1984 essay 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House' whilst also working in a restaurant and looking into the constantly changing pool of dirty cutlery. Here Lorde discusses what she perceives as an inherited self-loathing, experienced amongst minorities of sexuality and race. Reflecting on this aspect of her work, McCormack wanted to "pick up on this frightening realisation as one that stares back at the subject and forces it into being." A thought held while looking at the dirty dishes from the restaurant and from the mouths of diners. The idea of 'front' and 'back' of kitchen and the repetitive forwards and backwards of the slide projection evoke an infinite sense of task and labour.

16 Leslie Thornton, *Cut from Liquid to Snake*, 2018

Thornton's newly conceived film is formed around several voices – from cold to melancholic, to anxious – all at textural odds with each other. An entry

point to the work is the artist's metaphorical use of the Higgs Boson, first encountered in her recent residency with Richards at CERN. In her own words, "the Higgs field can be described as a gel that whips through particles and precipitates attractions." The voices range from a phone recording made during the Trump election, to an eyewitness account of the immediate aftermath of the bombing of Hiroshima, and an intimate and distressed encounter between the artist and her partner discussing the Higgs and the difference between thought and language. These disparate voices speak to one point in a way that is unnerving, bringing a kind of visceral imaging of the instability that humankind enacts upon itself into a present tense.

Interwoven into this new work is Thornton's complex emotional response to her own family history. Both the artist's father and grandfather (unbeknownst to each other at the time) were engineers in the Manhattan Project, and it was Thornton's father who screwed the last bolt into the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Before loading it onto the plane he wrote his own, his father's and mother's names on the bomb casing – an inscription of familial dedication, and authorship, a complex legacy that has preoccupied the artist and her work in an ongoing way.

Level 4 James Richards, *Phrasing*

In James Richards' *Phrasing*, radiography becomes a means of travelling through objects, and making visible a magical, sinister and inverted reality. The work occupies space like an oversized light box. Impossibly large collages draw upon material generated by an industrial x-ray machine, to which Richards subjected clocks, medical equipment, cables and anatomical figures. Held together in a grid, and organised in time through a mechanical and indexical ticking from one arrangement to the next, a sense of barely contained visceral and at times violent materiality unfolds. The attention to grain and illumination of negative space is reminiscent of the photogram, while collaged detritus and archival imagery appear and then re-appear in different states of decay and exposure. A sombre and charged science fictional.

James Richards (b. Cardiff, UK 1983) lives and works in Berlin. Recent solo shows include Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover (2017); ICA, London (2016), Bergen Kunsthall (2016), Kunstverein München (2015), CCA, Kitakyushu (2012), Chisenhale Gallery, London (2011) and Tate Britain, London (2010).

In 2017 Richards represented Wales at the 57th Venice Biennale. Selected group exhibitions include *Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2017) *Less Than Zero*, Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis (2016) *Cut to Swipe*, MoMA, New York (2014) *Frozen Lakes*, Artist Space New York (2013) and *The Encyclopaedic Palace*, 55th International Art Exhibition La Biennale de Venezia, Venice (2013).

He is the recipient of the Ars Viva Prize (2014) and Derek Jarman Award for film and video (2012) and was a resident of the DAAD Berliner Künstlerprogramm, 2013. The artist is represented by Cabinet (London), Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi (Berlin) and Rodeo (London, Athens).

Leslie Thornton (b. Knoxville, USA 1951) is a recognised pioneer of contemporary media aesthetics, working with film, video, photography and installation. Retrospectives have been held at MoMA (New York), FemCine (Santiago), Anthology Film Archives (New York) and at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Her work has been exhibited at dOCUMENTA 12, MoMA PS1, Centre Pompidou, the Whitney Biennial, Raven Row and Rodeo Gallery as well as the New York Film Festival, Oberhausen, and Rotterdam International Film Festivals, among others. Thornton is in the permanent collections of Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Centre Pompidou, MoMA, the Pacific Film Archives, the Walker Art Center and Jeu de paume. In 2018, she was the first recipient, in company with James Richards, of a new CERN Artist Residency, with the support of Center d'art Contemporain Geneve. Forthcoming exhibitions include Secession (Vienna) and Malmö Konsthall.

James Richards / Leslie Thornton
SPEED
30 June – 14 October 2018

Curated by Fatima Hellberg
and James Richards with Matt Fitts

Commissioned by Künstlerhaus Stuttgart
and Malmö Konsthall

The second iteration of SPEED
takes place at Malmö Konsthall
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