

|||| TORSTEN LAUSCHMANN  
|||| STARTLE REACTION  
|||| SATURDAY 22 OCTOBER 2011—  
| SUNDAY 8 JANUARY 2012

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**DCA**

Dundee Contemporary Arts

152 Nethergate  
Dundee DD1 4DY  
01382 909900  
[www.dca.org.uk](http://www.dca.org.uk)  
Reg Charity no. SCO26631

**Exhibition open**  
Tue - Sat 11:00 - 18:00, Sun 12:00 - 18:00  
Late Thu until 20:00  
Open daily during Discovery Film Festival  
**Admission free**

*“We are all robots when uncritically involved with our technologies.”*

Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore  
*War and Peace in the Global Village*, 1968

## **Torsten Lauschmann: Startle Reaction**

Torsten Lauschmann’s work is informed by his interest in the earliest forms of magical entertainment and the latest technical innovations. In his largest solo exhibition to date, he explores the tools, techniques and systems we use to solve problems, with the aim of sidestepping the tension that exists between optimistic and sceptical attitudes towards technology. *Startle Reaction* uses Lauschmann’s interest in automatons and cinema to play with the notion that we are capable of believing in things we know are false. Lauschmann is an artist who sees curiosity as his driving force to make art.

The exhibition features new commissions alongside significant works from the past decade - *Misshapen Pearl* (2003), *Self-Portrait as a Pataphysical Object* (2006), *House of the Rising Sun* (2009), *Digital Clock (Growing Zeros)*, *Skipping over Damaged Areas* and *Stuntmen in Skirts* (all 2010). DCA’s large gallery is given over to a major new installation reflecting the artist’s current practice.

Born in Germany in 1970, Lauschmann lives and works in Glasgow. He studied at Glasgow School of Art and ZKM, Karlsruhe. He was an inspirational tutor at DJCAD, Dundee for several years. He has exhibited widely, including at Collective, Edinburgh; Art Basel Miami Beach, Miami; ICA, London and Arnolfini, Bristol. More recently, he received the inaugural Margaret Tait Award at the Glasgow Film Festival and a Vital Spark commission from Creative Scotland, and was shortlisted for this year’s Jarman Award.

The exhibition is part of DCA’s Discovery Film Festival. The newly commissioned works have been produced in partnership with Film and Video Umbrella and AV Festival 2012. Lauschmann is represented by Mary Mary, Glasgow.

A publication featuring Lauschmann’s work is planned for early 2012.

Keep up to date with the very latest news and information from DCA by visiting our website, [www.dca.org.uk](http://www.dca.org.uk), or by subscribing to us on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/DCAdundee](http://www.twitter.com/DCAdundee)

## List of Works

### DCA Reception

#### **Digital Clock (Growing Zeros), 2010**

Monitor, controlling software; continuous

We have replaced our existing clock with an artwork by Lauschmann that still tells us the time of day – but in a much more creative and idiosyncratic way. Hours, minutes and seconds are rendered in real-time hand movements. Time and labour are combined in a poetic and comic way.

### Gallery One

#### **Misshapen Pearl, 2003**

Blu-ray; 8 minutes

"What is a streetlamp? I only pay her my attention if she bugs me, or if her light is too intense, or defective, or missing, or like now, if I give her my attention by breaking through the accepted everyday. In every other situation the streetlamp is for me just part of that disrespected environment, which I take for granted and which was created to be disrespected". *Misshapen Pearl* is a film adapted from Vilém Flusser's book *Dinge und Undinge*. It is a phenomenological investigation of the streetlamp's function in our consumer society and is narrated by the artist.

#### **Skipping Over Damaged Areas, 2010**

Blu-ray; 9 minutes 30 seconds

*Skipping Over Damaged Areas* edits together a series of movie title sequences from the past century of cinema, merrily assembled from blockbusters and cult curios. The work features the voice-over artist Iain Champion in the soundtrack, creating a new and unexpected narrative from the appropriated footage. The work was commissioned by Lux for Artissima in Turin in 2010 and utilises music from Goblin's score for the Dario Argento film *Profondo Rosso (Deep Red)* which was famously set in that city.

#### **Self-Portrait as a Pataphysical Object, 2006**

Audio adapters and cables, bulb and transformer

A chandelier comprised of audio adapters, cables and a very modest single light source. This work gently illuminates the artist's ideas of the entanglement of life and technology.

## Gallery Two

Specially brought together, these time-sequenced works have been designed to be experienced in the large gallery space as an installation. The individual works are listed below.

### **byt, 2011**

Projection, oak boards, objects; 3 minutes, looped

Charlie Chaplin satirising Hitler in *The Great Dictator* is abstracted into a composition of the global implications on the everyday - the rise and fall of tyrants, businesses and economies.

### **Sun For Five Nights, 2011**

Slide projectors, slides, screen, stands, speakers, controlling software and box; continuous

Five solarised images are projected from different angles but converge at the point where the common concern meets - a protagonist reaching for or catching the sun. The solarisation makes the sun black - no longer the emanatory source of light. The work calls to mind the pseudo-science fiction short film *La Jetée* by Chris Marker, where almost the entire film is made up of photographic slides.

### **Stuntmen in Skirts, 2010**

Monitor; 2 minutes, looped

A still image of stunt woman Helen Gibson has been manipulated to make the reflected light move across the screen. Gibson (1892 - 1977) was an American film actress, vaudeville and radio performer, film producer, trick rider and rodeo performer; and is considered to be the first American professional stunt woman. "Helen Gibson had this sensitivity to spatial relationships between objects in motion, but it is certainly not a gift shared by all stuntmen." Arthur Wise, *Stunting In the Cinema*, 1973.

### **The Coy Lover, 2011**

Yamaha Disklavier, snow machine, controlling software

A self-playing piano (pianola) that plays compositions programmed by the artist has previously featured in Lauschmann's ambitious Glasgow Film Festival commission, shown in Glasgow and in London. The pianola is at the centre of the DCA installation and sits beneath a snow machine that billows snow onto it at certain moments. As the pianola plays the snow gently falls.

The pianola was a staple of the silent film era, but is still used in theatre productions to this day. Lauschmann employs this sophisticated parlour trick machine to play his own composition, one designed to reflect chaos interfering with order and a certain degree of wastefulness with the perceived expectations of sophisticated technology.

### **Dear Scientist Please Paint Me, 2011**

Luminous paint, moving headlight, controlling software

A rotational light acts as a master of ceremonies to help the viewer navigate through the space. This stems from recent screenings using a rotational projector. The light also shines on to a wall with luminous paint applied to it. The ephemerality of the mark created by the light continues the temporal ideas within the exhibition.

### **Father's Monocle, 2011**

Custom built game engine, meniscus lens, motor; continuous

The programmer Eddie Lee was commissioned to design the special algorithmic pattern to a concept from Lauschmann inspired by the separation, alignment and cohesion achieved in the flocking behaviour associated with birds, fish and sheep. Lauschmann adds a rotating meniscus lens to pull the work into convergent focus. The use of numbers brings to mind earlier works by Lauschmann including *The Mathematician* (2006) and *Fear Among Scientists* (2008), but adds a much more epic and endless sweep.

## **Ancillary Galleries**

### **Before the Revolution, 2011**

Monitor, media player; 1 second, looped

The frozen photograph of a painting of galloping horses is given the further contradiction of a computer's loading symbol at the centre of the image, that acknowledges the presentation being on a monitor more usually used for moving imagery. The work also acknowledges the glitches that occur when technology stalls.

### **Truths Which No Longer Entertain Become Lies, 2011**

Projector, media player; 3 minutes, looped

A computerised version of the artist's voice narrates a projector's longing for the outside world. The projection creates an orb in the sky. The voice is more doleful than in *Misshapen Pearl* and resembles Marvin the Paranoid Android in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, who sang about having "a chip on my shoulder made of silicon".

### **House of the Rising Sun - Panoramic version, 2008, 2011**

Projection, wall painting; 3 minutes, looped

A large grey boulder-like landscape is painted onto the gallery wall, with a mansion on top. The illusion of the sun rising inside the dwelling is created using a masked-off video projection, the light slowly casting back across the painted landscape. For the first time, Lauschmann has painted it across the four walls of a gallery, creating another historic visual trick - that of panorama painting. The grandeur and exalted status of the house on the hill suggests societal hierarchical issues, whilst the title namechecks a traditional folk song made famous by The Animals about a house of ill-repute - either for gambling or prostitution. The work is a hybrid between video and painting; tradition and innovation.

All works courtesy of the artist and Mary Mary, Glasgow.

The artist would like to thank:

DCA; Cathy, Hans and Joy; Hannah and Anna at Mary Mary; Sam Luntley; Film and Video Umbrella; Eddie Lee; Rebecca Shatwell and AV Festival 2012; David Bellingham; Ben and Mike at Lux; Sandra Ross.

## **Related Talks**

At DCA unless stated

### **Contemporary Art Encounters**

Sun 6 November & Sun 8 January, 14:00 - 16:00

Free. Drop in

Sunday afternoon art schooling with the DCA Gallery Assistants, whose informed take on our exhibitions is crystallised through conversations with the artist and curator. Intended as a regular feature in our programme, these sessions will explore how the current exhibition relates to broader themes in contemporary art practice.

### **Nicholas Wade: Visual Science**

Thu 17 November, 19:00 - 20:00

Free but please book in advance

Nicholas Wade, Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of Dundee, makes a welcome return to DCA for a talk on the border where visual science meets visual art. Join us for a stimulating and interactive evening.

### **Artist Talk**

Wed 23 November, 11:00 - 12:30

D'Arcy Thompson Lecture Theatre, Dundee University

Free but please book in advance

Torsten Lauschmann will discuss his work, providing insights into the multifarious techniques he adopts in his practice. Presented in association with Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design. Open to students and public.

### **(((echo)))**

Thu 8 December, 18:30 - 20:00

Free. Drop in

An informal event to provoke discussion and alternative insights into Torsten Lauschmann's exhibition. A series of multi-media presentations by local artists will address a wide range of ideas. Come along and contribute.

## Related Screenings

### **The Pervert's Guide To Cinema**

Sun 13 November, 15:00

Dir: Sophie Fiennes / 2006 / 2h30m / 18

A perfect Sunday at the movies with philosopher and psychoanalyst Slavoj Žižek's acclaimed celluloid odyssey. "An insightful, indispensable and eye-opening love letter to the movies. Pure Genius." Toronto International Film Festival.

### **World of Plenty**

Wed 23 November, 18:00

Dir: Paul Rotha / 1943 / 42m / U

Paul Rotha's landmark polemical documentary about rationing and nutrition judiciously incorporates existing footage, new interviews and bravura technical animated scenes. *World of Plenty* mixes propaganda for the war effort and rationing but also looks ahead to post-war health and well-being.

### **Artists' film and video**

Tue 29 November, 18:30

Approx. 2h / Cert tbc

Dundee based artist and writer Steven Cairns continues his popular programme of artists' film and video screenings and talks, examining the different ways contemporary artists make use of the moving image.

### **The Great Dictator**

Sun 11 December, 13:00 & Mon 12 December, 18:00

Dirs: Charlie Chaplin & Wheelen Dryden

1940 / 2h4m / U

Charlie Chaplin takes a dual role and co-directs, scripts and produces the first major movie to satirise the Nazi Party in general, and Adolf Hitler in particular.