on the name of the free online translator) is a film, a website, an installation and an image archive. It is the eponymous film that comprises the central focus of Griffiths's exhibition.

From an office high up, a man in a suit surveys the nocturnal cityscape below through a telescope. It might be Manchester, a northern British Alphaville. The man examines microfiches on a lightbox. Nearby there is a slide carousel and a microscope for reading microdots. A woman is viewing film clips that are evidently aged and worn. We are possibly in the post-digital future and this may be the only technology that will work. The characters do not speak, but a voice-over suggests that we are hearing their thoughts. The male voice ruminates about history and the role of the archivist. The female voice describes or responds to the film clips, in the form of prose poems. Their allusive words were specially written for the film by the futurologist Stefan Skrimshire and poet Gaia Holmes. The prevailing measured tone and pace of the film (similar to that of the influential films of Patrick Keiller) are periodically disrupted by welters of clips of amateur video footage, accumulated via an open call on a dedicated website and from trawling a public film archive: pigs feeding on a farm, buildings being demolished, tea tasting, a person running away into trees, a woman in exotic costume, a fragment of grotesque claymation. The clips have been rendered grainy and scarred (or 'dim jerky far away', as William Burroughs repeatedly put it). Next to the projection screen stand three vintage microfiche readers, still in working order. Frames from the clips seen in the film have been miniaturised on celluloid microfiche sheets to be viewed by gallery visitors. The act of manually positioning the little metal pointer to the appropriate place on the alphanumerically indexed grid to view a particular image on the screen is strangely satisfying. It is worth remembering that crowd-sourced image archives existed before the internet – such as the Canadian artist Michael Morris's international, postcard-based *Image Bank*, started in 1969.

The texts of the philosopher Vilem Flusser about the history of photography and the nature of 'technical images' are rapidly moving from the margins to the centre of media theory (accompanying the exhibition is an essay by Flusser scholar and translator Nancy Roth), and his ideas float in and around this project. Griffiths's film appears to broach an examination of Flusser's thesis that a photograph is 'a dam placed in the way of the stream of history'. There is something Flusserian about viewing a photographic microdot of a star through a real astronomical telescope across the narrow span of a gallery. An unrealised idea it remains, however, for the telescope standing in the corner of the Castlefield Gallery is only notionally trained on a star map delineated on the wall opposite. This maps the sector of the night sky that, in principle, could be viewed from the gallery at 6pm on the night of the opening. Each star is represented by a round black microdot, like a typographic full stop in search of a sentence. Part of the work *Deep Field [The Photographic Universe]*, the remainder comprises three large tables whose tops are punctured with small holes in each of which is inlaid a miniature photograph of a galaxy, back lit so that it can be viewed through a hand-held magnifying lens.

Despite its professional production standards, Griffiths's film, at 18 minutes, feels like a study for a longer filmic investigation. It is also too well behaved to encompass the delirium engendered by encountering the excessive volume of unregulated, decontextualised imagery that is out there. The accompanying astronomical installation is a work in progress. The exhibition doesn't yet quite live up to its compelling premise. ■

DAVID BRIERS is an independent writer and curator, based in West Yorkshire.

Dave Griffiths
Babel Fiche 2012

How to Eclipse the Light

Wilkinson London 7 September to 5 October

The term 'post-internet' has, over the past year or so, begun to make its way from specialised pockets of discussion into the clutches of several institutions and galleries. The term – developed by artists and writers such as Gene McHugh and Artie Vierkant – encircles issues relating to the fact that, in most centres of advanced capitalism, the internet is no longer a specialist environment or set of tools for occasional use, or a separate 'realm', but is rather a ubiquitous, banal aspect of everyday life that has inherited the systems of power and economics that preceded it. In art this has meant a shift in the status of images and distribution, now that the flow of an artwork online – via images, texts, videos, links etc – can potentially become more important than distribution offline.

In 'How to Eclipse the Light', our post-internet landscape is metaphorically conceived by curator Karen Archey as one lit by an endless, harsh daylight, blinding in its brightness. The reason that this is such an effective premise is that it hands art a crucial political position for providing shade: creating reflective spaces in which to criticise and consider culture, and also places to make counter-propositions for ways in which we might choose to live. It is artists who provide us with moments in which we can see this enormous system for what it is and what it might be, in which we can see its codes and recognise the structures that it has pulled us into: it is a web, of course.

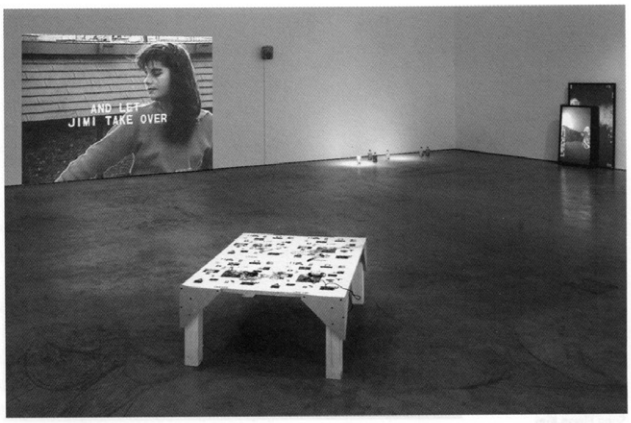
The curatorial lodestar for Archey's group exhibition at Wilkinson is gallery artist Dara Birnbaum, who, with seer-like foresight, positioned herself this way in relation to media culture long ago, swiping footage and images from television, magazines, film and music, and rejigging, remixing and repurposing them so that we might see them with renewed clarity. In Birnbaum's video *Fire! Hendrix*, 1982, included here, she constructed an alternative video narrative for Jimi Hendrix's *Fire*, in which a woman drinks and offers beer, while people buy fried chicken

at a fast-food joint. Desire, the kind conveyed by Hendrix, is a literal want, want, want, but the goods on offer to sate the viewer's appetite in Birnbaum's film leave everyone seeming cheap. Pamela Rosencrantz's 'Firm Beings' series, 2011 – a number of Fiji water bottles filled with various flesh-tinted silicone – echoes the offering of beer in Birnbaum's video, as well as attuning us to the bizarre marketing of water, seemingly an absolutely neutral, necessary element of life. Fiji water's eerie tagline is 'untouched by man' but Rosenkrantz's bottles remind us of the water in our very flesh and our interconnectedness with bodies of water, while also suggesting that the branding of mineral water involves a subtle corporate labelling of something that is inside us.

Continuing this metaphor, Cécile B Evans overlays elements from her own liquid body via lachrymose emotion onto stills from the emotional climaxes of Meryl Streep films, in which Streep and her leading man are about to kiss. These are particularly extreme moments of tearful climax for the artist, and so she has stuck wetted Schirmer Test Strips over the images, measuring the volume of tears she cries in these moments. In Archey's deft and richly associative curating we are taken, via an understanding of ourselves as liquid, to Bernadette Corporation's *The Earth's Tarry Dreams of Insurrection Against the Sun*, 2010: two flat-screen monitors leaning on their sides in which we see an endless stream of oil running into the sea during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in footage taken from underwater cameras. If we are, indeed, bodies of water, we literally see ourselves being poisoned in such an event by a seemingly unstoppable force: a clear and simple analogy, then, for the poisoning of entire economic and political systems by oil, as well as the earth itself.

There is a literal eclipsing of light in Cory Arcangel's *Sans Simon*, 2004, a video of a television screen playing Simon and Garfunkel's 1984 Central Park concert. Arcangel tries to cover Paul Simon by using his hands to cover the set every time he appears on screen like someone who, in trying to reconfigure culture physically with their hands, is continually frustrated. The work is doubly time-stamped by the layering of video technologies 20 years apart. We see a similar time-stamping in Birnbaum's four Polaroids of a television playing a Michael Jackson concert nearby; again a figure eclipsing light, and a layering of technological forms of reproduction. Each element in the image – the man, the television and the photograph – has degraded at a different pace. Simon Denny's black, empty picture frames resemble flat-screen monitors onto which he has pasted a white LED bar and several photographs of 'celebrities' houses at night', an idea he took from an episode of the American TV show *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, 1990-96, in which Will Smith's character comes up with a ruse for a coffee-table book.

Aleksandra Domanović's brilliant, wide-ranging project *19:30*, 2010-11, involves the artist's collection of music and graphics from the TV themes of evening news programmes broadcast in Yugoslavia (and the countries which made up this territory following the break-up of the country) between 1958 and the present. Domanivić asked a number of techno DJs to remix the themes or play them as samples in nightclubs and this project has so far been realised in raves and events, an online project, audio and video work and sculpture (here we have a paper-stack sculpture and a video). Techno raves, to the young Domanović, who experienced the splintering of Yugoslavia in her early teens, became a way to experience a 'coming together' with her peers and a way of sharing moments with others that she had previously experienced in a more socialist landscape, now torn apart and steadily capitalised – the news themes, when heard in nightclubs, powerfully reminded dancers of a shared, social psyche.



'How to Eclipse the Light' installation view

In fact it is this kind of longing for a coming together that powers many of the works in 'How to Eclipse the Light'. The shared strategies of the artists here who rip and rework media material have blossomed in the age of the internet, yes, but it is a concern with a past culture of television that dominates. This is mostly because it is under the light of this mass media that the majority of the artists in this exhibition grew and bloomed, a bygone age in which large portions of society consumed the same broadcasts at the same time. The ghosts from before the internet are those of mass popular culture – Michael Jackson, Meryl Streep, *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, Simon and Garfunkel, the evening news. But these ghosts, perhaps, point to deeper issues about sharing. Though we might all participate in the culture of the internet, it is harder to say – now that each of us has a specialised set of channels that we plug into – who our shared icons are, and it is harder to experience moments in which we all share something at once. And what of our shared elements and media, increasingly carved up and sold: water, television networks, music, the internet itself? Even in this age in which there is so much 'sharing', the political question of how humans should share the world and all their creations continues to reassert itself in the work of the 'post-internet' generation. As it did in Birnbaum's and every one before that. ■

LAURA MCLEAN-FERRIS is a writer and curator.