

ROTWAND

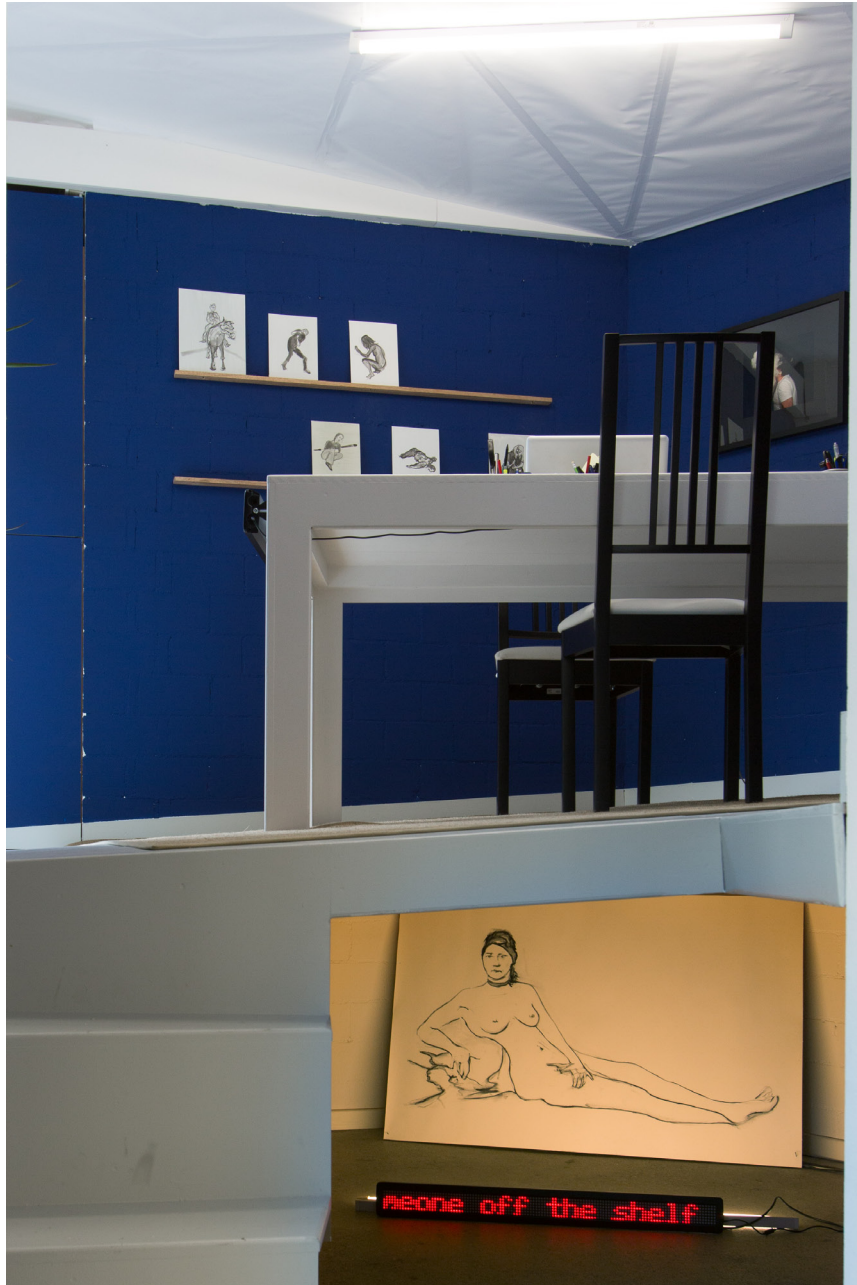
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William Hunt

Documentation



*INTERIOR LABOUR, UNDERLAPPING UNDERLAID.*, 2016  
Installation  
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, Zurich, Switzerland  
Photo: Alexander Hana



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*Carolee Schneemann I Was Just His Nude, 2016*  
LED, charcoal on paper on MDF with LED text panel  
90 x 140 cm (35 3/8 x 55 1/8 inch)  
Photo: Alexander Hana





*You're gonna pay for it now, Now you're gonna pay for it #6, 2016*  
C-Print  
24 x 30 cm (9 1/2 x 11 3/4 inch)



*You're gonna pay for it now, Now you're gonna pay for it #16, 2016*  
C-Print  
24 x 30 cm (9 1/2 x 11 3/4 inch)



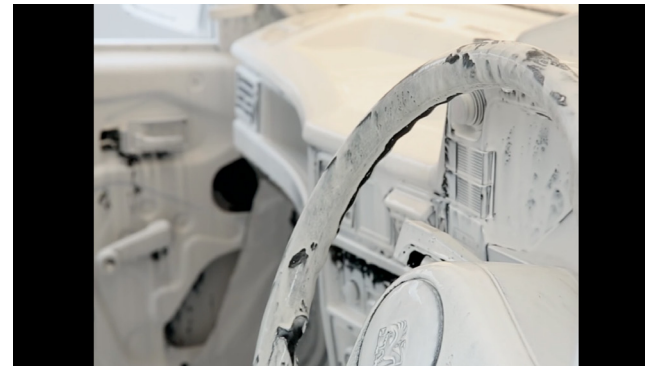


*Auto Portrait*, 2016  
Car airbag from an Opel Astra 1995, paint, car battery, cable and switch  
70 x 70 x 50 cm (27 1/2 x 27 1/2 x 19 5/8 inch)



*Still Yourself and Calm Your Boots*, 2014  
Video, 25 min



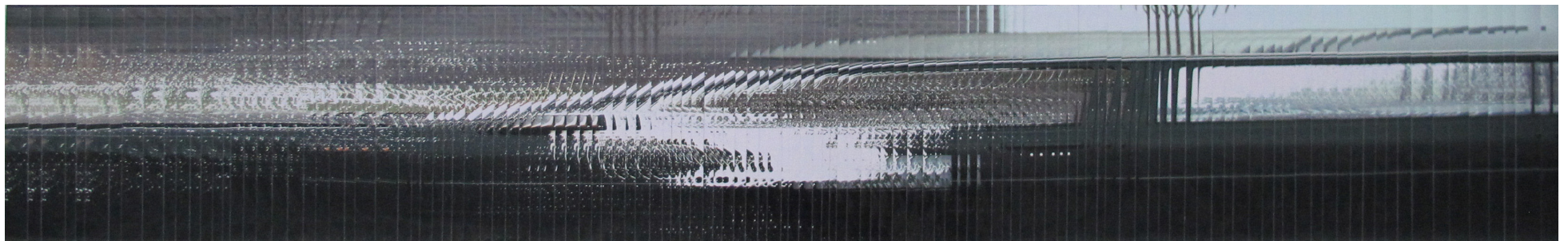
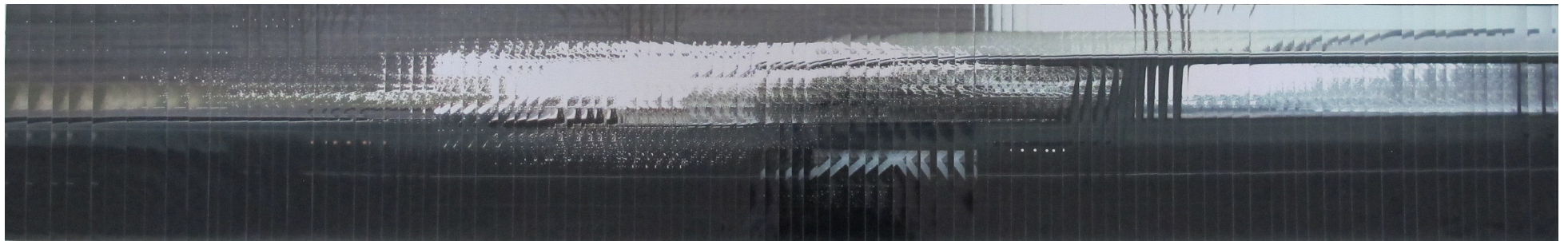
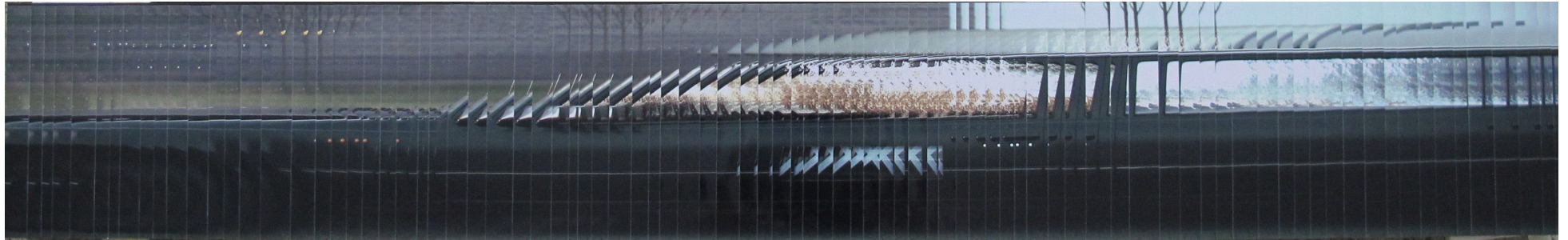


*Still Yourself and Calm Your Boots*, 2014  
Video, 25 min



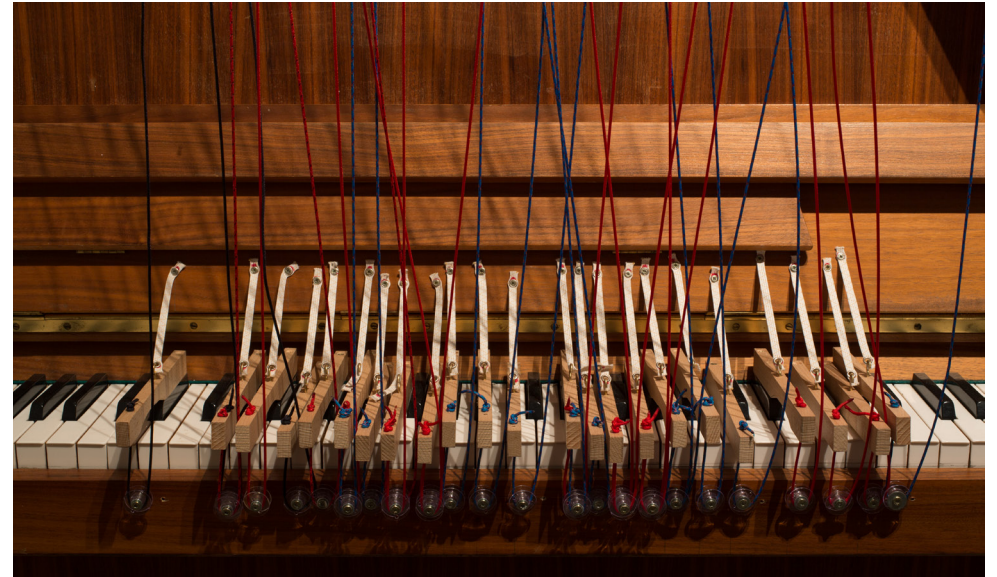


*Still Yourself and Calm Your Boots*, 2014  
Video, 25 min



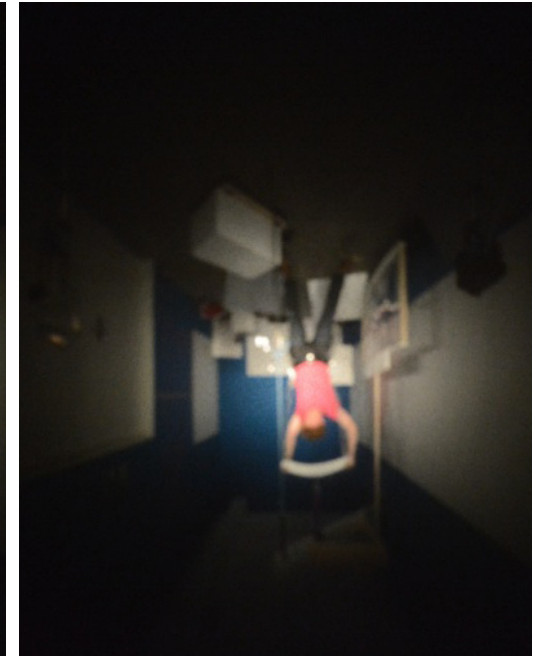
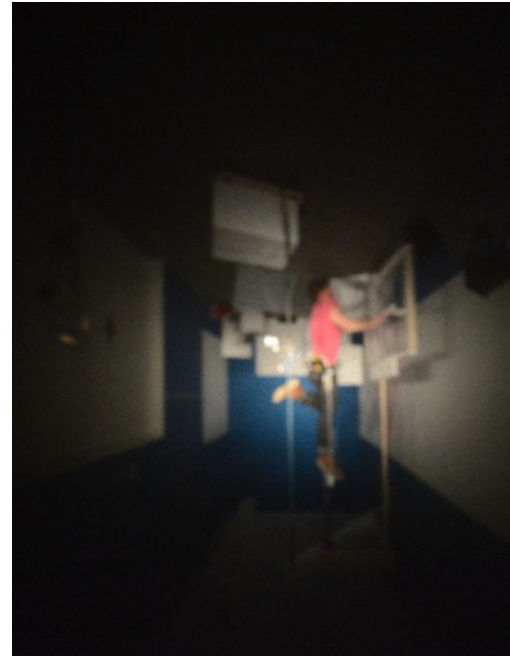
*From the series „deceleration photocollages“, 2014/15*  
Photocollage, each 15.4 x 101.3 cm (6 1/8 x 39 7/8 inch)



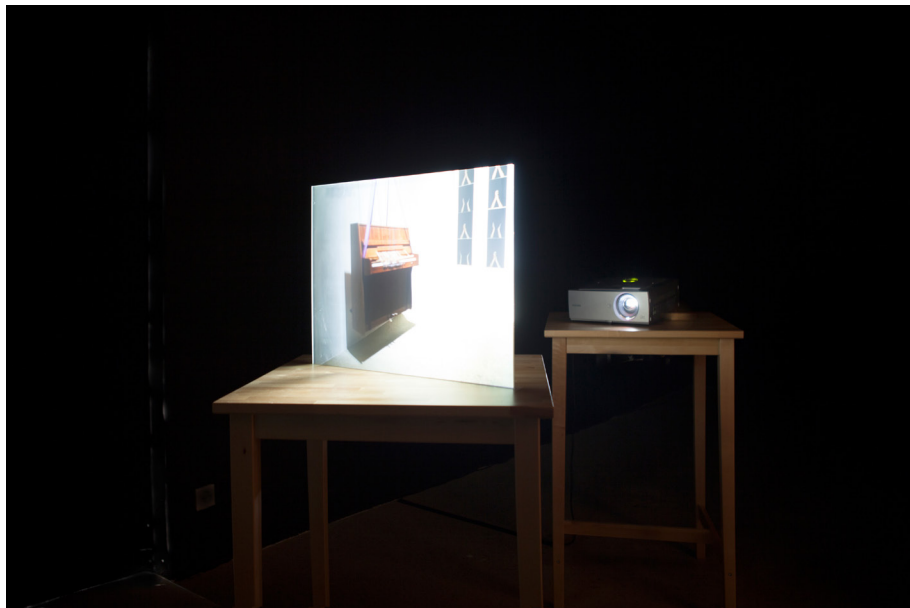


„BRA-VO, OH BRA-VO!“, 2014  
Performance and installation with camera obscura  
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, Zurich, Switzerland  
Photo: Alexander Hana





„BRA-VO, OH BRA-VO!“, 2014  
Performance and installation with camera obscura  
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, Zurich, Switzerland  
Photo: Alexander Hana



„BRA-VO, OH BRA-VO!“, 2014  
Performance and installation *But It Was Not To Be*  
Video *But It Was Not To Be*, 6 min 50 sec, 2014/15  
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, Zurich, Switzerland  
Photo credit: Alexander Hana



## WILLIAM HUNT

### Rotwand Gallery, Zurich

William Hunt is accustomed to testing his endurance while making music – his medium of choice – in art spaces. Previous performances have seen the Dusseldorf-based British artist singing and playing under water, pinned upside-down to a ceiling and crushed by his instrument (on that occasion, for *Even As You See Me Now*, 2008, a piano). In this exhibition, the spatial constraints of the gallery invited consideration of the roles of performer and audience, in particular when the two were separated by walls and a screen.

Hunt's installation *But it was not to be* (2014) consisted of a piano suspended from a metal beam that protruded through a hole in the wall. On the two walls that bookend the gallery hung six vertical panels, each featuring a photograph of a pair of hands clapping. During the opening, a chord progression was bashed out on the piano by hammers (like those inside the piano), which were attached to a rig of numerous strings, playing a rough, slightly mournful, tune. When there was a break in the music, which happened more frequently as the performance went on, the panels, taped together to form large tumbling toys – like Jacob's Ladders – were operated remotely by Hunt. They clapped loudly and abruptly. In a dark space behind a curtain, the artist could just be seen via a jewel-like camera obscura image. Visitors crowded around this vision, which appeared as an indistinct projection of a figure floating around a space akin to a cell. Though his movements were difficult to discern, he could be observed occasionally rotating in a harness attached to the ceiling. While he played he appeared to be upright, but as the image became inverted, it revealed that he was in fact hanging upside-down.

Motifs of flipping, revolving and challenging gravity repeated throughout the installation. Several different processes

of input and output took place concurrently: the audience, craning to see what was happening, were rewarded by the performer's activity; Hunt activated the pulleys to make the hammers bash the keys; the noise of the panels dropping caused heads to swivel to find the cause. This series of relayed actions made it difficult to trace the musical process – if Hunt pulled a string, the effect was indirect: his hammers were only striking other hammers that struck strings inside the instrument.

In a text on the artist's work, Andjeas Ejjksson compares Hunt to the bird in Joseph Wright of Derby's 1768 painting *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump*, in which a family observes a cockatoo struggling as it is deprived of air. The image testifies to the unsentimental empiricism of science. Hunt makes himself a test subject and, when he appeared as a reduced, remote image in this performance, his audience seemed to loom over him. While research and experimentation are indeed elements of Hunt's practice, *But it was not to be* says much about the nature of performer and audience. After the exhibition opening, Hunt's birdcage lay empty and the instruments fell silent. Inside the previously inaccessible chamber, the absent performer seemed less the puppet and more the puppeteer, as his now-revealed system of piano-playing resembled a marionette's strings, and a number of reflective boards that had produced the blurred image seen by the audience were also visible. This behind-the-scenes view inverted the balance of power between Hunt and his audience, or at least suggested a mutual dependency, and complementary drives to act and to observe. If celebrity culture has precipitated the corrosion of distinctions between performance and life, producing hybrid performances that are called 'reality', Hunt's act was an experiment in other possible versions of performance and reality.

AOIFE ROSENMEYER



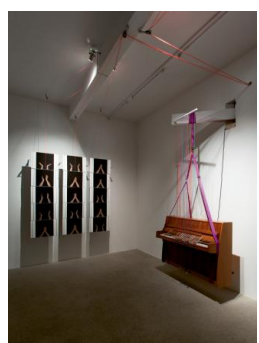


REVIEWS JUN. 06, 2014

# William Hunt

ZÜRICH,  
at Rotwand

by Olga Stefan



View of William Hunt's exhibition "BRA-VO, OH BRA - VO!, 2014; at Rotwand.

ADVERTISEMENT

London-based artist William Hunt (b. 1977) is known for physically demanding performances. Within a sculptural framework, he often combines acrobatic actions with the execution of his musical compositions, played on various instruments. His recent solo show, "BRA-VO, OH BRA - VO!," offered insight into the method and folly of his intermedia art.

Much like Allan Kaprow's Happenings in the 1950s and '60s, Hunt's endeavors are intricate mixed-medium displays. On the opening evening of this exhibition, a piano in the front room was suspended by straps next to a wall. Ropes attached to the piano keys disappeared into a hole in the same wall that led to a chamber, hidden from view. Nearby hung a 3-by-5 grid of wooden panels, each containing a different photograph of clapping hands. The panels were connected to one another by thin straps, and the top panel of each column was connected to ropes passing along the ceiling into another hole.

A black curtain separated the front room from a back room, where one entered complete darkness. On the left-hand wall was a small window with a frame around it, through which we saw the artist upside-down engaged in various movements. His inverted position suggested that somehow we were looking into a camera obscura. Eventually we realize that the setup is not a camera obscura at all, but rather a straightforward view into the mysterious chamber. We are in fact witnessing the artist harnessed to the ceiling upside down as he pulls the strings attached to the piano keys to play his melancholy tune, which intentionally allows for rests and pauses when he becomes exhausted. After some time, the artist pulled on another set of ropes, those connected to the photo panels with the clapping hands. Unexpectedly, the flaps in the front room lifted and fell on top of each other, generating an applauselike sound and signaling the end of the piece with a humorous touch. Following a pause, the performance resumed, but as the evening went on Hunt required longer intervals to recuperate from the intense effort.



testifying to the ephemeral event that took place: the suspended piano, the chamber where Hunt performed with the remnants of the harness and ropes, a video of the performance and the photos of the hands clapping, all part of an integrated installation.

Contextualizing the exhibition, a documentary video in a small office displayed an interview with the artist. The conversation is at first professional and somewhat superficial, but it soon becomes clear that the interviewer, whom we assume to be a journalist, is actually Hunt's wife. She is trying to make sense of the artist's need for extreme physical situations that can often be quite dangerous. Once he submerged himself in a car full of water—with only a tube for breathing—and sang one of his compositions. Suddenly she breaks down, taking the interview on an unscripted turn that parallels Hunt's own performances, where chance always plays an important role.

Hunt's work impresses not only because of its physicality but more importantly because of its ability to offer an experience that excites and challenges us intellectually and emotionally. He questions art's form and limits, while pushing his own boundaries, filling his viewers with wonder in the process.

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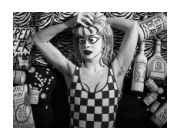
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A.I.A. editors suggest a few of the myriad events taking place this week in New York: Orson Welles at Film Forum; Mary Reid Kelley at School of Visual Arts; Kate Gilmore at the Metropolitan...



*Hans-Guck-in-die-Luft*, 2014  
Production still  
60 x 40 cm (image size)  
70 x 50 cm (framed size)





*Paranalia, 2013*

For 5 dancers, an exercise in suspension, co-operation and obstruction  
Performance, 45 min

First performed as part of the exhibition „Weight“ curated by Andjeas Ejiksson and Ragnar Kjartansson for GIBCA - Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art, Gothenburg, Sweden





*Sub-optimal Expression Output Interface, 2013*



*Sub-optimal Expression Output Interface 2013*  
Performance and installation, 42 min  
Petra Rinck Gallery, Dusseldorf, Germany





*A Moment's Hesitation, 2012*



*A Moment's Hesitation*, 2012  
Video, 13 min  
Dusseldorf, Germany



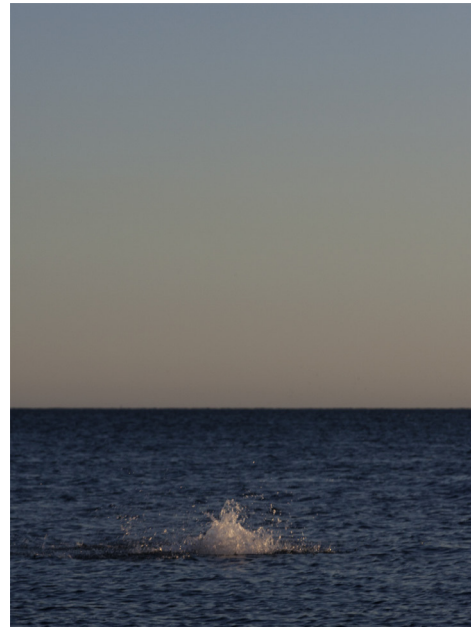
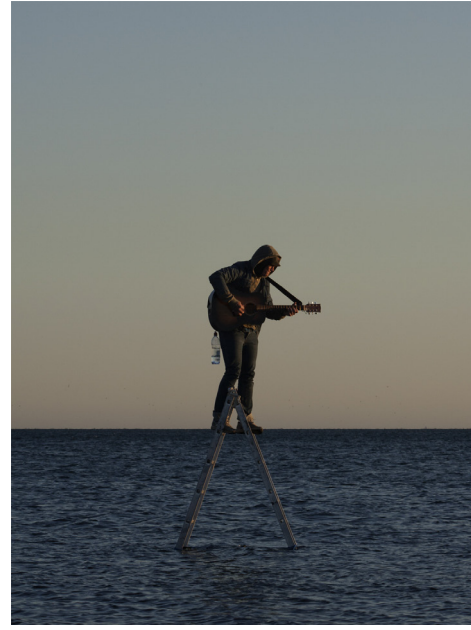


*Proposition A (Practising being something else just in case you're not what you think you are), 2010*  
Performance and installation  
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, Zurich, Switzerland  
15 barrels, motors



*From Hand to Eye to Ear to Head*, 2010  
Looped sound, plaster, microphones, headphones,  
stands  
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, Zurich, Switzerland





*Sjalfsskaparviti, 2010*  
11pm, 16th July 2010  
Performance, 60 min  
Reykjavík, Iceland



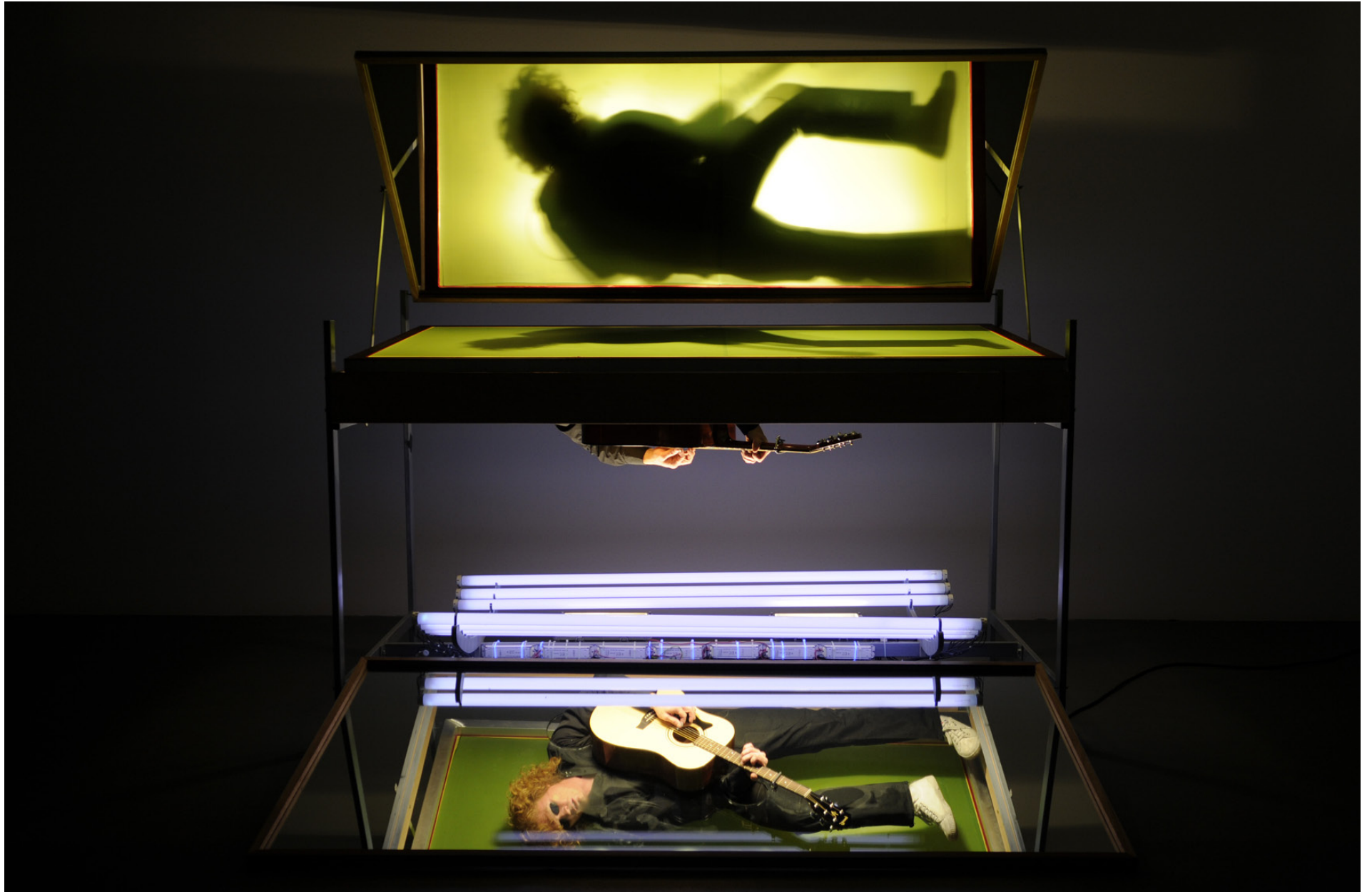


*Even As You See Me Now, 2008*





*Even As You See Me Now*, 2008  
Performance and installation, 17 min  
Solo exhibition at Rotwand, Zurich, Switzerland



*I know I wanted, 2008*





*I know I wanted*, 2008

Performance, installation, videos and prints (9 min exposure time for silk screen)

22 min

Witte de With, Rotterdam, Netherlands

Ultraviolet lights and light sensitive silkscreen record the shadow of the song's performance. The silkscreen is then cleaned and printed.



*I Forgot Myself Looking at You, 2008*





*I Forgot Myself Looking at You*, 2008  
Performance and installation, 23 min  
Kunsthhaus Glarus, Switzerland





*The Impotence of Radicalism in the Face of all these Extreme Positions,*  
2007  
Performance, 13 min  
Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy





*Put your Foot down, 2007*



*Put your Foot down*, 2007  
Performance and installation, 9 min  
Art Unlimited Art Basel, Basel, Switzerland





*Longshore Drift in Open C*, 2006  
Performance, 34 min  
Whistable Biennial, United Kingdom

Casting himself adrift at high tide the artist is swept along the beach and out to sea while playing melancholy music.



*Tank*, 2006

Performance and installation, 27 min

Wheelie bin, waterproof taperecorder, subaqua equipment and under-water microphones

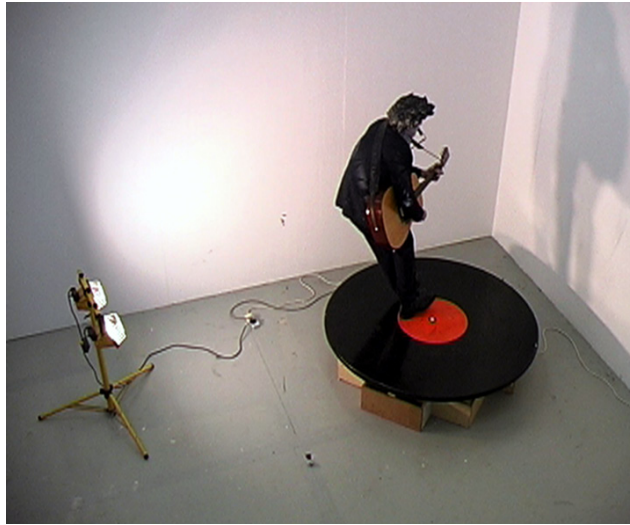
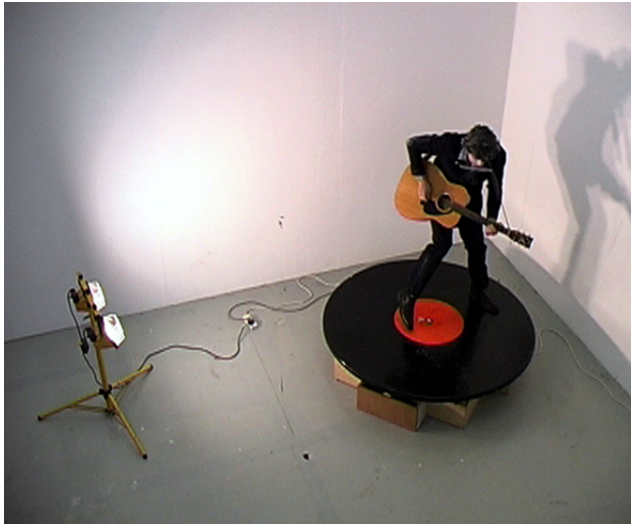
Milton Keynes Gallery, United Kingdom





*Don't give me money, It's not what I want, From you.*  
2005

Performance, 14 min  
Studio Voltaire, London, United Kingdom



*Rodeo / Radio*, 2005  
Performance and video, 7 min  
Cubitt, London, United Kingdom



## William Hunt

### A case study

*Practicing being something else just in case you're not what you think you are.*

It will always be an artist that makes a suggestion like this. Because he can; or, rather, because he's encouraged to. An artist can be fruitless, hapless, ridiculous or wrong and he will be applauded all the more for it, because an artist gets to play out the latent fantasies of the rest of us.

But what is the substance of the fantasy that William Hunt plays out on our behalf? In short, he performs music in physically restrictive conditions: submerged in a tank of water, trussed upside-down, with a head covered in setting plaster, up a ladder in the sea with his clothes on fire. This is a case of severe self-thwarting and the psychology is suitably layered: all social anxiety grows from the realisation that we cannot control how we are perceived by others, so why not adopt a self-image that embodies this unpredictability? And if we wish the authentic self to be visible, then its struggle to become visible is essential viewing. It is better to place it centre stage than to relegate it to the dressing room.

Drama, it is thought, originated in ancient sacrificial rites, which would cast the hero as a rebel against the divine regulation that is responsible for the existence of suffering. The hero that constructs his own suffering, then, is at once perpetrator and victim, demigod and mortal. And if a hero takes seriously that which is absurd, then it follows that he finds absurd that which should be taken seriously. This is radical iconoclasm of the most attractive kind. It signals a mistrust of the logical, the productive, the harmonious and the clear-cut. This is a denouncement of received ideas.

An independent mind is always admired in drama, especially if the body must suffer indignity or pain as a payoff. But, for us mere mortals who like to watch but perhaps not to experience drama, Hunt's methods represent more a mechanism for coping than heroics. If we are seen to struggle against adversity from the off, then we are not to blame when we fail; and if we succeed against all odds, we have escaped from a hell of sorts, albeit of our own making.

Sally O'Reilly  
October 2010

**William Hunt** 1977, Großbritannien, www.ibidprojects.co.uk

*Warum schaffen Sie in Ihren Performances physische Barrieren?*

Ich benutze physische Barrieren in meinen Performances buchstäblich dazu, den Versuch der Kommunikation zu vereiteln und ihn dann zu entlarven. Indem der Körper einer Extremsituation ausgesetzt wird, kann der Betrachter den Kampf zwischen der versuchten Performance und der tatsächlichen beobachten. Die Lieder, die ich schreibe, drehen sich um Verbindungen, die aber erschwert werden. Dies entlarvt den Versuch an sich, trotz Schwierigkeiten etwas zu erreichen. Es ist wie das Kleinkind im Supermarkt, das nicht das bekommt, was es will.

*Tendieren Sie mehr in Richtung Komödie oder Tragödie?*

Komödie ist das Gegenmittel zu Romantik und unterläuft sofort jegliche Rührseligkeit. Es hat etwas Grauensvolles, wenn ein Teenager seine Akustikgitarre herausscholt und seine Gefühle zeigt, aber auch etwas Großartiges. Ich habe nichts dagegen, dass in meinem Werk beide Bedeutungen des Romantischen existieren. Nervöses Lachen aus dem Publikum ist ebenfalls interessant. Es ermöglicht von Anfang an eine Entspannung und befördert alle im Raum in denselben emotionalen Zustand. Man kann loslassen, sich konzentrieren und herausfinden, was vor sich geht.

*Was interessiert Sie an Vergänglichkeit?*

Für mich ist jede Performance unlösbar ans Gedächtnis geknüpft. Jede Handlung hat eine Wirkung auf die vorherige. Da die Performance eine vergängliche Kunst ist, wirkt sie stets radikal. Es gibt die große Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass sie nicht funktioniert, und sie hat auch nichts zu verkaufen.

*Was bedeutet für Sie Musikkultur?*

Zusammen mit dem Schreiben von Musik und der Präsentation eines Musikers oder Songwriters geht es um eine Kritik an der Popmusik. Vieles bezieht sich auf das, was ich die »darstellende Mainstream-Kunst« nenne. Statt Talentshows sollte man sich besser Karaoke-Vorführungen anzusehen, wo der Fan eines Songs das umbringt, was er so wahn-sinnig toll findet. In seinem Gesicht spiegelt sich große Sehnsucht wider, seine Augen sind geschlossen, während er sich innerlich die perfekte Wiedergabe vorstellt.

*Was interessiert Sie an der Idee emotionaler Authentizität?*

Ich habe viel Zeit damit verbracht, Situationen zu entwickeln, in denen ich nicht schauspielern muss. Ich stehe wirklich auf dem Kopf. Ich befinde mich wirklich unter Wasser. Ich werde wirklich von einem Klavier erdrückt. Ich bin bereit, diese Situationen zu ertragen, damit ich nichts vorgeben muss und mir nicht bewusst bin, was ich da gerade ausdrücke.



1. *I Forgot Myself Looking At You*, 2008, Performance

2. *Even As You See Me Now*, 2007, Performance

3. *Put Your Foot Down*, 2006, Performance