TRIS VONNA-MICHELL
Tris Vonna-Michell, source material, 2014, courtesy the artist
This exhibition features new iterations of three installations by British artist Tris Vonna-Michell. Layering photographic images, film and soundtracks, Vonna-Michell threads together disparate historical information and social observation, filtered through personal anecdotes. The entangled narratives of these works slide between fact and fiction, drawing us into complex situations that a narrator is also grappling with. The dense assemblages of visual material are animated by intense monologues propelled by the artist’s distinctive voice. Informed by experimental writers such as Allen Ginsberg, Vonna-Michell’s spoken word compositions are full of detours, repetitions and dead ends that unravel into circuitous streams of association. This exhibition calls for our active involvement.

Vonna-Michell’s ongoing storylines are often interconnected and retold, and continually reference his own artistic production. Images drawn from his personal archive, including those of previous works, reappear in new configurations. Acutely aware of the impact of gallery contexts on every installation, he repositions his accumulated performance documents, photographs and audio recordings for each new iteration. The analogue technology in these works acts as a further reminder of temporal instability.
Tris Vonna-Michell

Finding Chopin: Dans l’Essex (East Gallery), originally shot on 16 mm film, is Vonna-Michell’s first video installation. It begins and ends with scenes of a seaside marshland filmed on a single day from dawn to dusk, which is combined with footage that distills a previous incarnation of this work. Based on his research on Henri Chopin, a French pioneer of postwar sound poetry, the work slips between times and places. The film is projected into a corner of the gallery space, distorting the moving picture into an unstable state of liquidity that reflects back on itself. A sequence of slide projections that appear as footnotes to the film refers to yet another system of notation.

Capital Complex (Centre Gallery) is set in Le Corbusier’s utopic modernist architecture of Chandigarh, India. The voice-over soundtrack features the main character Traveller, whose calm nocturnal strolls through the city become increasingly anxious and confused as he tries to contend with being trapped in a disorienting topography. Amplifying this sense of instability is an antiquated telex projector almost at floor level and a slanting table that displays a montage of photographs and pages from a four-act script written by the artist.

The dual-slide projection, Postscript V (Berlin) (West Gallery), is based on the artist’s search for clues to his mother’s family, photographed around Berlin’s Anhalter Bahnhof. As we try to construct a coherent story from the clues illustrated in the slideshow, the narrator is simultaneously calling into question the very authenticity of the images. The lightbox
“addendum” of archival remnants initially promises to offer explanations, yet the collage of documents adds another layer of deflections. In this work, Vonna-Michell reflects on the impossibility of accurately retelling personal histories enmeshed in conflicting memories and fantasies.

Tris Vonna-Michell extends his artistic practice to the book form, as with the two variations of an identical-looking publication on display here. As in the installations, disjointed narratives are superimposed onto one another through inserts added between pages.

In Tris Vonna-Michell’s complex, layered works, any clear sense of time and space becomes untethered. In the process of trying to make sense of the fragmented narratives, we are asked to pay attention to the very nature of coincidence and contingency, and the malleability of images and language.

Helga Pakasaar, Curator
Tris Vonna-Michell, source material, 2014, courtesy the artist
Tris Vonna-Michell, source material, 2014, courtesy the artist
EXHIBITED WORKS

WEST GALLERY

*Postscript V (Berlin)*, 2015
35mm slides, sound, chairs, curtain
9:06 min.
Courtesy the artist and Metro Pictures, New York

*Addendum II (Berlin)*, 2015
lightbox, Xerox and translucent inkjet prints
80 x 240 x 35 cm
Courtesy the artist and Metro Pictures, New York

CENTRE GALLERY

*Capitol Complex*, 2015
35mm slides, telex caramate, table, lightjet and inkjet prints, sound
6:38 min.
Courtesy the artist, Metro Pictures, New York and Jan Mot, Brussels

EAST GALLERY

16mm film transferred to HD video, 35 mm slides, sound, bench
13:45 min.
Courtesy the artist and T293, Rome and Naples

[www.presentationhousegallery.org](http://www.presentationhousegallery.org)

Documentation of Tris Vonna-Michell’s performance at Tate Britain, December 2014: a link can be found on our website and on our YouTube channel.
BIOGRAPHY

Tris Vonna-Michell lives and works in Stockholm, Sweden. Recent solo exhibitions include Overduin & Co., Los Angeles (2015); VOX Centre de l’image contemporaine, Montreal (2014); T293, Rome (2013); BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK (2012); and Metro Pictures, New York (2011). Recent group exhibitions include Moderna Museet, Malmö; Un Nouveau Festival, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2014); Unrest of Form. Imagining the Political Subject, Secession, Vienna (2013); The Butterfly Image, The Grand Duke Jean Museum of Modern Art, Luxembourg (2013); Reactivation, Shanghai Biennial (2012); Altermodern: Tate Triennial, Tate Britain, London (2009); and Time Crevasse, Yokohama Triennial (2008). Vonna-Michell was awarded the Baloise Art Prize and ars viva Prize for Fine Arts in 2008, and was shortlisted for the 2014 Turner Prize. He studied at the Glasgow School of Art, the Städelschule, Frankfurt, and briefly at Emily Carr University of Art and Design.

EVENTS

Thursday, April 23
7PM – Conversation between the artist and curator Helga Pakasaar
8PM – Opening reception
Tris Vonna-Michell

Cover image: Tris Vonna-Michell, source material, 2014, courtesy the artist
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Presentation House Gallery is grateful for the ongoing support from our funders: The Canada Council for the Arts, the British Columbia Arts Council, The City of North Vancouver and the District of North Vancouver through the North Vancouver Recreation & Culture Commission.

Presentation House Gallery is a public cultural facility operated by the British Columbia Photography and Media Arts Society, a federally registered charity.