Jeremy Shaw
Phase Shifting Index

26 February – 20 April 2020
An immersive installation
As part of Mutations / Creations #4
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Gallery 3, Level 1
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By Christine Macel

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Since the mid-2000s, Canadian artist Jeremy Shaw (born in 1977, based in Berlin) has established a multifaceted artistic practice that combines disparate sources of inspiration ranging from spiritual beliefs to neuroscience. His fascination with the mapping of the human mind and mechanisms of perception is coupled with an interest in belief systems, subculture, and transcendental experience. At the Centre Pompidou, Jeremy Shaw presents his first major museum exhibition in France with a new immersive installation, “Phase Shifting Index”.

At the entrance of the exhibition, a series of Shaw’s “Towards Universal Pattern Recognition” photographic sculptures are displayed. These objects contain archival images of people experiencing spiritual or hedonistic rapture and are framed under precisely crafted prismatic lenses that create a psychedelic fracturing of the image. Through a long ramped incline, the viewer then enters “Galerie 3” from a platform overlooking an immersive, seven-channel video installation. The seven videos presented in the space depict what appears to be documentary footage of subcultures of the future that engage movement-based belief systems as tools towards inducing parallel realities. Drawing from a wide cross-section of codified subcultural and spiritual movement styles, the seven groups of “Phase Shifting Index” incorporate gestural elements ranging from technical to somatic, from meditative to ecstatic.
Every 25 minutes, an additional soundtrack floods the room and the once independent films come together in a unified choreographic sync. An identical repetitive and cathartic dance is enacted by the subjects of all films, coupled with onscreen strobe lighting effects - uniting the seven screens into a pulsing, synchronised whole. This cohesive moment of dance spans across decades of time and media and engulfs the viewer in its immersive wake. Suddenly, all screens rupture into a meltdown of digital visual effects that consume the installation - devolving from para-fictional documentary compilation to immersive psychedelic art installation within seconds.

The Centre Pompidou has joined forces with the Swiss Institute, New York, the Museum of Old and New Art (Mona) and Dark Moto, Hobart, Tasmania and the Frankfurter Kunstverein to co-produce the films presented in the exhibition and show it in three different forms, from February 2020 at the Centre Pompidou, then in April at the Swiss Institute (2 April-14 June 2020), and finally in June at Mona (6 June 2020-5 April 2021).

The Centre Pompidou and the Swiss Institute have co-edited the artist’s first complete monograph, published in French and English (see page 11).

Curatorial team
Christine Macel
Chief curator at the Centre Pompidou and Head of the Department of Contemporary Art and Prospective
Assisted by
Loïc Le Gall, Roxane Illias and Aurélien Bernard
Conservation Managers, Department of Contemporary Art and Prospective

This exhibition is made possible thanks to several sponsors and collaborations: the Canadian Cultural Center, Paris; the Canada Council for the Arts, Ottawa; König Galerie; the Museum of Old and New Art (Mona), Hobart, Tasmania; Brillux and the Swiss Institute, New York.

With the support of
Centre Culturel Canadien, Paris

With the participation of
Museum of Old and New Art

The exhibition is presented as part of
Mutations / Creations #4 from 26 February to 20 April 2020, and jointly presented with the group exhibition:
Neurons, Simulated Intelligence (Gallery 4, Level 1)

With “Mutations/Creations,” the Centre Pompidou is transformed into a laboratory for creation and innovation at the interface between the arts, science and engineering. Each year the programme brings together artists, engineers, scientists and entrepreneurs. In 2020, “Mutations/Creations” continues its forward-looking research through two exhibitions, “Neurons, Simulated Intelligence,” and “Jeremy Shaw, Phase Shifting Index” after three successful editions devoted to 3D printing (“Printing the World,” and “Ryoji Ikeda” in 2017), to computer languages (“Coding the World” and “FrancescOx” in 2018) and to creations that combine the living and artificial life (“Designing the Living” and “Erika Verzutti” in 2019).

Mutations / Creations is supported by
with

In media partnership with
Jeremy Shaw
Dissolution Limits, or Spirituality at the Time of Biotechnology

By Christine Macel, Chief Curator and Head of the Department of Contemporary Creation and Prospective, Centre Pompidou, Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris

Excerpt from the monograph jointly edited by par the Centre Pompidou and the Swiss Institute, at the occasion of the exhibition (see page 11).

Canada-born, Berlin-based, Jeremy Shaw has pursued his often immersive visual and sonic work for more than fifteen years, after a period of traveling the world to play live and DJ with his music project, Circlesquare, of 1996-2009. Those years were not irrelevant to the very nature of his art work, in which music and the sonic dimension play a large role. Child of a religious family, he moved towards other shores, immersing himself in shoegaze music and rave culture, trying various drugs, and flirting with limits, before making a radical change in the mid-2000s by dedicating himself to his work as an artist.

At this early stage, Shaw was already addressing subjects that would remain present in his later works: subcultures, adolescent cultures, cathartic and ecstatic rituals, the search for altered states, particularly through corporeal practices, dance and music, and the ambiguity of images that leave something unsaid.

But Shaw’s work goes far beyond this simple hedonistic or even spiritual approach to the exploration of altered states, even though it bears resemblance to the world described in Matthew Collin’s cult work on dance music, “Altered States. The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House.” It is situated precisely at the conjunction of several contemporary interrogations now emerging or re-emerging in the public consciousness. Questions equally vital to philosophy, anthropology, and sociology, cognitive science and neuroscience, and finally, the latest technological advances, such as bionanotechnology. His work attempts, via visual and sonic means, to take into account these multiple research developments and propel them into a fictional field, engaging with both science fiction and alternative cultures.

Without establishing hierarchies, Shaw weaves his tales by drawing both from the psychedelic culture of the 1960s and 1970s, descended from the Beat Generation, and the most recent neuroscientific discoveries on brain function, all while working precisely on perception within his very installations. These engage the spectator in a genuinely multisensory experience, inspiring questions about the work itself and the experience of the work, through the lived experience of the subject perceiving them. Shaw aims to obtain effects analogous to those that interest him—in the same way that a DJ plays with frequencies and, especially, subfrequencies. He goes so far as to create quasi-religious environments, presenting “I Can See Forever” (2018), in a former chapel, part of the König Gallery in Berlin. The space was entirely covered with soft carpeting, transformed into a place of retreat and sensory ecstatic.

Rejected by Positivism and Marxist criticism in the late 19th and then the 20th century, the issues addressed by metaphysics even in the Collège de France, alongside developments in neuroscience. Did we really come to the end of metaphysics with Heidegger? The debate was reopened a decade ago by young philosophers like Elie During, Patrice Maniglier, Quentin Meillassoux, and David Rabouin, who have been editing the “Métaphysiques” imprint at Presses Universitaires de France since 2009, inventing a new metaphysics. What is reality? What are things in themselves? What are other metaphysics, non-Western or “cannibal,” as Viveiros de Castro put it? Without necessarily following these developments, Shaw puts at the heart of his work eminently metaphysical questions, the aspiration to transcendence and the dissolution of limits, different belief systems, the definition of reality at a moment when it may seem uncertain or confused, in the era of “fake news” and mass manipulation.

To this metaphysical dimension is added a sharp sensitivity to sociology, particularly that of belief systems. Shaw interrogates the persistence of this fundamental human need for spirituality and belief, despite scientific advances that might have suggested a replacement by reason and technological progress.

This temporal distortion, typical of science fiction, constituting one of the artist’s favored techniques, can be seen in his video installations, starting with “Quantification Trilogy”: a series of films whose textures evoke different periods and styles, from Maya Deren to Chris Marker, from the 1950s to the 1990s, all while creating a futuristic world. This stratification and melding of eras contributes to flattening temporal experience, making it simultaneously invalid, reversible, and unreal. It also corresponds to a sociological fact: that fashions reinterpret and resist (“twist,” as the magazines say), a 1980 piece into a 2020 trend or invent a néobourgeoise right out of the 1970s. [1]
Neurosciences and cognitive science constitute a third focal point in Jeremy Shaw’s work. How do we see and perceive? What is consciousness? How does the brain “think”? These questions have occupied the neurosciences since they emerged in the 1970s, popularized by Antonio Damasio, who places emotion and feeling at the base of human consciousness, or Stanislas Dehaene who evokes the algorithms that make us think, and who has had a major impact on Shaw’s practice.

To these questions we might add the following: What is reality from the neuroscientific point of view? How does the brain work on drugs or in a trance state? Will biotechnology modify consciousness? And, finally, how can neuroscientific discoveries be brought together with emerging metaphysical aspiration and new belief systems in a world that is “manipulated” or in any event uncertain in its relationship with truth, in a time, in fact, of “post-truth”?

These questions feed into Shaw’s work, and are also sometimes invited by his pieces. [...]

“Phase Shifting Index”, the new installation created for his show at the Centre Pompidou, seems the acme and synthesis of his previous installations and research, first through its ambition for an even more intensely immersive spectator experience. Entering a vast hall, through a long, claustrophobic ramp, the visitor emerges on tiers above the darkened space where, on seven hanging screens, seven films are shown, each accompanied by a different music and narration, according to a precise time cycle. During the first quarter hour or so, seven groups of people, seeming to belong to eras ranging from the 1950s to the 1990s, both in the style of the media and in their clothes and actions, perform rituals that gradually send them into a state of collective trance. Then the films synchronize: the protagonists adopt identical gestures, arms raised to heaven, as a single soundtrack fills the entire room.

At the height of this transtemporal catharsis, the culmination of a single aspiration to transcendence, suddenly there are projected on all the screens, during the few remaining minutes, the images of the faces of the characters in the parallel films, deformed by datamoshing effects, as though this harmony were abruptly broken and disfigured. Each group is moved by different beliefs, in different periods and in a specific style of clothing. The first group of “altruists,” believing in the harmonious coexistence of machine and human, appears as if at the end of the 1970s in a 16mm black-and-white film, adopting the codes of the documentary, with organic, fluid movements. Another, all female, dances in a style reminiscent of the American hardcore movement of the 1990s, in a video apparently made with a handheld camera, in the dimness of a nightclub. Yet another is composed of young dancers whose fluid clothes and sneakers seem right out of the mid-1980s, with a robotic pop-and-lock look, moved by belief in the technology of machine DNA.

Questioning ultimate goals, juxtaposing belief systems, using fiction to invite neurosciences to dialog with subcultures, and staging a confrontation of rational and spiritual aspirations in a future, post-human era: the video installation “Phase Shifting Index” is as spellbinding as it is terrifying, dissolving the limits of image and sound, and exciting the perceptive nerves of the spectator who is torn between ecstasy and a self-fascinated fear, at the crossroads of a new metaphysical, anthropological, and scientific era.

Phase Shifting Index
About the installation

At the entrance, the photographs “Towards Universal Pattern Recognition” are framed under precisely faceted picture lenses, designed by the artist to create multiple refracted images of a specific element within the picture. This mediation of the presented image not only appears to approximate the altered state of consciousness of the photographic subject(s), it heightens an awareness of the perspectives of the camera, the beliefs or values of the original photographer and the viewer of the artwork; they are brought into relation around the very notion of capture, witnessing, authenticity and representability.

“Phase Shifting Index” appears to be comprised entirely of archival documentary material culled from a 30-year span of 20th century time-based media (from 16mm to VHS to Video8, from the 1960s to the 1990s). Though aesthetically precise to their period by design, the films are narrated as though a historical compilation set 50 - 200 years in the future, by a voice coming from another 200 years ahead in time. This backwards-glancing/ future-timeline details a series of unique cultures that forged their own movement and technology-based belief systems during a period of humanity when science had quantified faith and apathetic, addictive technologies had consumed the masses.

1. and 2.
Towards Universal Pattern Recognition
(Celebration of Spirit - Jul 16 1983)
2019
Archive black and white photograph, acrylic, chrome
37,50 x 42,50 x 16 cm
© Timo Ohler,
Courtesy Jeremy Shaw and KÖNIG GALERIE, Berlin

3. and 4.
Phase Shifting Index
2020
HD Video installation with seven channels and original soundtrack.
35’19”, multicanal sound.
Edition: 5 + 2 AP
Courtesy Jeremy Shaw and KÖNIG GALERIE, Berlin
Phase Shifting Index

Layout plan

Gallery 3, Level 1

Towards Universal Pattern Recognition

1.

Phase Shifting Index

2 to 8

Videos:

— 2. “Quantum Moderns”
— 3. “Countdown”
— 4. “The Violet Lux”
— 5. “The Alignment Movement”
— 6. “Reclaimers”
— 7. “Zero-Ones”
— 8. “The Cyclical Culture”

Towards Universal Pattern Recognition
Jeremy Shaw

Biography


Education

— 1999
Bachelor of Fine Arts – Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Vancouver, Canada.

Solo Exhibitions (selection)

— 2020
“Quantification Trilogy”, Julia Stoschek, Berlin and Düsseldorf, Germany.

— 2019
“Quantification Trilogy”, Esker Foundation, Calgary, Canada.

— 2018
“I Can See Forever”, König Galerie, Berlin, Germany.
“Liminals”, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, Montréal, Canada.
“Quantification Trilogy », Kunstverein Hamburg, Germany.

— 2016
“Towards Universal Pattern Recognition”, König Galerie, Berlin, Germany.

Group Exhibitions (selection)

— 2019
“Della materia spirituale dell’arte”, Fondazione Maxxi, Rome, Italy.

— 2018
“Blind Faith”, Haus der Kunst, Munich; Kunstpreis der Böttcherstraße, Kunsthalle Bremen, Germany.
“Alone Together”, Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, Canada.

— 2017
57th Venice Biennale, « Viva Arte Viva », Venice, Italy.
“How to Live Together”, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria.

— 2016
“ Sobey Art Award”, The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada.
Manifesta 11, “The Things People Do for Money”, Zurich, Switzerland.
“Where Are We Now”, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin, Germany.

— 2015
“Medium-Based Time”, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada.
“Degenerative Imaging in the Dark”, Lambda Lambda Lambda, Pristina, Kosovo.

— 2014
“Quickening”, Johann König, Berlin, Germany.

— 2013
“Variation FO”, Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin, Germany.

— 2011
“Best Minds”, MoMA PS1, New York, USA.

— 2007
“Best Minds Part One”, Dr Gallery, Vancouver, Canada.

— 2006
“DMT”, The Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto, Canada.

— 2004
“DMT”, Presentation House Gallery, Vancouver, Canada.

— 2015
“What We Call Love”, The Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland.
“Offline”, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Japan.

— 2014

— 2013

— 2012
“One on One”, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany.
“The Dark Cube”, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France.
Group Exhibitions (selection)

— 2011
“Based in Berlin”, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany.
Biennale de Montréal, “Elements of Chance”, Montréal, Canada.
“Cities of Gold and Mirrors”, Julia Stoschek Collection, Düsseldorf, Germany.

— 2010
“Gewalt (Violence)”, Kunstverein Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany.
“Videodrome”, Autocenter, Berlin, Germany.

— 2008
“Thermostat. Video and the Pacific Northwest”, Seattle Art Gallery, Seattle, USA.

Residencies

— 2018
Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA.

— 2016
Fogo Island Arts residency, Fogo Island, Canada.

— 2015
Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences, Leipzig, Germany.
Matter Residency, Athènes, Greece.

Screenings (selection)

— 2019
Vilnius Film Festival, Lithuania.
Brisbane International Film Festival, Australia.

— 2018
Tate Modern, London, UK.
Vancouver Film Festival, Canada.
New York Film Festival, USA.

— 2017
True/False Film Festival, Columbia, USA.

Collections (selection)

— Centre Pompidou
Paris, France

— The Museum of Modern Art
New York, USA

— Tate Modern
London, UK

— The National Gallery of Canada
Ottawa, Canada

— Julia Stoschek Collection
Düsseldorf, Germany

— Rennie Collection
Vancouver, Canada

— Sammlung zeitgenössische Kunst des Bundesrepublik
Germany

— 2007

— 2005

— 2002
“Voir grand/Think Big”, Saidye Bronfman Centre For the Arts, Montréal, Canada.

— 2001
“Surround”, Charles H. Scott Gallery, Vancouver, Canada.

— 2000
“Sound Separation”, Western Front Gallery, Vancouver, Canada.

— 2011
International Studio & Curatorial Program, New York, USA.

— 2010
Caribic Residency, Hamburg, Germany.

— 2014
Migrating Forms Festival, Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, USA.

— 2011
Toronto International Film Festival, Canada.

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Publication

Jeremy Shaw
Monograph

Supervised by
Christine Macel and Simon Castets

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Content

Illustrated essays
— Foreword by Bernard Blistène, Director of the Musée national d’art moderne and Serge Lasvignes, President of the Centre Pompidou.
— Introduction by Christine Macel and Simon Castets
— Christine Macel: “The Dissolution of Limits, or, Spirituality in the Time of Biotechnologies”.
— Simon Castets and Laura McLean-Ferris: “Assisted vérité” conversation with Jeremy Shaw.
— Monica Szewczyk: “Blessing”.
— Nora N.Khan: “Rapture”.

Corpus
— Chronological catalogue of the works
— Images of works and texts by Maxwell Stephens

Annex
— List of works exhibited
Practical information

The Exhibition

Jeremy Shaw
Phase Shifting Index

26 February – 20 April 2020
Gallery 3, Level 1
As part of Mutations / Creations #4
Curator Christine Macel
In collaboration with Loïc Le Gall, Roxane Ilias and Aurélien Bernard
Production manager Maud Desseigne
Architect-scenographer Jasmin Ouzouïdi

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The Centre Pompidou
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Opening times and Admissions
Every day from 11am to 9pm (Thursdays until 11pm), except Tuesdays and May 1st.
€15, reduced fare €12 / Free for those under 18. Young people under 26*, teachers and students at schools of art, drama, dance and music and members of the Maison des artistes may visit the Museum for free and buy tickets for exhibitions at the concessionary rate.
Free admission for Centre Pompidou members.

Online bookings and print-at-home tickets on:
www.billetterie.centrepompidou.fr

The reservation of a time slot applies to all visitors, except for those benefiting of a free admission.
* Nationals of Member States of the EU or the European Economic Area aged 18-25. Valid the same day for the Musée National d’Art Moderne and all exhibitions.

Press images

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Press contact

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At the same time

Yuan Jai
5 February – 27 April 2020
Museum, Focus Room

Chine<–>Afrique (China<–>Africa)
4 March – 25 May 2020
Museum, Gallery 0

Wols
4 March – 25 May 2020
Museum, Graphic Arts Gallery

Christo and Jeanne-Claude
Paris !
18 March – 15 June 2020
Gallery 2

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