



THE WOODEN LIGHTBOX: A SECRET ART OF SEEING

Alex Mackenzie, 2007-2011, ~50 mins, 16mm performance
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The Wooden Lightbox: A Secret Art of Seeing is an exploration and reconfiguration of cinematic apparatus and emulsion. Using the early development of cinema as a marker for cultural, technological and economic change, these film cycles draw from turn of the century cinematic prototypes and long forgotten ideas surrounding the moving image and its early promise. At the core of this approach is the use of a homebuilt hand-cranked projector in an expanded cinema format to present a striking array of handmade and processed emulsion. The vast potential of the film frame is drawn out through imagery both archaic and contemporary in shape and form. Hypnosis, panorama, motion studies, expectation, magic, the dreamworld and sleight of eye conspire in this intimate and immersive framework.

SELECT SCREENINGS Anti-Matter Victoria, **Rotterdam International Film Festival** Netherlands, **Lightcone (Scratch Projections)** Paris, **Le 102** Grenoble, **(K-Raa-K)3 Festival** Brussels, **Grand-Guignol** Lyon, **WNDX** Winnipeg, **VideoDumbo** Brooklyn, **Exis Film Festival** Seoul, **Mercury Lounge/IFCO** Ottawa, **Hexagram Black Box** Concordia Montreal, **Pleasuredome** Toronto, **Leeds Film Festival** Leeds, **Cork Film Festival** Cork, **Aurora Festival** Norwich, **No.w.here** London, **Star and Shadow Cinema** Newcastle, **The Magic Lantern** Edinburgh, **Cube Cinema** Bristol, **7 Inch Cinema** Birmingham, **Pacific Cinematheque** Vancouver.

Mackenzie's work often has an otherworldly quality, as if we were seeing images for the first time...his process allows for the re-entry of a sense of wonder, what theorist Walter Benjamin once referred to as the promesse de bonheur, or the utopian promise of technology that can only be reproduced through an artistic reinvestment in the hidden possibilities of a medium. Through his rediscoveries, MacKenzie takes us back to the birth of the moving image...

-Chris Kennedy, *Strategies of the Medium III: In the Dark*

The Wooden Lightbox is about remembering, about throwing ourselves back to a time when audience expectation was open, with the projection of films equally non-rigid. The degraded quality of the images, often created through the alternative emulsions and hand processing of the film, helps to reinforce the notion of lost memories and decaying history. By reviving some of the technical approaches...Alex preserves some of the spirit of that past and shares the adventure of invention with the contemporary audience.

-Gerald Saul, *Experimental Film Review*

DETAILS Performed live with a hand-cranked 16mm projector built and assembled from various relic 16mm projector and rewind parts and framed in a wooden box. Ten chapters are presented over the course of 4 reels. Film speed is varied manually by cranking more quickly or more slowly, while direction of the action is controlled by winding forward and backward. An average of 8 frames of 16mm can be cranked for every second of time elapsed. Colour gels are used to tone the black and white images while lens and hand interference are used to distort and/or partially obscure the image. Sound consists of a series of tracks shaped for the specific chapters and acting as guides to the progression of the images. TWL is an ongoing work in progress, an assembly of images entirely handprocessed and contact printed, transforming and developing as new materials are added and deleted.

SCREENING/TECH REQUIREMENTS The projector is operated with a dim bulb (50W), and so full darkness and relatively small image size in the screening space is crucial. The piece is most effective in a small screening space or gallery, as this enhances the intimacy and places the projector and performer in amongst the audience. With two lens options, throw is as follows (with image brightness dimming as the throw increases):

5 ft wide image=15 OR 30 foot throw | 8 ft wide image=24 OR 48 foot throw

Audio requires a line running to the same location as the projector, preferably with a mixer there as well. The line out is ipod style - 1/8" mini female, and so requires a 1/8" mini male out to run to mixer and speakers. Power (AC) is required at this same location.

BIOGRAPHY Alex MacKenzie is an experimental film artist working primarily with relic analog film equipment and hand processed imagery. He creates works of expanded cinema, light projection installation, and projector performance. His work has screened at the Rotterdam International Film Festival, the EXiS Experimental Film Festival in Seoul, Lightcone in Paris, Kino Arsenal in Berlin and others. Alex was the founder and curator of the Edison Electric Gallery of Moving Images, the Blinding Light!! Cinema and the Vancouver Underground Film Festival. He was an artist in residence at Atelier MTK in Grenobles, France and Struts Gallery/Faucet Media in New Brunswick. Alex co-edited *Damp: Contemporary Vancouver Media Art* (Anvil Press 2008), and interviewed David Rimmer for *Loop, Print, Fade + Flicker: David Rimmer's Moving Images* (Anvil Press 2009). For further information please see: www.alexmackenzie.ca