



**LEEDS
ARTS RESEARCH
CENTRE**

GROUP PHOTO

DR CLAIRE HOPE

OUTPUT INFORMATION

Title:
Group Photo

Output Type:
M – Exhibition

Venues: Gallery II, University of Bradford;
Showroom Gallery, London; Pavilion,
Leeds; Kunstraum, London; The Tetley,
Leeds; Islington Mill, Manchester; Humber
Street Gallery, Hull

Year of first exhibition:
2014

Research Groups:
Participatory Practice



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION STATEMENT

Group Photo is a three-screen moving image installation; its original contribution to the field lies in the work's contention that our political relationship to the present resides in our choice of images to view; who we watch, and how they are treated become the corollary of our hegemonic desire to 'become' politically within capitalism. This research question derives from Dr Hope's doctoral thesis *Politicising Agency through Affect* (2014) in which she reframed classic Marxist perspectives on spectatorship, in particular the inequality identified as endemic to image-based culture, via perspectives on affect, attachment and neuro-aesthetics.

Choreographed actions disrupt our associations with image making, as well as the role of camera and editor, the latter two seem to work against each other as a 'cold' scanning and searching camera, is off- set by a 'warm' affectionate camera. This method provocatively combines the disparate fates of those we watch in images with self-reflexive approaches that allude to structuralist film.

The context for sharing includes ACE funded solo exhibition at Gallery II, University of Bradford including a publication and reading of a commissioned text (February, 2014), screening at the Showroom Gallery with work by Judith Barry from Cinenova collection, (February, 2016), screening at Pavilion, Leeds (April, 2016) and in the touring screening programme *You are good* curated by Daniel Lichtman shown at Kunstraum, London; The Tetley, Leeds; Islington Mill, Manchester; Humber Street Gallery, Hull, (March, 2019).

Presentations on Group Photo: Artist's Talk, University of Leeds (November, 2015), Critical Researches into Capitalism Research Group, University of Leeds, (February, 2016); Q&A with Marina Vishmidt at Showroom Gallery, London (February, 2016); Artist's Talk Sotheby's Institute, London (April, 2016), Q&A Pavilion, Leeds (April, 2016); Q&A Islington Mill, Manchester (March, 2019). Group Photo reviewed by: Adam Pugh for *This is Tomorrow* and Amy Charlesworth, Gallery II Curator (Unpublished).



“It is this expert dissolution of the perimeter of script and scripted that activates Group Photo. The logic that the work exposes moves from specific incidences to general laws; types of group photo to sets of behaviour, our actions on a grander stage directed according to a defined set of roles. Its silence implies, demonstrates, that script robs us of voice: yet it is not so much that there is a problem with acting the parts offered, more the extent to which we perceive that we are doing so, and agree to accept the deterministic contract which they set out.”

Adam Pugh, *This is Tomorrow*



“The work renders the void between who we might be and how we might wish to identify ourselves tangible. Our outward projections, and their internalisations, are mediated through a whole proliferation of imagery that is pervasive in forming our experience of day-to-day life. It is this critical attention to how we experience others, how our interactions with them shift according to the demands of our surroundings and ultimately how we project ourselves accordingly that makes Group Photo a quiet, subtle, though largely confrontational work; a work that looks to the reification and mediation of social relations.”

Amy Charlesworth, Curator



“The conjunction of the two films [*Group Photo* and Judith Barry’s *Kaleidoscope* (1978)] made for a compelling examination of the interlocking of gender normativity and the visual habits and identity formations of mass media viewership and performance over a span of two decades, a period which had witnessed several waves of feminism and accelerated technological change. The conversation also engaged with these topics, dwelling on the the psychology of watched 'behaviour' and questions of authenticity, performance and surveillance in the current shape of (precarious) work as well.”

Marina Vishmidt, *by email, 2020*



“As a curator interested in feminist moving image practices, I look to Claire as an important feminist artist whose engagement with ideas of embodiment, attachment and collaboration are significant in relation to feminist ideas and debates. I saw Claire’s work *Group Photo* on show at Gallery II (University of Bradford) in 2014 and in response to this, I invited Claire to develop ideas for a new, but related, work in the context of a festival I curated in Leeds entitled *About Time*, that was adjunct to the British Art Show 8 (2015). Claire developed three workshops as part of this programme through which she researched ideas and processes for her subsequent moving image work *Contact*. These workshops (titled ‘Attach and Perform’) allowed me to develop my understanding as a curator, of how artwork-in-production can be a process of public participation. They led to a substantial curatorial partnership with Claire and myself while I was director of the visual arts organisation Pavilion: a post-doctoral fellowship supported by the AHRC, the University of Leeds and Pavilion. This fellowship made public Claire’s 2016 work *Contact*, alongside *Group Photo*, which together should be recognised as a significant body of work for its research into human attachment in and through film.”

Gill Park, Lecturer, University of Leeds and Former Director of Pavilion, Leeds, *by email, 2020*



“Claire Hope’s...solo show *Group Photo* was a profound consolidation of this research, explored through A/V. The innovative video work at the centre of the project involved a row of people exploring one generic pose – the line-up – and also various image genres – crucially the group portrait. The cool visual tones and slow tracking shots knowingly updated distancing effects from the tradition of political cinema. The tonal changes, from cool to warm, were keyed to different forms of bodily contact between those in the ‘group photo’ and the sociality they play with. One of the most inventive aspects of the work is its double use of scanning, as both a documentary technique for closing looking and method for identification. In addition to the formal qualities of the final exhibition, the project’s developments had a direct impact on the audience at the University of Leeds. The workshopping methods Hope used, as well as the underlying themes of personal and collective agency those workshops addressed, became drivers for a range of group teaching work she undertook with Fine Art students over a number of years at the University of Leeds. This teaching exposed students to radically new methods of practice, against the pressure to individualised models of learning, and as a direct extension of the political principles at the heart of Hope’s research.”

Nick Thurston, Testimony Letter 2020



Group Photo (2014), Film still,
Cinematography by Will Simpson

Watch *Group Photo* in full
at: <https://vimeo.com/86828202>

(password: group_photo)



Group Photo (2014), Film still,
Cinematography by Will Simpson



Group Photo (2014), Film still, Cinematography by Will Simpson

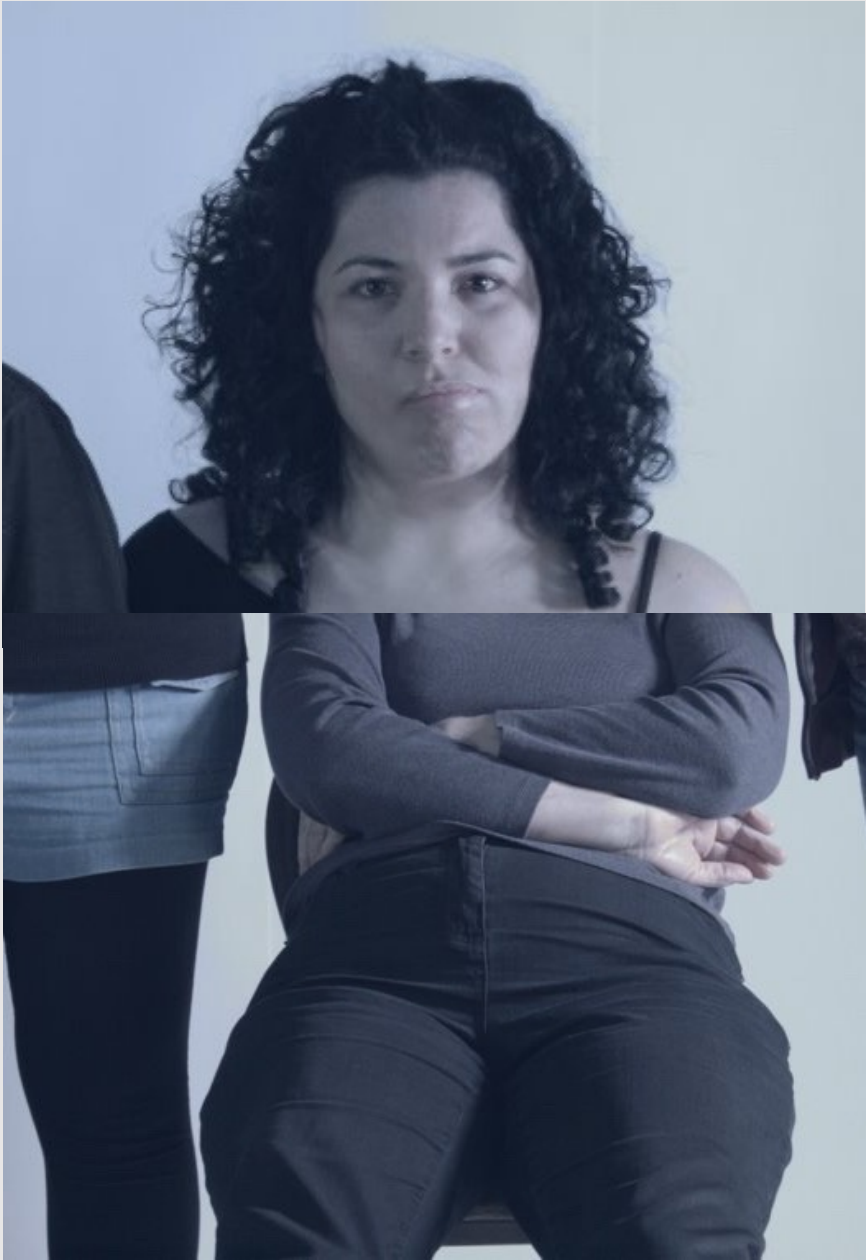


Group Photo (2014), Film still, Cinematography by Will Simpson

Group Photo (2014), Film
still, Cinematography by Will
Simpson



Group Photo (2014), Film still, Cinematography by Will Simpson



Group Photo (2014), Film still, Cinematography by Will Simpson





Group Photo (2014), Film still,
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Group Photo (2014), Film still, Cinematography by Will Simpson



Group Photo (2014), Film still, Cinematography by Will Simpson



Group Photo, Claire Hope Solo
Exhibition, Gallery II,
Bradford Image courtesy of the
artist.



Group Photo, Claire Hope Solo Exhibition, Gallery II, Bradford Image courtesy of the artist.





*Members of the Cast, Live Reading of a commissioned text by Sean Ashton, in association with *Group Photo*, Gallery II, Bradford, March 2014. Image courtesy of the artist.*

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“I do recall visitors finding Group Photo an oddly confrontational piece of work, and I also think this was because of the type of environment it was shown in, yes it was a gallery but not one with much institutional support in all honesty. And I think that the corporate nature of the Neoliberal University and the role of the Arts was reflected back via Group Photo to a University which didn't really place much value on the Arts (apart from a few dedicated individuals etc.)”

Amy Charlesworth, Curator, Gallery II Bradford



“In early 2016 the feminist film and video distribution agency Cinenova extended an invitation to artist-filmmaker Claire Hope to take part in our Now Showing series of screenings. The concept of the series was to re-articulate Cinenova's historical collection in the present by asking contemporary artist-filmmakers to curate screenings based on the dialogue between their work and one or several of the films held in the collection. For this event, Claire showed her film *Group Photo* (2014), a single-screen version of a three-screen installation, in conjunction with Judith Barry's *Kaleidoscope* (1978), followed by a conversation with myself, one of the members of the Cinenova working group. The proposition of the Now Showing series was that the screening provide a research opportunity for each of the filmmakers we invited, within a general framework of how the collection's strong thematics of gender, queerness and collective politics resonated in the current moment. The conjunction of the two films made for a compelling examination of the interlocking of gender normativity and the visual habits and identity formations of mass media viewership and performance over a span of two decades, a period which had witnessed several waves of feminism and accelerated technological change. The conversation also engaged with these topics, dwelling on the the psychology of watched 'behaviour' and questions of authenticity, performance and surveillance in the current shape of (precarious) work as well.”

Marina Vishmidt, Curator, Cinenova

APPENDIX

REVIEWS & ARTICLES

Adam Pugh, 'Claire Hope: Group Photo', *This is Tomorrow*, March, 2014,
<http://thisistomorrow.info/articles/claire-hope-group-photo>

Amy Charlesworth, 'Group Photo', Gallery II, Bradford', *University of Bradford*, February 2014.

Gallery II, University of Bradford, 'Group Photo', Press Release, February 2014
<https://www.brad.ac.uk/gallery/whats-on/past-exhibitions/2014/spring-14/claire-hope-group-photo/>

Claire Hope, *Group Photo*, February 2014.

Sean Ashton, 'Members of the Cast', Commissioned Text for Live Reading, Gallery II, Bradford, March 2014.

Claire Hope, 'Performing Attachment: A Counter-alienating Practice' Capitalism's Bodies' Symposium, Critical Researches into Capitalism Research Group, University of Leeds, February 2016

Event Promotion, Claire Hope and Judith Barry: Now Showing, February 2015,
<https://www.theshowroom.org/events/cinenova-now-showing-february>

Marina Vishmidt and Claire Hope Live Q&A, 'Now Showing: Claire Hope', February, 2014, Transcript from Audio Recording (edited for clarity and relevance)

Screening Programme website, 'You Are Good', March 2019, <http://www.you-are-good.website/>

Adam Pugh, 'Claire Hope: Group Photo', This is Tomorrow, March 2014,
<http://thisistomorrow.info/articles/claire-hope-group-photo>

It is becoming difficult to know where we stop representing and start being represented; where the shift in agency from scriptwriter to actor occurs. Complicated by contradictory concepts of self and other, the individualist promise of capitalism and the consequent erosion of the social, it is this shifting territory that Claire Hope's assured new commission traverses.

In front of the studio's infinity curve, a group of people pose for a portrait. The cold blue light, the way they are dressed, the fact that they do not smile suggest formality, perhaps a corporate shot. The camera scans feet, torsos, heads in separate passes, and the men and women shift poses, presumably when directed, bodies swaying almost imperceptibly, faces stiffening.

Now under a magenta cast, the subjects begin to move. An arm unfolds, white skin bright, its hand un-clenched. But the people's smiles fix and then wither, the scene stale, the poses rigid. The fingers of a man's hand are opened out by someone else, a transgressive yet oddly formal act. The back of another hand methodically rubs that of its neighbour, not intimately but perfunctorily, in a business-like fashion. Their gestures are all at sea.

The last section sees the group laughing together, clasping hands, hugging. They are so natural, so easy. It makes sense as a narrative, from the cold fixed poses of the first, through the loosening of the second to the overcoming of strictures in the last, a return to true intercourse. Except that the lights are still on, the scene still set, and there is the nagging sense that this, too, is neither spontaneous nor the end of a neat story but a warm-up, the trust exercise of the drama class, a foil to fool.

If this is not the group as themselves, where do they exist? Where does the script stop? It becomes unclear whether we are seeing actors acting or watching them acting acting.

It is this expert dissolution of the perimeter of script and scripted that activates 'Group Photo'. The logic that the work exposes moves from specific incidences to general laws; types of group photo to sets of behaviour, our actions on a grander stage directed according to a defined set of roles. Its silence implies, demonstrates, that script robs us of voice: yet it is not so much that there is a problem with acting the parts offered, more the extent to which we perceive that we are doing so, and agree to accept the deterministic contract which they set out.

Amy Charlesworth (Gallery II Curator), 'Group Photo Review', Unpublished, March 2014

Group Photo is a decidedly unnerving work. As we watch - letting the camera's track assimilate our gaze - we patiently await the event. The event, however, never arrives. The more you watch, the clearer it becomes that you are witnessing a process, a process that makes us acutely aware of our own physicality and the demands of scrutiny that we place on ourselves and others.

Whether it be a hand inappropriately yet mechanistically caressing another or a dazzling smile revelling food stuck between teeth, we as viewers, are both drawn in and repelled by this tripartite moving-image work. The smiles can be inviting, expressions genuine but the viewer cannot relax. The torso of a middle-aged woman sits centre shot, the woman's folded arms mimicking the faux lackadaisical posture adopted by those asked to sit at the front of the group photo formation. From this pose the woman sits back, removing her crossed arms that lay over her crossed legs and reveals the mid-section of her body. For a split second you feel what you assume to be her vulnerability, that is until she confidently rearranges her top, for her own comfort and definitely folds her arms, tightly across her chest. This scene renders you voyeur, owner of the image for a split-second, before the protagonist re-claims the space and her body in a few deft gestures.

As the camera travels across the heads, feet and torsos of the protagonists you strain for imperfections: the creases in the shirt, the vulnerable open palm, the bitten nails, the tensile fabric fraught across the shirt buttons. As the group of five move between a range of permutations recognisable as the 'generic' group photo, whether corporate, familial or intimate one is drawn to fixate on the in-between state. As the radiant smile fades to match the empty stare, we as viewers are privy to the moment that the camera click can never quite capture. Or, if it does would be rendered a failure. It would be the dud shot: the shot the photographer missed, for the group would be asked to 'smile' once more, on the count of one, two, three...

Installed on three synchronised wall-mounted flat screens you move, just catching, the start of each shot from screen one through to three. The direction you walk and the gaze you are compelled to cast as viewer is highly directive. Although at the polar opposite of the cool grey-blue screen appears the flesh-warm tones in which the protagonists no longer display awkward distance but rather delightful intimacy, through warm embrace and animated chatter, the installation remains silent. Such an install, with the quietly poised invigilator sat behind the desk, positioned just that little bit too close to the final screen draws the entire architecture of the space and the standard ways of behaviour to attention. Compelled, and/or expected to act a certain way, the question of contemplation is added to the experience of the viewer in the space.

This confrontation with the institutionalised gallery space speaks to the participatory notion in a manner that closely maps social interaction under capitalism. The aims of what is now, often too comfortably termed, 'socially-engaged' art, puts interaction between people at the centre of the political and critically engaged artwork. Here, in Group Photo, the artist reminds us, or rather asks us to confront that those idyllic enclaves of personal interactions are not de facto absolved from capitalist exchange. How might this explicitly utopian turn to the value of social relations and bonds, be understood, however, Claire Hope exploits those social bonds to explore the increased objectification of the human body and its relation to other bodies?

Continues on next page

**Amy Charlesworth (Gallery II
Curator), 'Group Photo Review',
Unpublished, March 2014
(Continued text)**

Stewart Martin, in his 2007 'Critique of Relational Aesthetics' notes that Nicolas Bourriaud neglects to acknowledge that social relations are as easily reified as any object-based artistic practice. Martin argues that Bourriaud fails to note that value, for Marx, is not attributed to the object but rather to the necessary, socially invested labour-time it takes to make the object. Thus, the extreme reification, and thus fetishisation, of the social exchange becomes the commodified object. Thus social exchange is at just as much risk of commodification as the 'object-based' artwork might be: Group Photo makes much work of this premise.

The work renders the void between who we might be and how we might wish to identify ourselves tangible. Our outward projections, and their internalisations, are mediated through a whole proliferation of imagery that is pervasive in forming our experience of day-to-day life. It is this critical attention to how we experience others, how our interactions with them shift according to the demands of our surroundings and ultimately how we project ourselves accordingly that makes Group Photo a quiet, subtle, though largely confrontational work; a work that looks to the reification and mediation of social relations.

Amy Charlesworth

Curator, Gallery II, University of Bradford

2014

**Gallery II, University of Bradford,
'Group Photo', Press Release,
February 2014**
[https://www.brad.ac.uk/gallery/
whats-on/past-
exhibitions/2014/spring-
14/claire-hope-group-photo/](https://www.brad.ac.uk/gallery/whats-on/past-exhibitions/2014/spring-14/claire-hope-group-photo/)

Gallery II at the University of Bradford invites you to the preview of
Claire Hope | GROUP PHOTO

13 February 5 - 8 pm at Gallery II

GROUP PHOTO runs 14 February - 13 March 2014 at Gallery II. Entry is free. Artist Claire Hope bases her commissioned moving image work for Gallery II on the generic group photograph. Yet in this staged work, how the group behave and are viewed by the camera, also how we as viewers feel about them becomes increasingly unpredictable. The work draws on emotional extremes common to contemporary media's reality shows, competitions, not least cinema and web-based media - which may invite a powerful empathy towards those we watch - as often as a 'judging' coldness. Where such extremes seem to amplify wider attitudes in social life, like valorising love or achievement, in this moving image work affection and assessment become the poles around which the formal and promotional group photograph is depicted. But the contrast between these imagined portraits, and the way the camera treats the group, seems to invite different sorts of action and interaction.

Claire Hope (UK, 1977) has exhibited and screened her artwork widely in the UK and abroad including with Black Maria, London; Wysing Arts, Cambridge; David Dale Gallery, Glasgow; LUX, London; Mains d'Oeuvres Arts Centre, Paris; Tank.tv online; S1/ Salon09, Sheffield; Transmediale festival, Berlin. Claire graduated with an MA Fine Art from Chelsea College of Art in 2004 and is currently studying for a Practice-led PhD in Fine Art at the University of Leeds. She is also a former LUX Associate Artist and Lecturer in Fine Art.

Claire Hope, 'Group Photo',
February 2014

GROUP PHOTO

In this publication artist Claire Hope takes extreme shifts in actor's behaviour from her moving image work 'Group Photo', and translates them into a new disjuncture between image and text. Both the moving image work and the publication were commissioned by Gallery II, University of Bradford.



The group relax their poses



The group are physically affectionate



The pair stand side by side, one facing front with no smile, the other angled, smiling



The pair gaze at each other with feeling



The group talk animatedly



The group play, their actions unpredictable

Claire Hope (UK, 1977) has exhibited and screened her artwork widely in the UK and abroad including with Black Maria, London; Wysing Arts, Cambridge; David Dale Gallery, Glasgow; LUX, London; Mains d'Oeuvres Arts Centre, Paris; Tank.tv online; S1/ Salon09, Sheffield; Transmediale festival, Berlin. Claire graduated with an MA Fine Art from Chelsea College of Art in 2004 and is currently studying for a Practice-led PhD in Fine Art at the University of Leeds. She is also a former LUX Associate Artist and Lecturer in Fine Art.

'Group Photo' was commissioned by Amy Charlesworth, Curator of Arts at Gallery II, University of Bradford and exhibited at the gallery 14th February - 13th March 2014. Whilst there is no formal academic department devoted to the Arts at Bradford, the University fully supports and invests in its Arts on Campus programme, which includes theatre, music and visual arts. Gallery II extends beyond the boundaries of the arts venue into public spaces and places and plays a key role in the cultural life of the campus and the city, through its exhibitions, events, partnership projects and artist residencies. The gallery works to create opportunities for artists to make new work and seeks to create innovative and flexible ways in which they can interact with the institution, its stakeholders and the wider world.

Artist Claire Hope based her commissioned moving image work for Gallery II on the generic group photograph. Yet in this staged work, how the group behave and are viewed by the camera, also how we as viewers feel about them becomes increasingly unpredictable. The work draws on emotional extremes common to contemporary media's reality shows, competitions, not least cinema and web-based media – which may invite a powerful empathy towards those we watch - as often as a 'judging' coldness. Where such extremes seem to amplify wider attitudes in social life, like valorising love or achievement, in this moving image work affection and assessment become the poles around which the formal and promotional group photograph is depicted. But the contrast between these imagined portraits, and the way the camera treats the group, seems to invite different sorts of action and interaction.

'Group Photo' was supported by:



Sean Ashton, Members of the Cast, Commissioned text for Live Reading Event, March 2014

Members of the Cast

My agent's right: some of us can do it and some of us can't. Smile, I mean.

Take a look at the mugshots on Spotlight. How many of us are smiling?

Maybe one in ten? It's inadvisable. Unless you're a natural smiler. And even then.

'I know it's not strictly done,' said the director, when she asked us to go on smiling, to hold it way beyond what was normal, 'I know it's a fleeting thing, a smile, and not a permanent fixture, but it's what I want – it's what I want you to do.'

We'd tried several things before we hit on smiling. Frowning was too easy. It made our faces all look the same: like bad portraits of Lenin. Horror was a joke – we couldn't stop corpsing.

'OK, then,' she said, after we'd tried horror, 'dread. Do dread.'

'Dread?'

'You know, the way your face goes when the wolves are still half a mile distant?'

She was a good director. We had rapport. We liked the things she said to get us to do stuff. But dread's not as easy as it looks. It kept coming out as embarrassment, mortification, so we abandoned dread and took five while she had a rethink.

When I came back from the toilet, everyone was stood in a line looking crestfallen: Ross, Sarah, Kesh and Carmen.

'We're doing disappointment now,' said Ross, as the Steadicam panned along their faces.

'Looks more like dismay to me,' I said.

'Dismay?' said the director. 'Dismay? I thought we had it – I thought we'd nailed disappointment.'

'No,' I said. 'This is disappointment.'

'Call that disappointment,' said Kesh. 'I call it mild irritation.'

Everyone laughed. All this time I'd been mildly irritated when I thought I'd been disappointed.

'Do that again,' said the director.

She was talking to me.

'Do what again?'

'The way your mouth went, just after you stopped laughing.'

'This?'

'That's it. Hold that.' She span round and faced the others. 'All of you.'

It was not so much a smile as the residue of a smile. Some of us were doubtful, but the director insisted it was so.

'A smile is like a stain,' she said, pacing up and down. 'At first it's quite prominent. And then, after a while, all you see is a slight discolouration.' She stopped at the end of the line, where I'd fallen in with the others. 'Every expression leaves a trace. A residue.

That's what I want to see: not the expression itself, but the residue. I want to watch your smiles dry up. I want to see them evaporate. I want this on camera. Now.'

So we stood there, in line, evaporating, holding our smiles till the blood left our lips and all that remained was the ventriloquist's grimace. And she swore she could see it, she swore she could still see everything else, the expressions that had been there before: the disapproving frown, the vaudevillian horror, the wild shots at disappointment that came out as dismay, all the things that had preceded the smile.

Of course, we already knew that smiles had a residue. We'd just forgotten, that's all. We knew it intuitively: that each expression is less an embodiment of a distinct emotion, than a point on a continuum. An actor is not a striker of poses, but a pitch-bender of emotional frequencies. The hardest thing of all is to remain locked on a single channel. Very few can do so without appearing ridiculous, but some excel at it. Paul Darrow, for example. You don't see it so much in his current role as Eddy Fox on Emmerdale, but the success of Blake's 7 was due largely to the enigma of his face, which remained fixed throughout fifty episodes in an expression of perfect moral ambiguity, somewhere between a sneer, a smile and a look of resignation, an expression that said: I am Kerr Avon, supreme sceptic of the known universe.

**Sean Ashton, Members of the
Cast, Commissioned text for
Live Reading Event, March 2014
Continued.**

We also knew that gestures had a prelude. But again, we had to be reminded of the fact. We already knew it instinctively, of course, we already knew that gestures have a beginning, middle and end, especially those that result in physical contact with another actor. But that wasn't what she was getting at. The prelude of the gesture was less to do with an actor's timing, and more a product of audience expectation: a hand might reach out and touch another hand; then again it might not.

'Usually,' said the director, 'your task is to keep both possibilities alive, so that when the hand does reach out – onstage or onscreen – there is drama.'

There was a murmur of excitement at this word. For the truth was there'd been minimal drama to what we'd been doing so far. Our excitement was premature: 'It's this drama that I wish to eliminate,' continued the director. 'Your gestures should be matter-of-fact.

Perfunctory. When you touch, contact should be inevitable. Inevitable rather than dramatic.'

'So no drama at all, then,' clarified Carmen.

'As little as you can manage,' said the director.

She wanted the non-contact to be inevitable too: for the space between the hands to be emptier, somehow, than it already was. This would enable the camera to focus on what really mattered: the folds and creases in our clothing, the way the light caught the fabric, the rise and fall of the gut as we drew breath.

'Can you do that again?' she asked, as she watched me exhale.

'Sure,' I said. 'I'll just need to inhale first.'

'Excellent,' said the director. 'Excellent.'

Is she at all interested in us? we whispered, as we performed these tasks. Is she at all interested?

When we stopped for lunch, the others sent me over to ask.

'Don't take this the wrong way,' I said, 'but it seems like you just want the bare essentials of our humanity, the more peripheral aspects of our being, if I can put it like that: the residue of our expressions, the preludes of our gestures, the brute fact of our existence. It seems like you want this rather than – well, rather than

us.'

The director was slumped in her chair, running a finger round the rim of her wineglass, trying to make it sing, but all you could hear was a dull squeak.

'I think it's time for the group activity,' she said, when she finally looked up.

We were looking forward to this. We'd been promised that, in addition to standing motionless for long periods and repeating basic movements, and repeating them again till we got them right, there'd be something at the end, something that would enable us to show what we could really do, what we were capable of. When we reconvened, the director lined us up by the far wall and began to address us from her position at the table.

'I've been watching you all very closely,' she said, 'as individuals and as a group. You,' she said to Kesh, 'I love the way you tilt your head.' 'Me?'

'Yes, you. Especially when you tilt it to the left.'

We waited for her to continue – we were sure it was the beginning of a more comprehensive appraisal of Kesh's talents – but she moved on immediately to Sarah.

'Love the way you blink,' she said.

'Thanks,' said Sarah. 'I've had a lifetime's experience.'

'Haven't we all. But the way you do it – it's fresh. By the way, is anyone having this?'

The director reached for the bottle and emptied it without waiting for an answer. Then she got up from her chair and began to approach us, unsteadily, her glass brimming with pinot: 'I feel that your skills,' she said, veering towards Ross, 'I feel that your skills are more difficult to place. If I were to tell you, quite simply, that I like the shape of you, that I dig the weft of your hair, the heft of your forearms, the crotch of your jeans, would you take that in the spirit in which it's meant?'

'You're drunk,' said Ross.

**Sean Ashton, Members of the
Cast, Commissioned text for
Live Reading Event, March 2014
Continued.**

The director reached out, leaning on him for support. 'Be that as it may,' she said, 'I am still the director... Carmen?'

'Yes?'

'Can I ask you a question? You don't have to answer, it's just that I'm curious.'

'Go ahead.'

'Where did you learn to roll up your sleeve in such an interesting way? So deliberately? So methodically? Without fuss, without – what's the word I'm looking for – without fanfare?'

'Well,' said Carmen. 'I have a confession to make.'

The director held up her hand: 'Don't tell me: it's the first time, isn't it? The first time you've rolled your sleeve up over your elbow? Not just on camera. Ever.'

Carmen nodded and let out an embarrassed laugh. It was more of a splutter than a laugh, like she'd been holding it in all day.

Finally, the director turned to me.

'Let me guess,' I said. 'You like the way I breathe?'

'I love the way you breathe,' said the director. 'That goes without saying. Especially as part of an ensemble. But more than that, I like the way you sit. I like the way you all sit, actually, but you, Alyson, that thing you do with your legs, the way you cross and uncross them, while simultaneously folding and unfolding your arms – I go so far as to call it your signature.'

It was intended as high praise, and I had little option but to take as such. I'd been asked – we'd all been asked – not to perform for the camera, but to exist for it. That, and nothing more. And we'd acquitted ourselves ably. But how did we bring these skills to bear on our group activity? That's what I wanted to know.

'Our what?' said the director.

'Our group activity,' said Carmen.

'Yeah,' said Sarah. 'You said there'd be one.'

It didn't look like there was going to be, not now. While critiquing my performance, the director had returned to the table and begun gathering up her things. She already had her coat on and was moving towards the door, and we thought that would be that; but before leaving she stopped, turned, and dispensed one final piece

of direction: 'Very well,' she said. 'Very well. All that I have denied you is now permitted. Where I have forbidden warmth, I now encourage it; where I have forbidden candour, I now grant it; where I have counselled restraint and self-composure, I now advise recklessness; where I have asked for distance, I now authorise intimacy; where I have called for a disavowal of your natural thespian instincts, I now invite both tragedy and farce. Where I have censored drama, I now sanction it.' The director drained her glass and placed it on a window sill. 'In short, everything we were doing before, I now exhort you to do the opposite.'

And then she was gone. The door continued flapping for several seconds, her exit receding in the stairwell beyond: the scrape of her heels, the buzz of the security lock on the ground floor below, a brief howl of traffic as she found the street. Then silence.

I don't know who said it. I don't know who it was that said action. A male voice, I think. All that matters is that someone said it. And as soon as they said it, everyone knew what to do. Everyone knew exactly what to do.

Claire Hope, 'Performing Attachment: A Counter-alienating Practice?', Capitalism's Bodies' Symposium, Critical Researches into Capitalism Research Group, University of Leeds, February 2016 (relevant section)

I produced Group Photo in 2014 as a solo moving image installation. I discussed this work in my PhD thesis as the basis for a suggested reframing of the classic critiques of spectatorship in fine art. I suggested that viewers may seek proxy agencies through their affective, attachment-based experience of other people via images. This is underscored by inequality whereby those we watch in images tend to be in a better or worse situation than us; I suggested that despite the proliferation of social media the disparity between the life of the viewer and those in the image, remains marked in capitalism.

There are three parts to Group Photo: the first refers most directly to the group photograph by showing the group in static poses, the second involves choreographed movements that negotiate possible intimacies, and the third freer shows collaborative interaction by the group. There is a strict limitation of what the camera will show, i.e. the 'cold' images interrogate parts of bodies, while the 'warm' images create 'couples'.

(Showing Part Two - from 3.19 minutes)

In this section of Group Photo, the limitations of the 'photographic' poses by the group are disrupted and the two controlling 'aesthetics' of the camera are met by the actors who let themselves be interrogated in the image, or who 'become' couples or intimate. In the context of my Post-Doctoral project 'Performing Attachment', this section of the moving image work deliberately employs limited gestures of affection: hands on arms, held hands, hands on face. Yet they are employed in such a way that we cannot predict their order, or how they will be approached. Also, while they appear to be an effective liberation from the stillness of the first part of the moving image work, they remain constraining and limited, albeit a preface to a broader 'release' from constraint in the final part of the work.

Where Group Photo deliberately referred to, and sought to disrupt what we as viewers expect from people in images, late last year, I

began to consider and witness the creativity that is possible between people in a context of human attachment. By this I mean the seemingly innovative ways in which attached people use each others' bodies as a site to inhabit, a place to spend time, relax or from which to explore an interest, for instance. An example of this would be a young child using her sister's lap, and the armchair in which she is sitting, as a place to lay across - a good vantage point from which to watch television at close range. Here, the sister's body becomes a safe place, a site I would connect to Mary Ainsworth's term in Attachment Theory - a secure base. Not only can this attachment-figure be explored as a safe site from which to act or move, they can be returned to - after wider exploration, again and again. In using this example I would draw on Judith Butler's emphasis on siblings and their importance within a context of attachment relationships - as opposed to the well-known emphasis on the quality of the mother-child relationship in attachment theory.

Contrary to this the more limited depiction of gestures in intimate relationships in Hollywood cinema, contemporary television series and social media is notable. At the level of manufactured culture, produced under the capitalist system with significant financial resources, the generally codified nature of intimate gestures jumps out. The Hays code had a significant effect on Hollywood cinema between 1930 and 1966, but what of the films that have followed. Complex series of camera shots are still often carefully paced to reveal, in close-up, at the right moment, a hand touched with another hand. This was highlighted and subverted in the recent Todd Haynes film Carol (2015) in which a hand placed by Carol on Therese's shoulder in public, is interrogated as an important moment of intimacy, and of potential separation. The depiction of family life rarely seems to contain the kind of relatively abstract shapes and situations a child's body may achieve with a parent or a sibling, for instance. Rather these forms of creativity tend to reside more so in private spaces, such as in the family home.

**Claire Hope, 'Performing Attachment: A Counter-alienating Practice?', Capitalism's Bodies' Symposium, Critical Researches into Capitalism Research Group, University of Leeds, February 2016 (relevant section)
Continued.**

Similarly, in social media, perhaps due to the common charge of 'narcissism', the representation of 'self' can dominate. In terms of relationships, the emphasis tends towards the documentation of events, nights out and occasions - effectively public forms of meeting that are represented in a knowing way. The matter of actions and interactions produced especially for the camera provides a further counterpoint to the almost defenceless forms of interacting that can result from attachment relationships.

For me, the apparent creativity present between people who are closely attached goes beyond gesture. To an extent, the limitations or constraints of gesture are overcome or even obliterated by what happens between people in life. Representations of other people in images in capitalism still seem deliberately constrained. A familiar narrative, in classic Hollywood cinema, and broader, is the journey from a state of being single to one of being in a relationship. Here, the physical separation of fictional protagonists throughout the film aids the impact of the conclusion that involves touch, or kissing, for instance. While the family life and states human attachment which follow such romantic denouements are a focus in cinema, points of struggle or drama around the family seem more so highlighted.

For the Performing Attachment project this creates a context where the performance of attachment, notably by people who are not otherwise attached, becomes the focus. The planned project involves working with actors, and students in workshops with a moving image work, and hoped for later live performance commission, derived from this process. I am interested in the knowledge that actors have, in particular about codified depictions of intimacy.

**Press Release, Claire Hope and
Judith Barry: Now Showing,
February 2015,
[https://www.theshowroom.org/
events/cinenova-now-showing-
february](https://www.theshowroom.org/events/cinenova-now-showing-february)**

Now Showing intends to materialise relationships between contemporary artist moving image practice and the feminist and organising legacies present in the Cinenova collection. The format of the series is that an artist filmmaker is invited to select a film from the Cinenova collection which they would like to screen alongside a work of theirs.

For February's screening Claire Hope will show her 2014 work Group Photo, (9mins) alongside Judith Barry's Kaleidoscope, (50mins) 1978.

Claire Hope, Group Photo, Digital video, 9mins, 2014
Commissioned by Gallery II, Bradford in 2014 Group Photo is based on the generic group photograph. Yet in this staged work, how the group behave and are viewed by the camera, also how we as viewers feel about them becomes increasingly unpredictable. The work draws on emotional extremes common to contemporary media's reality shows, competitions, not least cinema and web-based media – which may invite a powerful empathy towards those we watch – as often as a 'judging' coldness. Where such extremes seem to amplify wider attitudes in social life, like valorising love or achievement, in this moving image work affection and assessment become the poles around which the formal and promotional group photograph is depicted. But the contrast between these imagined portraits, and the way the camera treats the group, seems to invite different sorts of action and interaction.

Judith Barry, Kaleidoscope, 50mins, 1978
Originally performed over a two-week period at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, these five-minute scenes juggle with domestic situations and probe the dynamics of a couple's daily interactions – but in this instance the male character is cleverly played by a woman. Popular conventions from TV, cinema and theatre are used to draw attention to issues raised by middle-class feminism. The format parodies typical soap opera programmes and in so doing highlights how, in its attempt to

reflect ordinary life, soap opera grossly distorts reality through over-dramatisation and compacting events. Barry hints and puts across the feeling that women then tended to seek solutions to their problems within the confines of personal relationships, instead of pursuing them in the outside world where they really intended changes to take place.

Cinenova Feminist Film and Video Distributor was founded in 1991 following the merger of two feminist film and video distributors, Circles and Cinema of Women. Each was formed in the early 1980s in response to the lack of recognition of women in the history of the moving image. Both organisations, although initially self-organised and unfunded, aimed to provide the means to support the production and distribution of women's work in this area, and played critical roles in the creation of an independent and radical media.

**Marina Vishmidt and Claire Hope
Live Q&A, 'Now Showing: Claire
Hope', February, 2014,
Transcript from Audio Recording
(edited for clarity and relevance)**

MV: I guess maybe I could just start by seeing if you want to talk about the research project, or artistic project, that Group Photo was in a way the inception of and where you've gone with that since then?

CH: Yeah, sure. Group Photo was a piece of work that I made during my PhD, that I completed last year and it became the basis for what I was trying to do, which was to in some way reframe classic perspectives on spectatorship. What I was trying to suggest was that we are potentially using people we are viewing in images as proxy attachments and means of pursuing particular forms of agency, which obviously function generally in relation to a fairly reduced idea of life that might be represented in the kind of images that we are engaging with whether it be in visual media or social media.

So, Group Photo in relation to that was an intended self-conscious response to the idea of viewing really, the idea of watching someone else in an image. I wanted to disrupt our expectations of people in images and how we might engage with them. But at the same time refer a great deal to a lot of tropes, which is one of the reasons I picked the Judith Barry work. There was this idea which has continued into the project I'm working on at the moment, of constraint and of how, when you think of actors in a space being photographed and filmed, in Group Photo you get a sense of how constraining that is and how limiting it is to some extent. What I was interested in doing was having these self-conscious devices, say for instance the two extremes in colour which tie to particular regimes of treating bodies, so the blue tones were this kind of interrogative approach to bodies, always trying to look at details, and the warmer one was creating a proxy relationships, so in other words the group could never be seen as a group, even when they were interacting in a freer way. So even though there is a narrative that is a release of the group from this constraint in the first part of the work to the end of the work, it's compromised because we still don't see the group in full and there is a lot that's controlling about

the image...

MV: and maybe a final practical question, I guess with [Judith Barry's] Kaleidoscope and the intensity and multi-valent role that dialogue plays there, I was interested in why sound was not part of a group photo, so if you have ideas about how sound can come into your frame of work, or why it's an absence that needs to be pronounced?

CH: I think it's the first silent work I've ever made, there is usually a lot of dialogue in my work, lots and lots. I knew with this work it was about the photograph, I saw the space and the work was made very much in response to the academic context because I was thinking of these two kinds of photographs, the academic achievement photograph, where there is a hockey team or something shot in maybe daylight, not that flatteringly and then the group in advertising, I was thinking of young people who look like students being in advertising in a university setting, promoting courses or something. So there was this sense of it being a photograph, obviously the photographs could be silent in a sense. But I was thinking of sound throughout making it and there was one of those moments where I realised, I don't need it. But I was trying to work with it, it just felt like it didn't need it, and for me I like how unnerving it is without sound, it feels a bit uncomfortable, for me still seeing it without sound.

**Screening Programme website,
'You Are Good', March 2019,
<http://www.you-are-good.website/>**

You Are Good

A screening program of video works that explore tentative forms of intimacy, survival and vernacular speech.

12-16 March, 2019

Organized by New York-based artist Daniel Lichtman, with local artists invited by each venue. Touring to The Islington Mill, Salford (12 March); The Tetley, Leeds (13 March); Humber Street Gallery, Hull (14 March); and Kunstraum, London (16 March)

Alternately building and dismantling vocabularies of trust, works in this program sometimes appear to gaze directly at you, the viewer, and at other times look elsewhere, or entirely away. Working with scripted and improvised speech, human and non-human bodies, videos in You Are Good explore an expanded idea of wilderness, defined by language, desire and corporeality.

Including:

Bill Santen, based in New York -- Dark Green -- a video portrait of Lexington, Kentucky environmentalist, Kris Kelly. The documentary follows Kelly as she contemplates moving from fake wilderness into what she considers the real thing—urban wilderness.

Michael Barnes-Wynters, based in Hull (invited by Humber St. Gallery) — Hull Legend — an intimate interview with 'Hull Legend' DJ Roscoe.

Claire Potter, based in West Yorkshire — Cast Metal Nut — in which Potter explores several body positions in a woodland: crouching by the stream, lying on a tree, sheltering by a rock, looking at the ready-made image of 'the lad'.

Asta Gröting, based in Berlin - The Inner Voice, 16 Years, 1999-2015 — in which Native American ventriloquist Buddy Big Mountain performs a therapeutic conversation with his alter-ego puppet, first in first in 1999 and again in 2015.

Claire Hope, based in Leeds (invited by Poor Image Projects / The Tetley) — Group Photo — in which the moment of taking a group photo is extended and manipulated through time.

Ria Hartley, based in Salford (invited by The Islington Mill) — The Representational Body — in which Hartley coats the body with

paint, tape, fruits and vegetables, exploring notions of ancestry, mythology and ritual.

Jemima Stehli, based in London — She Looks Back - Jemima Stehli naked, films If Lucy fell, Ze Dos Bois, Lisbon 27/11/09 — in which Stehli, naked, films Portuguese indie rock band, If Lucy Fell during a live concert.

Maia Conran, based in London — Meat — featuring a film studio lighting rig that is repurposed as the protagonist of a scripted psycho-narrative only to be disrupted by its counter-character, Meat.

Sarah Duffy, based in London (invited by Kunstraum) — The Island — in which an island's previous occupants wander its landscape long after the erasure of all their physical traces.

PRESS RELEASES

Newly commissioned moving image work by artist Claire Hope

[View this email in your browser](#)



Gallery II at the University of Bradford invites you to the preview of

Claire Hope | GROUP PHOTO

13 February 5 - 8 pm at [Gallery II](#)

GROUP PHOTO runs 14 February - 13 March 2014 at Gallery II. Entry is free.

Artist Claire Hope bases her commissioned moving image work for Gallery II on the generic group photograph. Yet in this staged work, how the group behave and are viewed by the camera, also how we as viewers feel about them becomes increasingly unpredictable. The work draws on emotional extremes common to contemporary media's reality shows, competitions, not least cinema and web-based media – which may invite a powerful empathy towards those we watch - as often as a 'judging' coldness. Where such extremes seem to amplify wider attitudes in social life, like valorising love or achievement, in this moving image work affection and assessment become the poles around which the formal and promotional group photograph is depicted. But the contrast between these imagined portraits, and the way the camera treats the group, seems to invite different sorts of action and interaction.

Claire Hope (UK, 1977) has exhibited and screened her artwork widely in the UK and abroad including with Black Maria, London; Wysing Arts, Cambridge; David Dale Gallery, Glasgow; LUX, London; Mains d'Oeuvres Arts Centre, Paris; [Tank.tv](#) online; S1/ Salon09, Sheffield; Transmediale festival, Berlin. Claire graduated with an MA Fine Art from Chelsea College of Art in 2004 and is currently studying for a Practice-led PhD in Fine Art at the University of Leeds. She is also a former LUX Associate Artist and Lecturer in Fine Art.

<http://www.clairehope.co.uk>

Gallery II opening hours

Monday to Friday: 11am - 5pm

Thursday: 11am - 6pm

If you would like to arrange a visit outside these hours, please [contact us](#)

PRESS RELEASES

Members of the Cast - Reading of a Short Story by Sean Ashton **Tuesday 11 March, 6 - 7 pm, Gallery II, free and open to all**

'Members of the Cast' is an imagined conversation between the director of 'Group Photo' and its protagonists. Read by Alyson Marks, Ashton's story presents a scenario in which the actors, rather than being asked to 'perform' for the camera, are required merely to exist for it. Sean was specially invited by Claire Hope, as part of the Gallery II 'Group Photo' commission to produce a text to be read publicly in response to the project.

Sean Ashton is a writer of fiction and criticism. A regular contributor to *Art Review*, his recent essays and stories include 'Post-Avant-garde Provocation', in the book *Provocation* (Transmission, 2012), and 'Mr Heggarty Goes Down' in the forthcoming issue of the philosophy journal *Collapse* (Vol. VIII). He is the author of the book *Sunsets and Dogshits* (Alma, 2007), a collection of reviews of imaginary cultural phenomena.



Image: video still *Group Photo*, courtesy of artist, Claire Hope

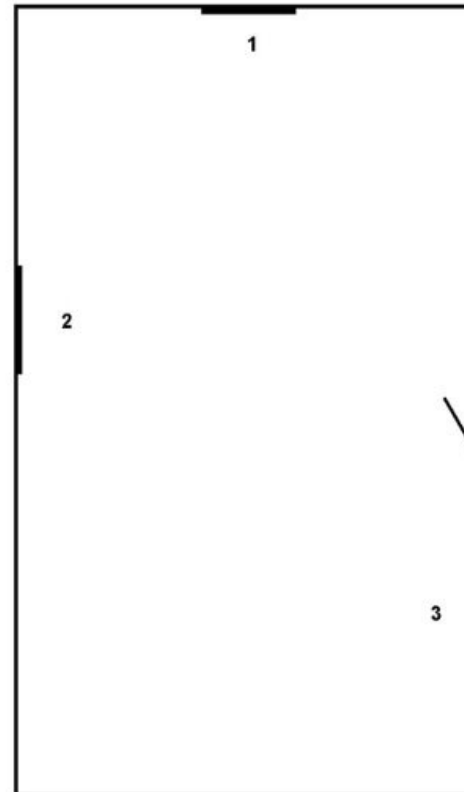
PRESS RELEASES

GROUP PHOTO | Claire Hope 14 February – 13 March

Gallery II, University of Bradford

Artist Claire Hope bases her commissioned moving image work for Gallery II on the generic group photograph. Yet in this staged work, how the group behave and are viewed by the camera, also how we as viewers might feel about them becomes increasingly unpredictable. The work draws on emotional extremes common to contemporary media's reality shows, competitions, not least cinema and web-based media – which may invite a powerful empathy towards those we watch - as often as a 'judging' coldness. Where such extremes seem to amplify wider attitudes in social life, like valorising love or achievement, in this moving image work affection and assessment become the poles around which the formal and promotional group photograph is depicted. But the contrast between these imagined portraits, and the way the camera treats the group, seems to invite different sorts of action and interaction.

Gallery II plan of GROUP PHOTO 1 - 3



PRESS RELEASES

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Event | 11 March 6-7 pm, free and open to all

'Members of the Cast' – Reading of a Short Story by Sean Ashton

'Members of the Cast' is an imagined conversation between the director of 'Group Photo' and its protagonists. Read by Alyson Marks, Ashton's story presents a scenario in which the actors, rather than being asked to 'perform' for the camera, are required merely to exist for it. Sean was specially invited by Claire Hope, as part of the Gallery II 'Group Photo' commission to produce a text to be read publicly in response to the project.

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Credits:

Actors: Alyson Marks, Carmen Martorell, Ross Newell, Sarah Oldknow, Kesh Sharma

Cinematographer: Will Simpson, Omni Pictures Ltd

Studio: Omni Pictures Ltd, Leeds

Equipment & Installation: Lumen Arts Ltd, Leeds

Direction and Editing: Claire Hope



SOCIAL MEDIA




SOCIAL MEDIA




SOCIAL MEDIA


 **Claire Hope**
February 12, 2014 · 

Opening of 'Group Photo' newly commissioned three screen moving image work at Gallery II, Bradford tomorrow 5-8pm. The exhibition is open from 14 February to 13 March with an event on Tuesday 11th March. <http://www.brad.ac.uk/gallery/whats-on/>







BRAD.AC.UK
What's On
Artist Claire Hope bases her commissioned moving image work f...


 Fiona Allen, Sean Ashton and 14 others 2 Comments 1 Share



GROUP PHOTO - Claire Hope - video
14 views · 4 Aug 2014

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TM Theatre in the Mill
5 subscribers




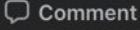
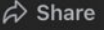
 **Claire Hope**
March 4, 2014 · 

Event next week - Members of the Cast, Reading of a Short Story by Sean Ashton, 6-7pm, 11/3/14 at Gallery II, Bradford

'Members of the Cast' is an imagined conversation between the director of 'Group Photo' and its protagonists. Read by Alyson Marks, Ashton's story presents a scenario in which the actors, rather than being asked to 'perform' for the camera, are required merely to exist for it. Sean was specially invited by Claire Hope, as part of the Gallery II 'Group Photo... [See More](#)



 Sarah Oldknow, Sibyl A Fisher and 1 other 1 Share

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


 **Claire Hope**
February 17, 2016 · 🌐


Really looking forward to tomorrow's screening of 'Group Photo' with Judith Barry's 'Kaleidoscope' at **The Showroom** gallery, London in association with **Cinenova Distribution**. Includes Q&A with Marina Vishmidt. Details below...hope to see you there xx




THU, FEB 18, 2016
Cinenova | Now Showing
London
Nick, Fiona and 11 friends

 Sarah Salmon, Darren Farrell and 3 others 1 Comment


 Like  Comment  Share

 **Claire Hope**
April 13, 2016 · 👤



I'm screening new film 'Contact' 2016 with 'Group Photo', 2014 tomorrow 6-7.30pm Woodhouse Community Centre, Leeds. Places are free but you can book online via the link on the page below. <http://www.pavilion.org.uk/events/2016/Contact/>. Hope to see you there xx




PAVILION.ORG.UK
Pavilion — Claire Hope: Contact, 14 April 2016
a visual arts commissioning organisation in Leeds, UK

 Jim Richards, Lara Eggleton and 13 others

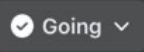
SOCIAL MEDIA

 **Claire Hope**
March 1, 2019 · 


I'm happy to be showing work in this screening on the 13th March organised by Daniel Lichtman invited by **Beth Hughes** and **Anya Stewart-Maggs** of Poor Image Projects via The Tetley, Leeds. The screening is also showing at Islington Mill, Manchester (12th), Humber Street Gallery, Hull (14th) and Kunstraum, London (16th). For more details: <http://www.you-are-good.website>.



WED, MAR 13, 2019

Screening: You Are Good 

Leeds
Simon, Marlo and 13 friends

 Anya Stewart-Maggs, Beth Hughes and 7 others

Keywords:

Moving image
Performance
Spectatorship
Images
Groups
Society
Visual culture

Key dates:

13th February 2014, Exhibition Launch, Group Photo, Gallery II Bradford
Exhibition open 14th February to 13th March 2014
11th March 2014, Live Reading Event, Group Photo, Gallery II Bradford
25th November 2015, Artist's Talk, University of Leeds
10th February 2016, Paper: 'Performing Attachment: A Counter-alienating Practice?', Critical Researches into Capitalism Research Group, University of Leeds
18th February 2016, Now Showing, Cinenova, Showroom Gallery, London
14th April 2016, Screening 'Group Photo' and 'Contact', Pavilion, Leeds
27th April 2016, Artist's Talk Sotheby's Institute, London Screenings 'You Are Good', 12-16 March 2019

Funding:

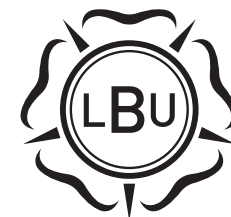
Arts Council England
Gallery II
University of Bradford University of Leeds.

Email:

c.hope@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

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