

YUEYUAN GONG

Yue Yuan Gong
Electronic Integrated Arts
Master Of Fine Arts

Thesis Committee

Peer Bode
Barbara Lattanzi
Xiaowen Chen

Division of Expanded Media School of Art and Design New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University

Acknowledgements

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I am thankful to the encouragement and support of my family and my friends who motivated and helped me to complete my thesis exhibition.



Relevant Concepts

Open your eyes and look at the topics and concepts which you are concerned about. You will find a more complete self and know yourself better. The topics and concepts which you are concerned about as an artist represent your opinions of this world. The artistic creation can clearly demonstrate ideas in your mind, which is actually self-knowledge and self-observation. The process of artistic creation will lead you to more consciously think about things that you care about. Some artists are interested in social topics and the interpersonal relationship. Some pay more attention to artistic interaction with the physical environment. Some are committed to studying philosophical and psychological topics. All in all, these are topics and concepts which are of concern to artists. Despite the differences, all these topics and concepts are a manifestation of their desire to affect the world. In the following part, I will try to open my eyes to examine the topics and concepts of my deepest concerns.

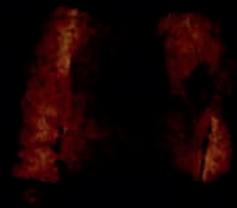


Negative Impulse
Three Channel Video
5 mins 20s loop
2018

Negative and Positive Impulses



The interrelationship between negative and positive impulses is a topic which I have been fascinated with in recent years. My interest in this topic first originates from *The Dark Side of the Light Chasers* a psychology book written by Debbie Ford. It also comes from my curiosity about my internal world. While reading this book, I got a deeper understanding of the “Negative Impulse” in ourselves.



What is “negative”? What is “positive”? In the world, the existence of light is demonstrated in different ways. It can refer to a high intensity illumination, such as sunshine and raging flames. It can be understood also in a psychological way. Light can be easy-going and vigorous, if it refers to a psychological state which is positive . This does not mean that the dark side doesn't exist. Then, what is “dark”? Darkness is opposite to light; it is negative. Darkness, as negative, refers to a passive psychological state, which is mainly characterized by pent-up feelings, loneliness, suppression, etc. Nevertheless, darkness is by no means equivalent to evil. Darkness is a description of a psychological state. I have found that almost everyone including me has a dark side, negative impulse, deep within. It is a side which one is unwilling to make known to others. In the current society, we are accustomed to showing our bright side, worrying that our negative impulse might arouse others' annoyance, for all of us are longing for love. I think that, whether there is the light or the darkness in our hearts, positive or negative impulses, we need to accept these states fully. The habit of hiding one's dark side makes one numb to its existence. I believe that I am not the only one that is concerned about internal world states nor the only one trying to strike a balance between the light and the dark. This is a meaningful topic and a topic worth further discussion. To sum up, when you open your eyes and when you see the negative and positive impulse within your heart, you will get a deeper understanding of yourself.



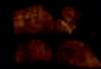
Identity



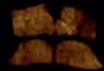
Identity is a topic which cannot be avoided in human society. In my work, disappearance of the characters' faces and sense organs is directly linked with the topic of identity. A face which is beyond recognition is just like a disappearing identity.

What is your name? Where are you from? The topic of identity has a close bearing on my growing up. I was born in an era when the Chinese economy started to take off, an era when new concepts quickly replaced old ones. Therefore, changes of people's concepts were as fast as economic developments. People like my parents knew who they were because they understood their roles in the society of the past. As society changed, their roles and ways of thinking, and their appearance also changed. The changes continue and are happening so fast that they sometimes feel lost temporarily, forgetting who they were previously.

The era of my parents witnessed increasing frequency of Eastern and Western cultural exchange. Many of the post-80s generation, deeply impacted by the Western culture, have gone to study in America. Like me, they have undergone what one might call a geographical and cultural baptism. This is a period of conflicts, new living habits that compete with old ones. These conflicts and changes also happen in my heart, arousing rising questions. I feel temporarily lost as I try to stick to something and change something as well.



Repetition and Variation



Repetition and variation is one of the structuring method used by me to create my artworks. My understanding of “repetition and variation” is inspired by Today, an artwork, by the Japanese artist On Kawara. Another inspiration is The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, an essay written by Walter Benjamin.



Today is an artwork series whose creation started in 1966. It lasted to until the death of On Kawara. In each work, he put down the date (day, month and year) when an artwork was created on the single-color background. The language of the city which he was in on that day was adopted. If he failed to finish a work on one day, the semi-finished work would be destroyed. When I saw paintings of On Kawara in Detroit Institute of Arts Museum, I felt confused about the time because these works are similar to each other, but in fact, each is different from the other. I suddenly realized that these works are delivering a special approach, namely repetition and variation, daily living and difference.

I was inspired by Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. This essay points out that we have now been ushered into an era where machines can copy almost everything and eliminate the sense of distance, exclusiveness and holiness of art. It also shows us that technologies along with social reforms have gradually affected aesthetic concepts. After reading this essay, I deeply realized that repetition and variation are also significant, particularly in the contemporary art video making process. In fact, the process of repetition and variation is a basic structuring method.



Deconstruction



Deconstruction is another idea of contemporary art. Deconstruction is a deviation from the logical order. Of course, the order does not refer to social order alone. Apart from the existing social and moral order, marriage order, ethics and moral standards, the order also refers to the order of individual consciousness, such as habits of thinking. Some deconstructionists make use of phrases but reverse them, reconstructing their relationships. The concept of deconstruction can be used to emphasize fragmentation, superposition, recombination, individuals and parts.

In this exhibition, the re-arrangement of the relationship between different elements can be taken as a form of deconstruction, such as the relationship between the knife and the schoolbag, between the eclipse and the glitch, between the black and white photos and the colorful graffiti. In my opinion, the re-arrangement of the symbolic meaning between different elements is the linchpin to increasing the expressive power of artworks.



Cyborg Culture



A cyborg (short for “cybernetic organism”) is a being with both organic and biomechatronic components. Cyborg culture originates from rapid-developing technology of contemporary society. Appearance of the cyborg means blurring of the boundary between the organic and the inorganic. Undoubtedly, this is a significant topic. In the field of aesthetics, the cyborg culture refers to style of nonhuman and robot-like movement. For example, the facial plastic surgery, the choreography and dance blocking of female entertainment groups in KPOP all fall under the category of cyborg aesthetics.

The characters in my artworks perform mechanically similar to Kpop dance groups. I made the faceless family series to explore this topic. The strange, rigid and identical movements of the characters in the work make them look robotic. I hope I can make audiences think about whether humans are manipulated by technology or whether humans have endowed machines with the new vigor and meaning of life.



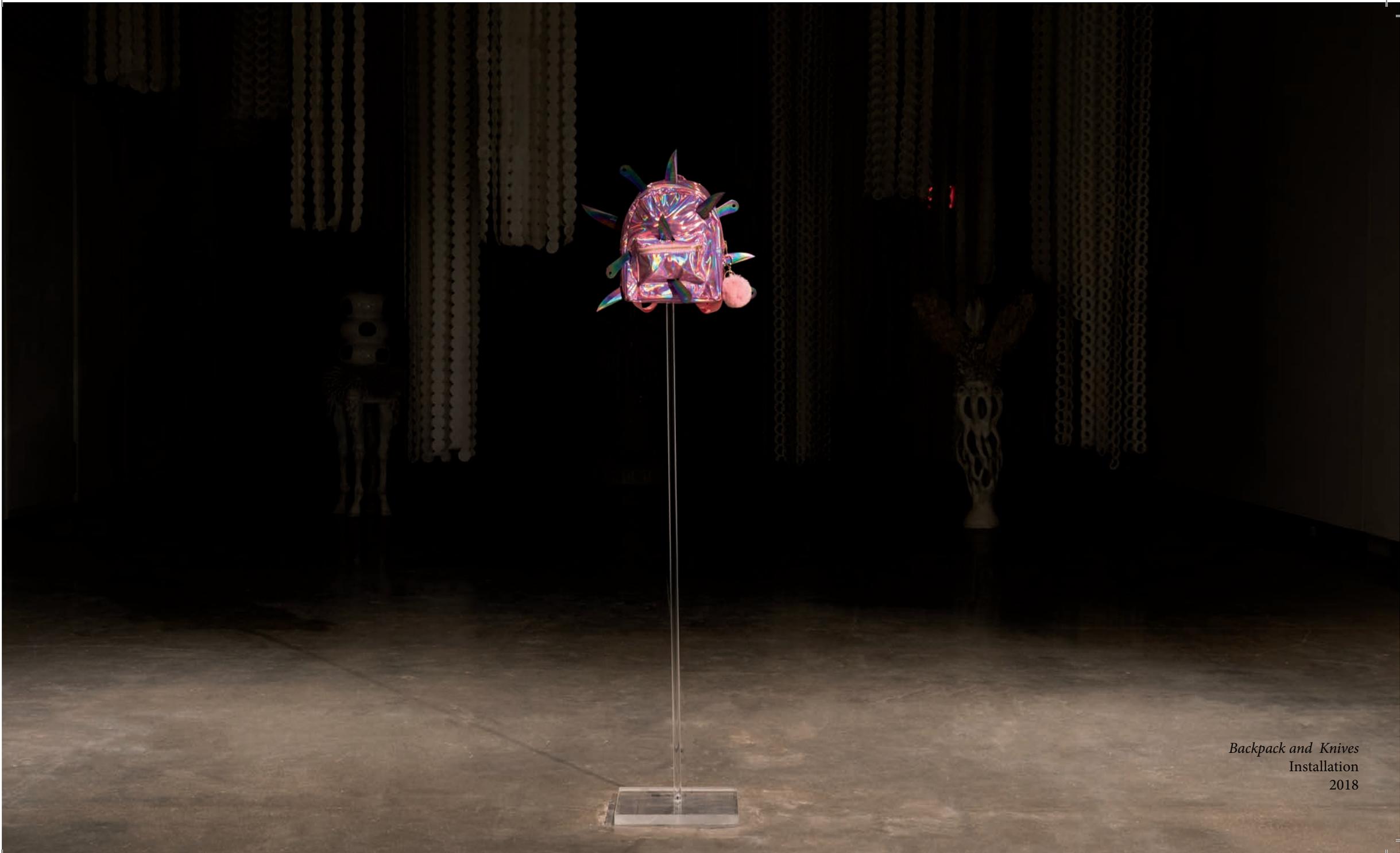
The

Works

Open your eyes. Look at the elements employed in your works. You will see a more complete self. You are learning more about yourself. The same theme can be constructed by different elements. Every artist's selection of elements is different. Some people choose elements which they have special feelings for to explore and create as artworks. Therefore, observing elements employed by yourself in your artwork is also an approach to know your own understanding and feelings of things.

Open your eyes. Look at your creation methods. You will find a more complete self. You are also knowing yourself better. In the current artistic environment, diversification of artistic aesthetics and creation methods has become increasingly a strategy. A work can be created comprehensively combining different methods. Video, animation, painting, or interactive media used simultaneously can serve for the creation of a work. This has enriched the approaches for art creation. To young artists, the use of a comprehensive set of art practices can not only improve the art creation, but also broaden ideas.

Backpack and Knives



Backpack and Knives
Installation
2018

Backpack and Knives is an installation with combined use of the site, materials and emotions. Compared with other artistic methods, such as video and sound, this installation highlights the material texture and charm of physical materials. The materials of the installation are extracted from daily life, which can deliver specific lived information. The information conveyed by the pink backpack inserted with knives, demonstrates that the light and the dark, the positive and the negative exist together.



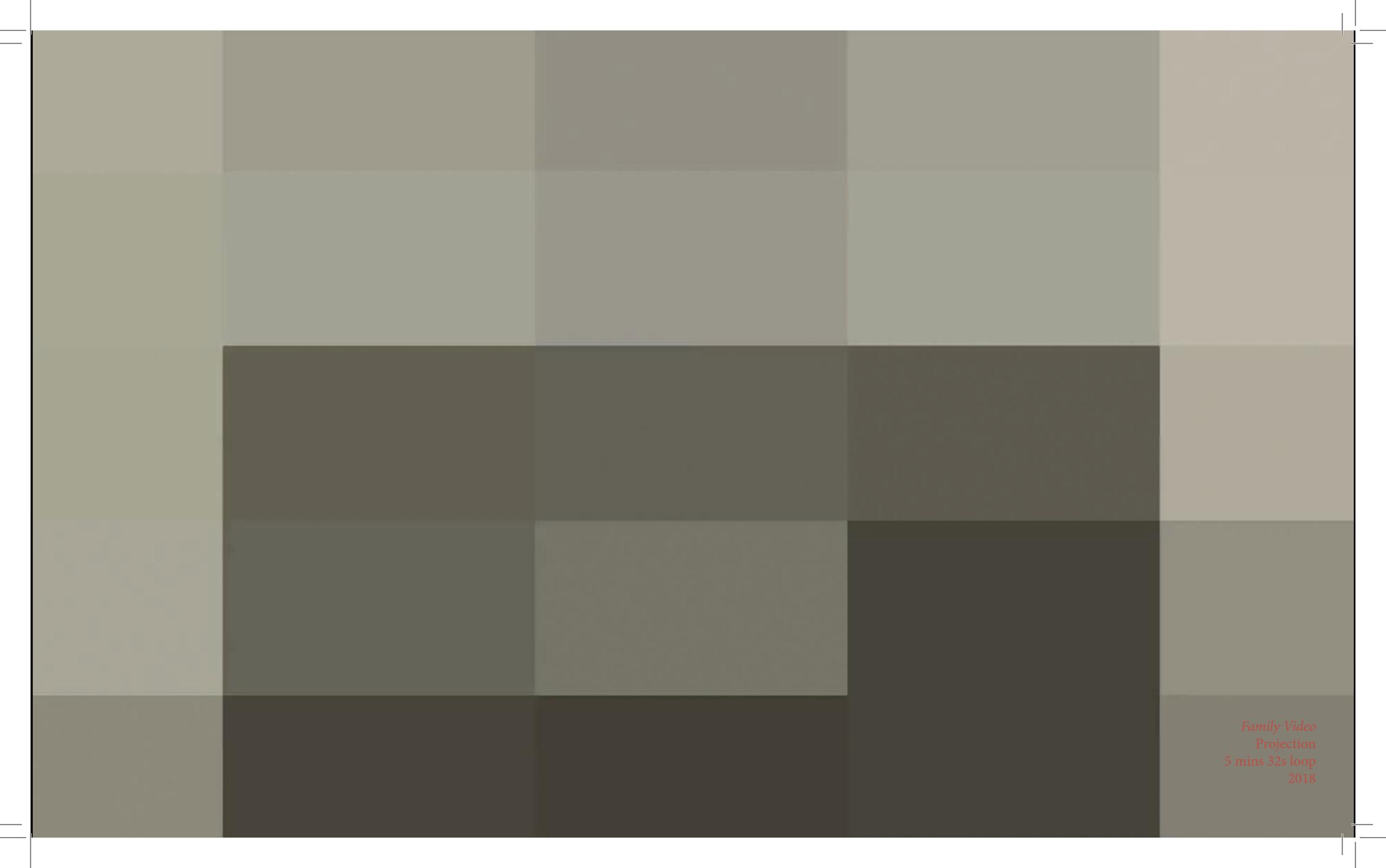
Backpack and Knives
Installation
2018



Backpack and Knives
Video
1 mins 33s loop
2018

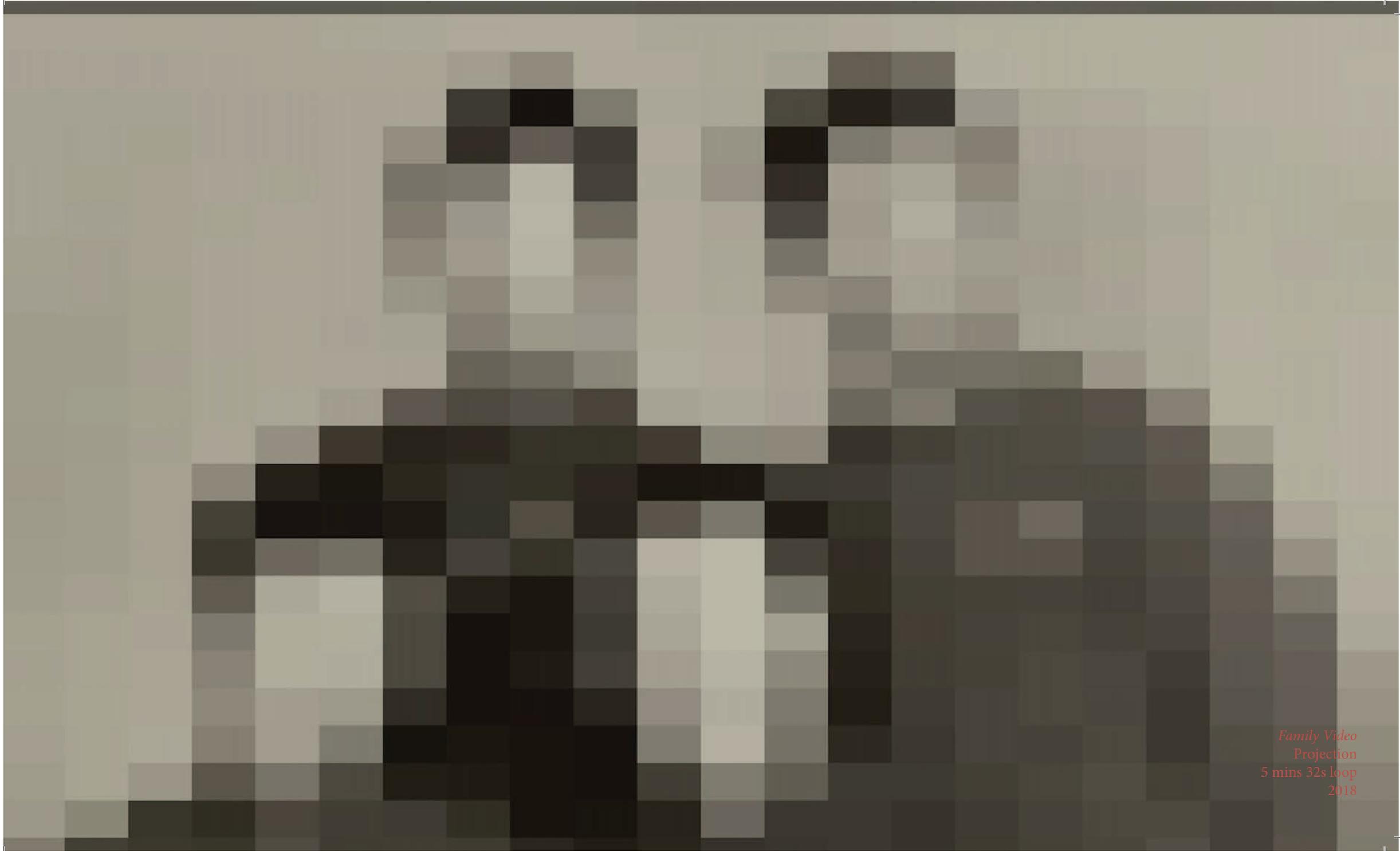
The backpack is a carrier of knowledge and a symbol of rules. Pink is a color reminding one of girls, which can be regarded as a symbol of femininity. However, a knife is a sharp weapon, which is destructive and dangerous. Concerning the symbolic meaning of the two objects made up of different materials, they are existences on two extremes, which can be extended to psychological difference between gentleness and aggression. The backpack directly shows audiences objects on two extremes, such as dark and light, which also coexist in the depth of one's heart. The whole exhibition presents the two extremes.

Family Video



Family Video
Projection
5 mins 32s loop
2018

In the 20th century, apart from TV and computer, photography was the technology developing the fastest. From the middle and later period of the 20th century to the present, the dynamic image has been one of the most popular means of visual information expression. In the field of dynamic vision, there is the avant-garde experimental film, traditional narrative film, etc. Development of the image field is full of splendors. Besides, I think that, when the augmented reality technology is developed to certain level, the art of dynamic image will become the main visual expressive means because of its strong potential for representing our experience. I am excited to participate in discovery of new possibilities for art that come with new technologies.



Family Video
Projection
5 mins 32s loop
2018

In *Family video*, I work with my main element is the human faces. Faces are a main way to distinguish human identity and a powerful way to understand emotions. Without eyes, nose and mouth, the face is beyond recognition. Also, the viewers of Family Video do not know whether the character is sad or happy. Without eyes, nose or mouth, all individual characteristics are lost. The disappearing of sense organs makes viewers feel incomplete deep down inside. Like the light, the dark is also a shared nature of humans. I want to tell my audiences to open their eyes and look at the dark existing in their heart.



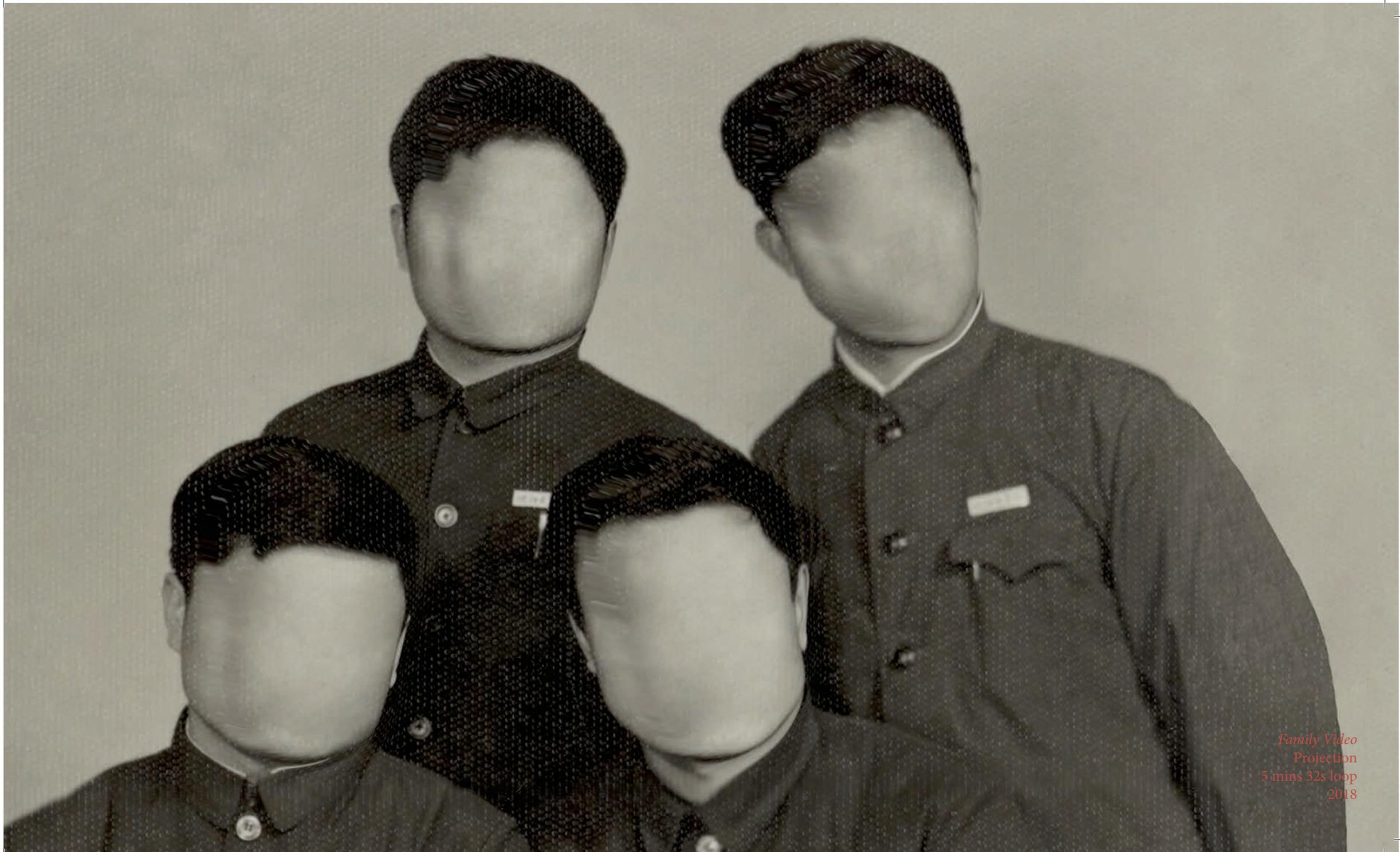
Family Video
Projection
5 mins 32s loop
2018

The old photos are from the 1950-80s generation of my family. The old photo denotes the past, which preserves memory and the world of the past. Since all pains will stay hidden, the dark is a topic related to the past. The old photo thus becomes a material carrier of the theme. Photography, digital painting, and new media technology emerges in the technology era of the Western world. The conflict and combination of time and space shows my loss of bearing and my contradictory feeling in a diverse cultural environment.



Family Video
Projection
5 mins 32s loop
2018

Posture and movement are another part of the work worth explaining. Limbs of characters are all moving in strange ways. Their heads keep rotating slowly, and their bodies are rigid. Their movements are a reflection of their emotions. The stiff body and the slow movements are mechanical and hide profound emotions and ideas. All these feelings which make one feel uncomfortable are associated with the negative impulse in meaning. Every family member shakes his or her head like a robot moving mechanically and repeatedly. The robot has no life, suggesting emptiness. However, emptiness inside has a close bearing on the dark side and negative impulses.



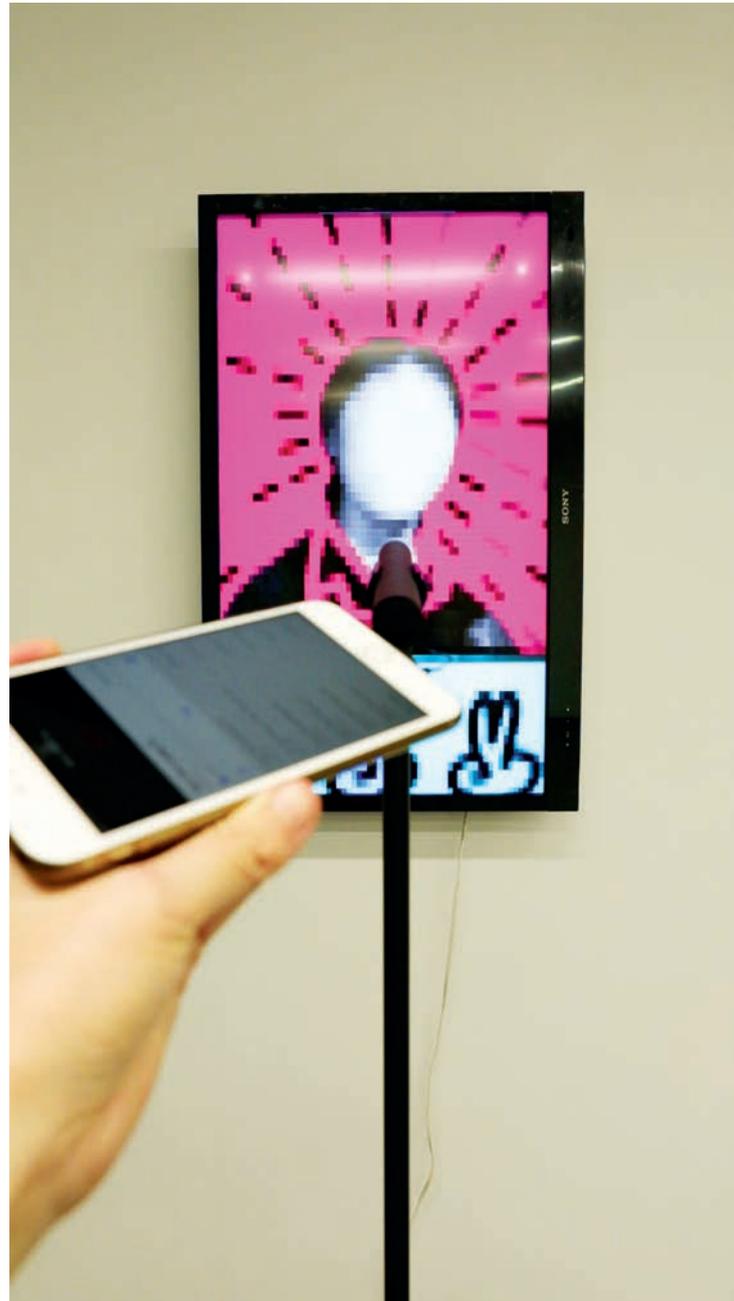
Family Video
Projection
5 mins 32s loop
2018

Sound Interactive Works



Sound Interactive Work
Interactive Installation
2018

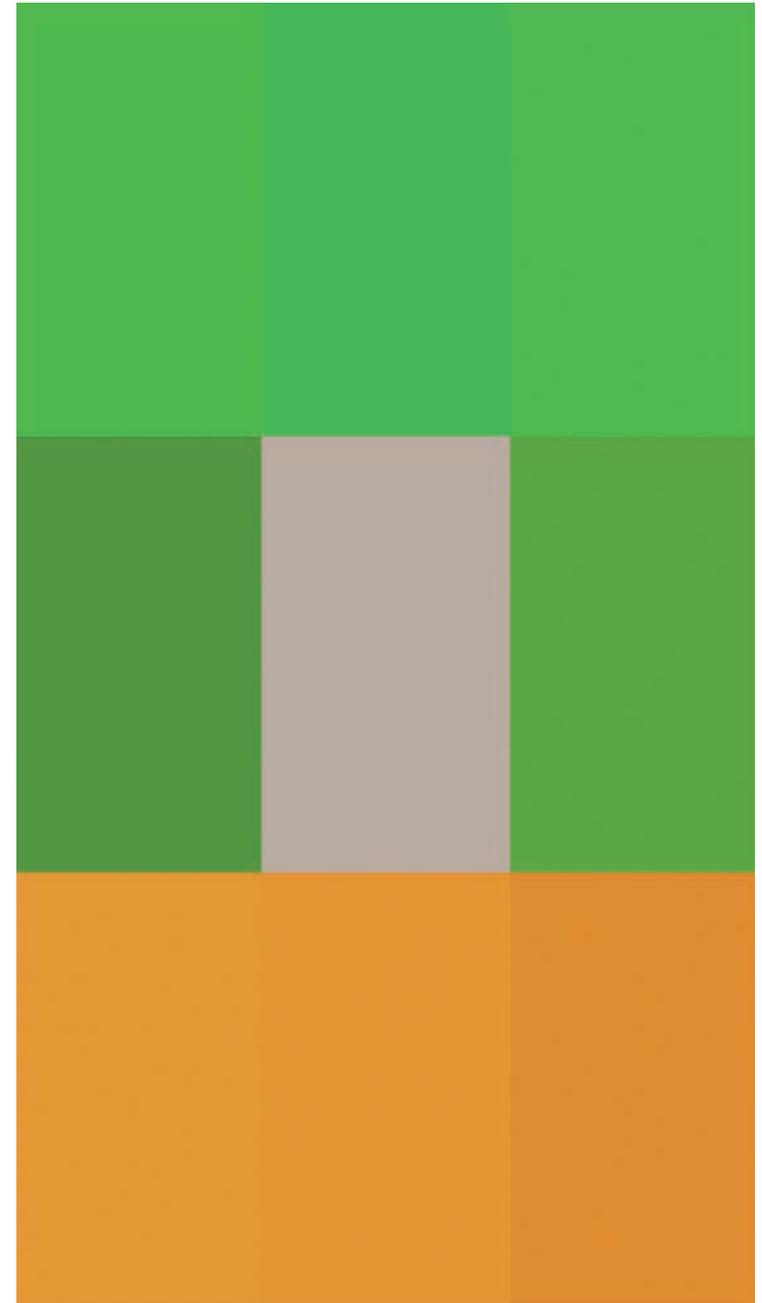
Sound Interactive Work
Interactive Installation
2018



Recent years have witnessed rapid development of the interactive art as an artistic creative approach. An issue of concern by artists is how to properly use the interactive technology expressively. Like many artists, I am also trying hard to avoid merely focusing on the technology. After a period of learning and exploration, I find that I am interested in the interactive technology of sound. In the exhibition, I demonstrate sound interactive works. Since humans have an inborn desire to recognize different faces, I make use of the human psychology to turn sound as a medium of face identification. In a word, my work realizes face identification via sound. The louder and the longer an audience member cries into a microphone in front of the video monitor, the clearer that the faces will be seen by the audience.

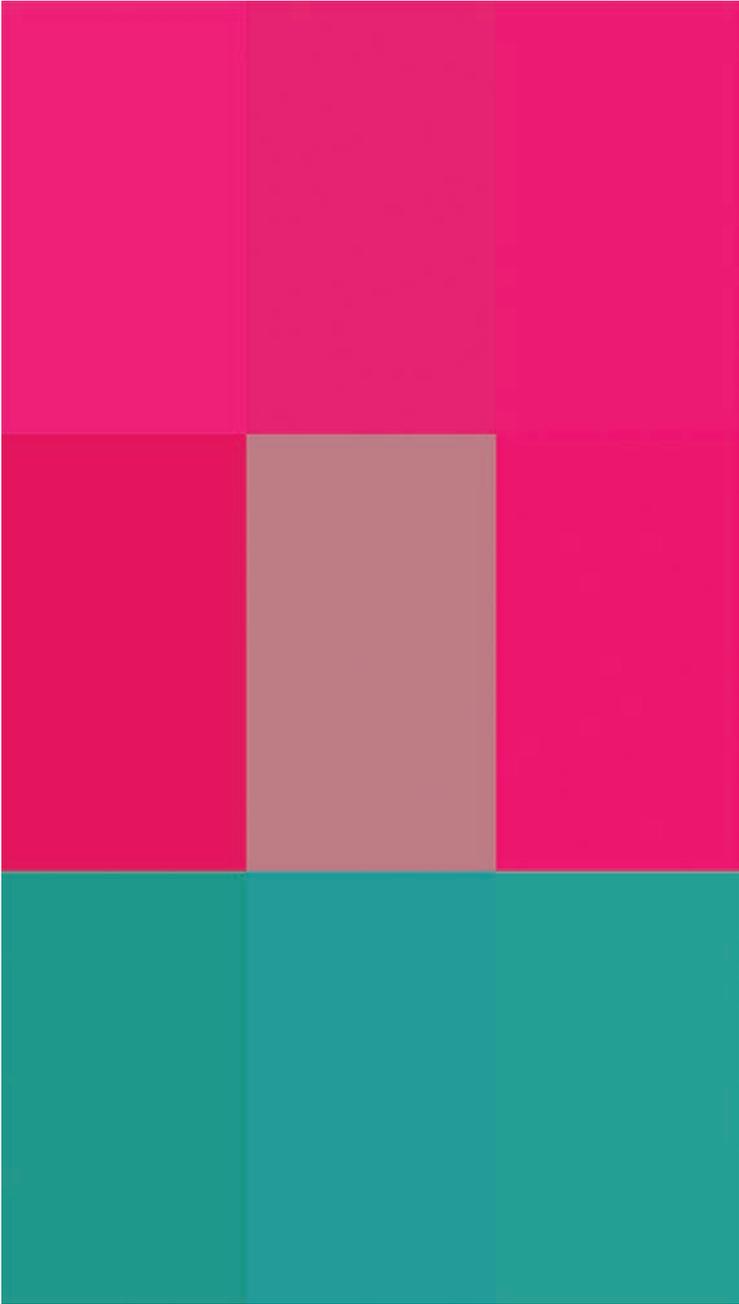
The utilizing of painting, as well as the combination of photography, is worthy of attention and discussion in this sound interactive installation. In the field of painting, I am deeply influenced by Keith Haring, American artist. I have a special preference for his use of large color lumps and vivacious, crude lines in his works. The bright colors and the strong lines are a symbol of the vigor of life. They make me feel that our life is flowing ahead like a river. Inspired by this, I introduce the rich colors and lines to the black-and-white old photos. It seems that the characters in the old photo have been revived from the dust-laden memory. New life is injected into these photos to make the characters alive. The delicate texture of the photos is combined with the vivacious painting. Thus, the original atmosphere is broken. It seems these characters have been traveling in the time machine to 2018, a brand-new era.

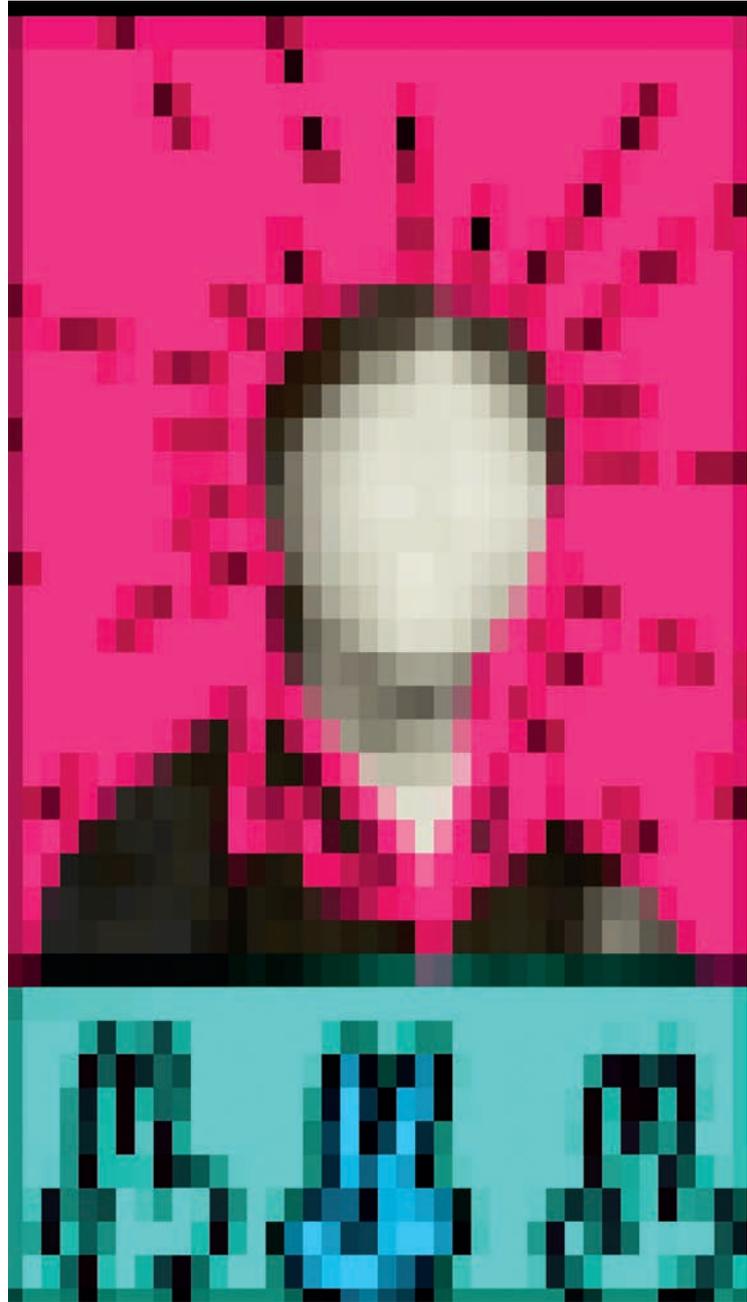
Sound Interactive Work
Interactive Installation
2018



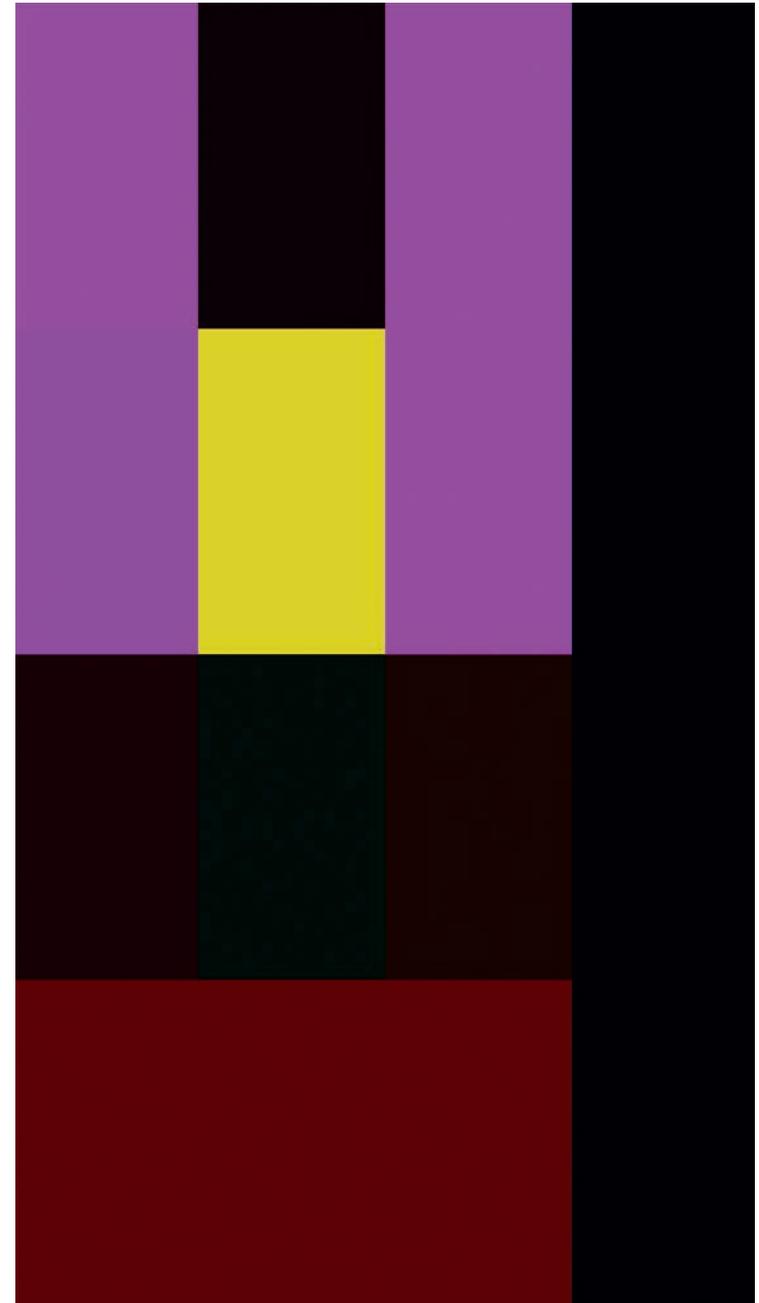


Sound Interactive Work
Interactive Installation
2018



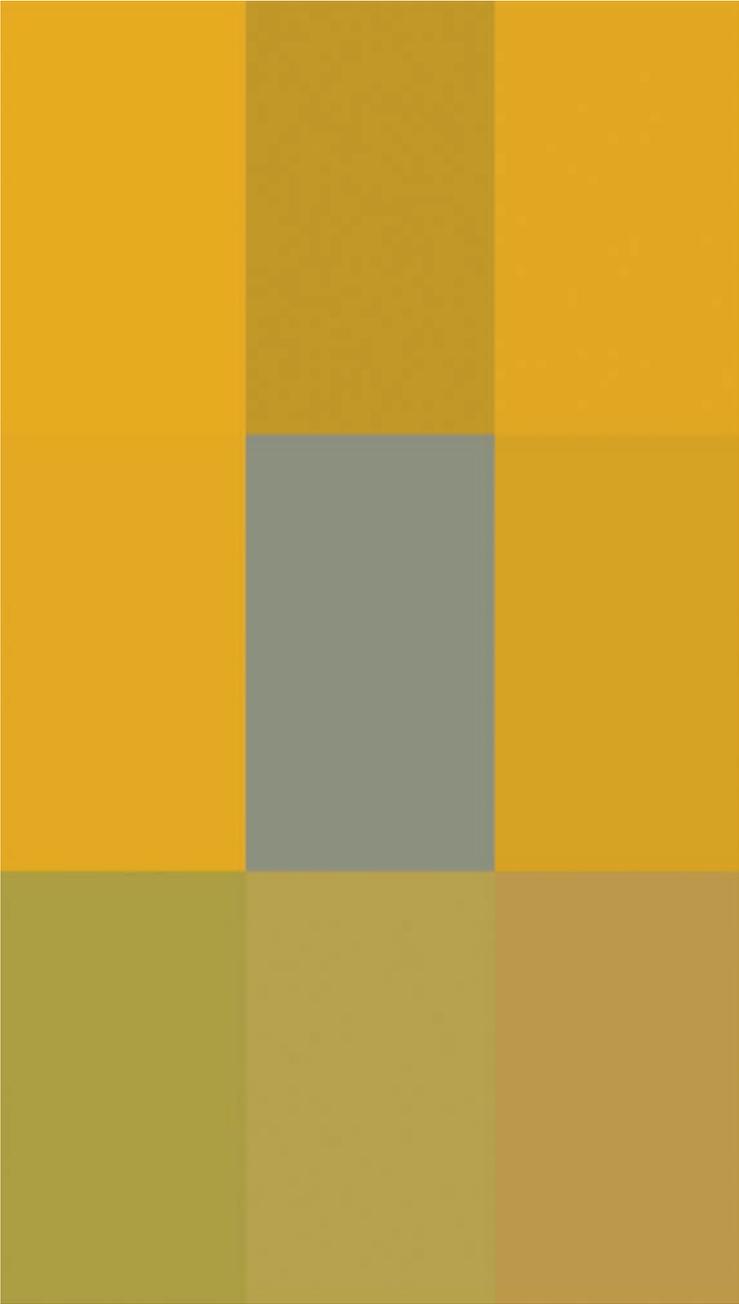


Sound Interactive Work
Interactive Installation
2018



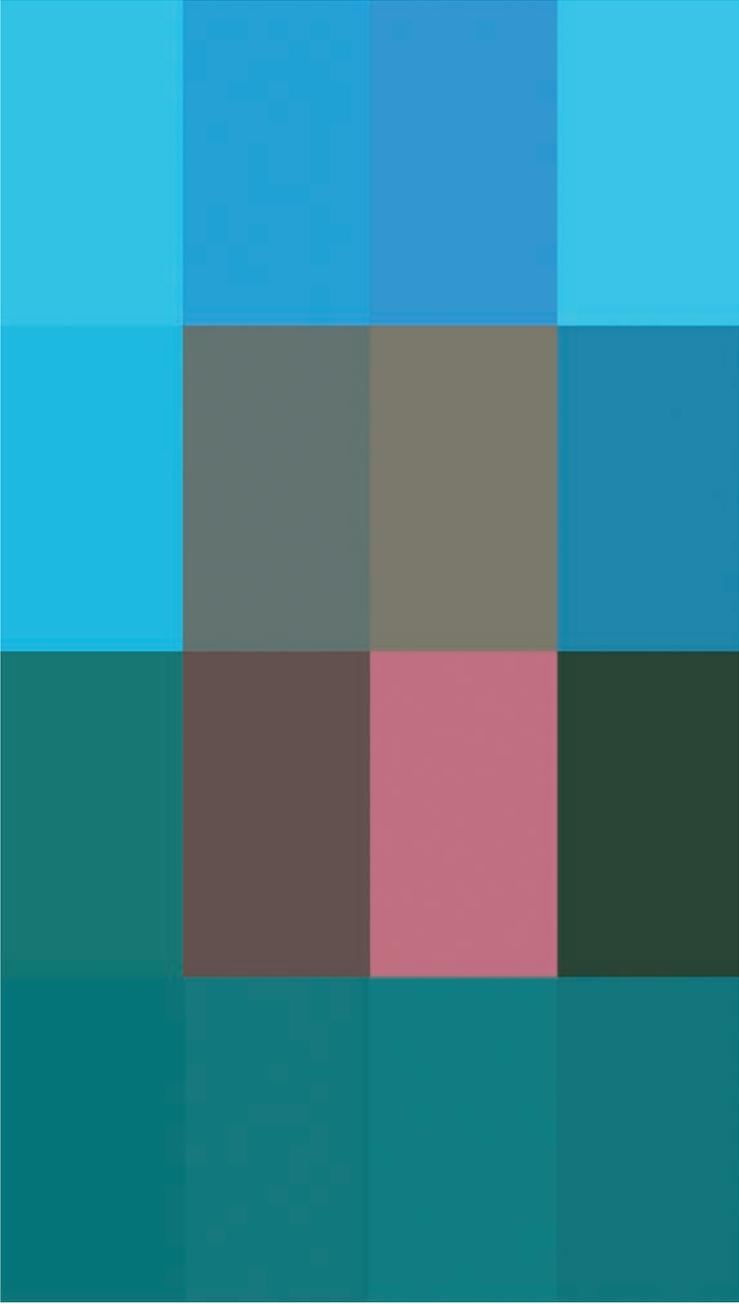


Sound Interactive Work
Interactive Installation
2018





Sound Interactive Work
Interactive Installation
2018





Negative Impulse

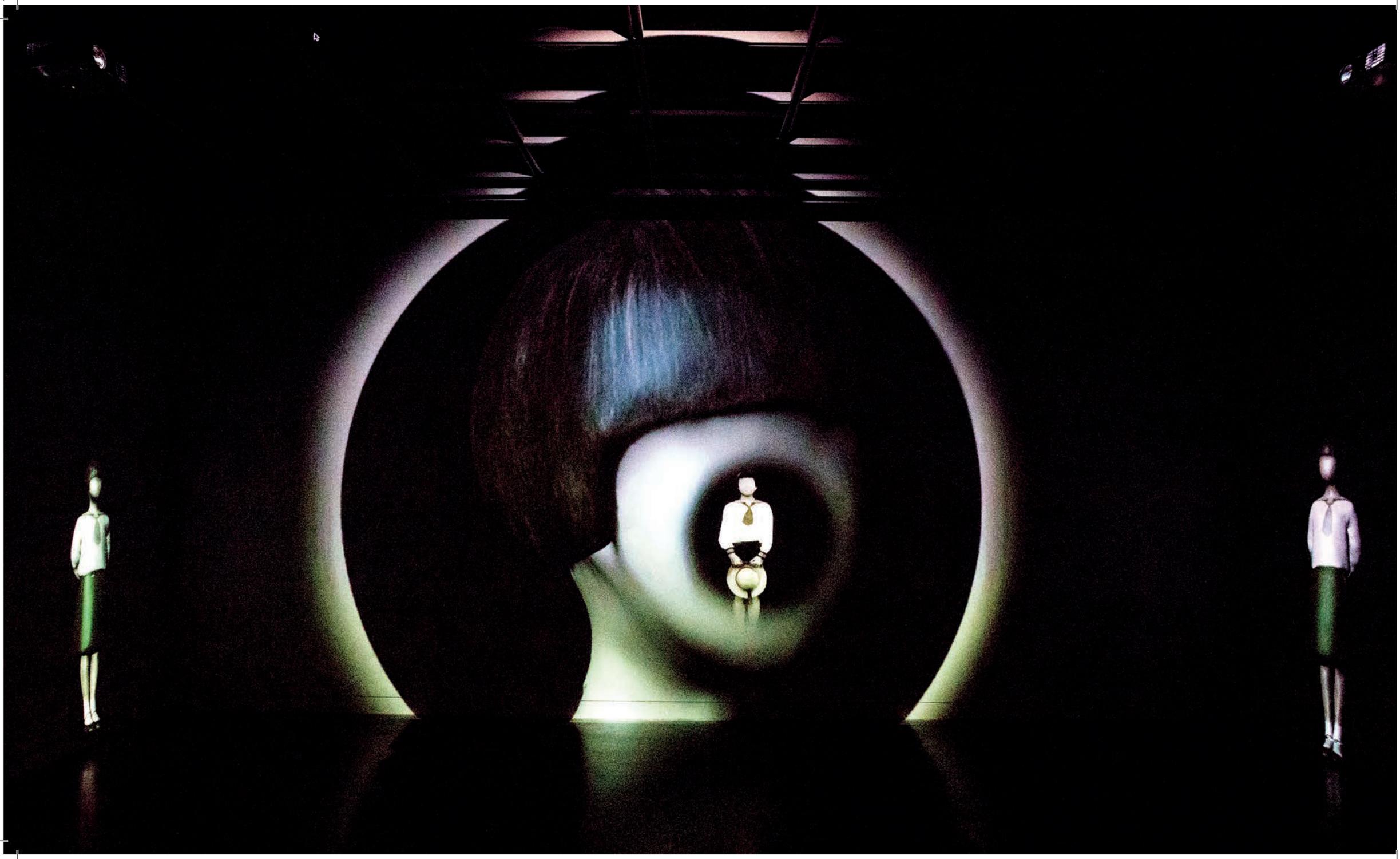


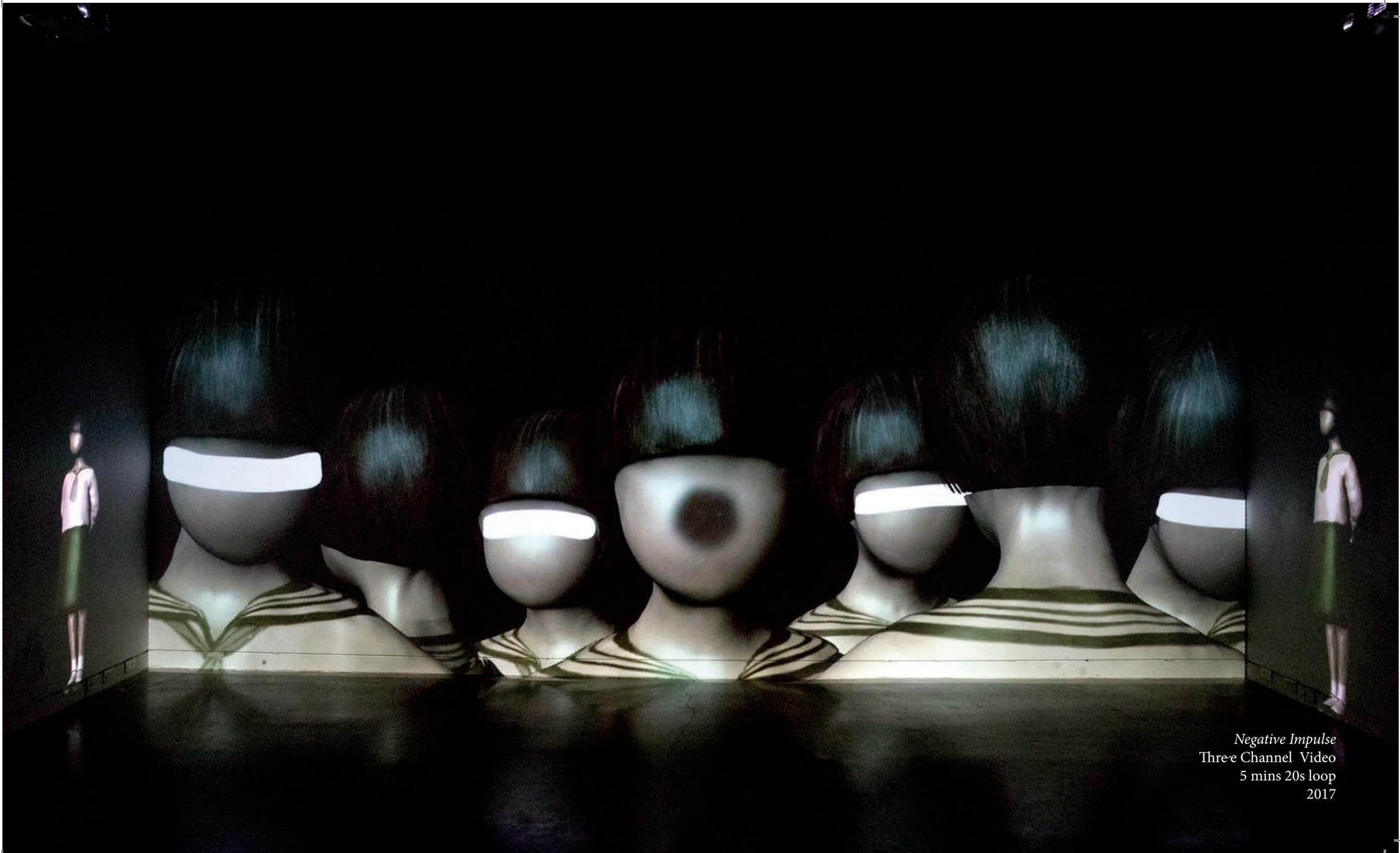
Negative Impulse
Three Channel Video
5 mins 20s loop
2017



Negative Impulse is an immersive video work. In my work, I imagine the dark side as the image of a girl. Why do I choose the image of a girl as the symbol of the Negative? There are mainly two reasons. First, the image originates from the book *The Dark Side of the Light Chasers*. In this book, Debbie Ford suggests that there is a child in our heart who will never grow up. The child is fragile, calling for our protection and care. The child always stands in the dark side, waiting for our hug and acceptance. Second, though the dark side is a shared nature of humans, I still hope that my work can proceed from my own situations. Based on these two considerations, I create the image of a girl, which is a symbol of the dark in my heart. Besides, the girl has no eyes, nose, or mouth in the video. She is a little older than a child. The girl without a face represents my current ever-changing state, which is a transformation state from the dark to the light.

Why do I choose the 3D technology to create the character image? The main reason is that the 3D animation technology can simulate skin texture in a cyborg way. The girl created by the 3D technology has a texture similar to the robot. The robot has no life, no ideas. Its body movements are rigid and rely on codes and commands. All these lifeless and rigid characteristics are connected with the various potential meanings of the dark side. The faceless 3D girl is more like a robot than a human being alive. All this explains why I choose the 3D animation technology to demonstrate characters related to the dark.





Negative Impulse
Three Channel Video
5 mins 20s loop
2017

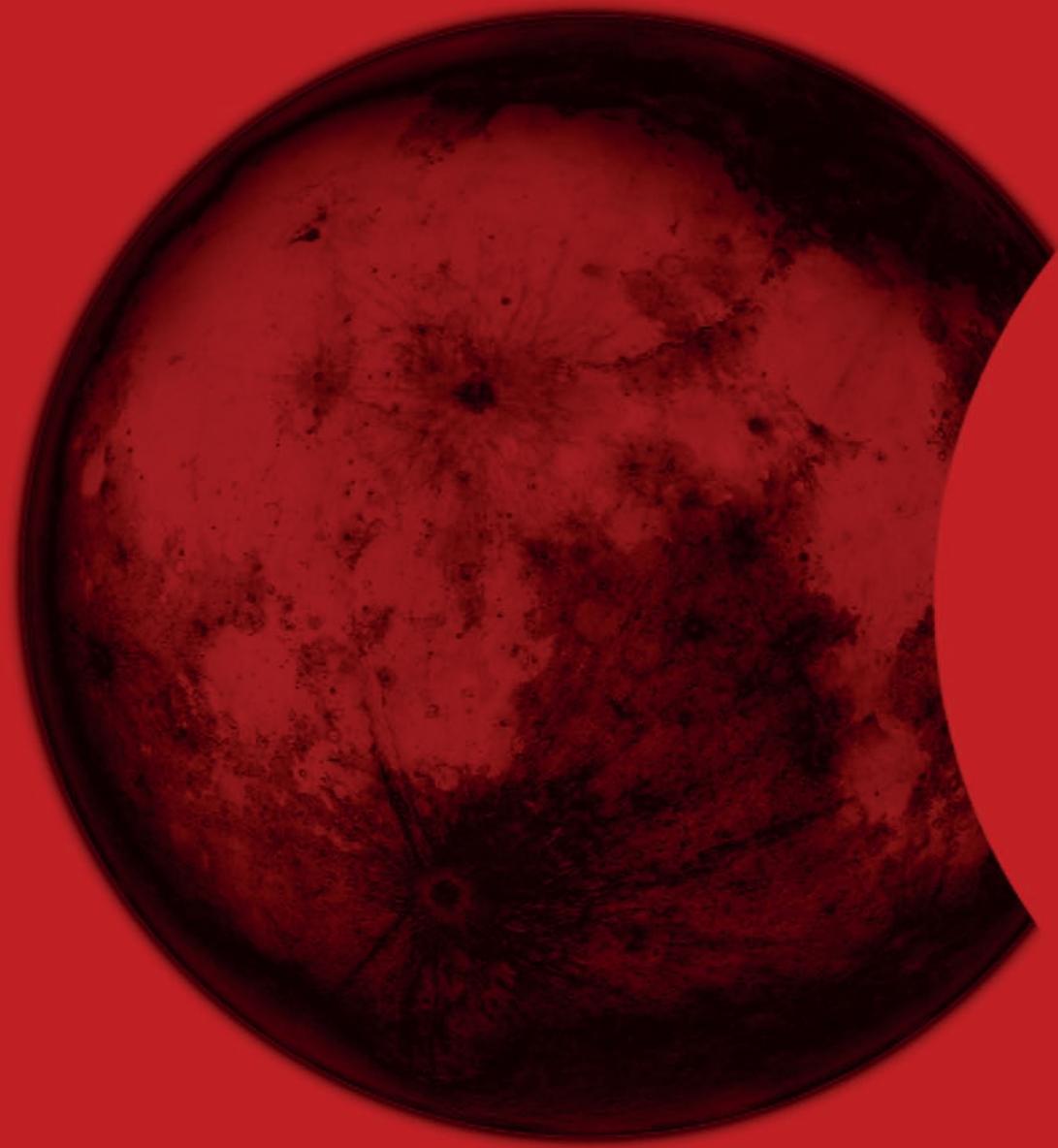
For the immersive experience, the video uses the images of grids. What is the reason for the grid? In expressing the dark side, the grid stands for external and internal shackles and pressure. The top-down grid suggests the rules and restraints of the outside world. The grid behind the faceless girl points to the shackles and contradictions that come from one's own internal world.

The solar eclipse is a phenomenon that occurs when the moon passes between the sun and the earth, and when the moon fully or partially blocks the sun. The solar eclipse is the shadow of the moon cast on the earth which can be a metaphor of the transformation of inner world from the light to the dark.

The black hole is a celestial body existing in the universe according to modern physics. The gravitation of the black hole is so strong that no light can escape from it. Psychologically, the black hole can be a symbol of one's inner fear, anger or other emotions. In my opinion, every phenomenon of the material world can potentially find its counterpart in an emotional world. It means that elements of the material world can be used to expound emotions and thinking.

Fog is another element in the Dark Side piece appearing in the Immersive Gallery. Fog, is a physical phenomenon, begins to form when water vapor condenses into tiny liquid water droplets convergence into areas of upward motion, which is a mixed state of liquid and solid. Fog corresponds to the ambiguous status psychologically which ambiguity can point to one's loss of one's bearing.

Television is a medium for us to learn the outside world. It is a telecommunication medium for transmitting moving images in monochrome (black and white) or in color, and in two or three dimensions and sound. Psychologically, "bad TV" means the information transmission is blocked and unsteady, implying a blocked status between a person and the outside world. Thus, "bad TV" can be regarded as a symbol of isolation of one's internal world from the outside world.





Negative Impulse
Three Channel Video
5 mins 20s loop
2017

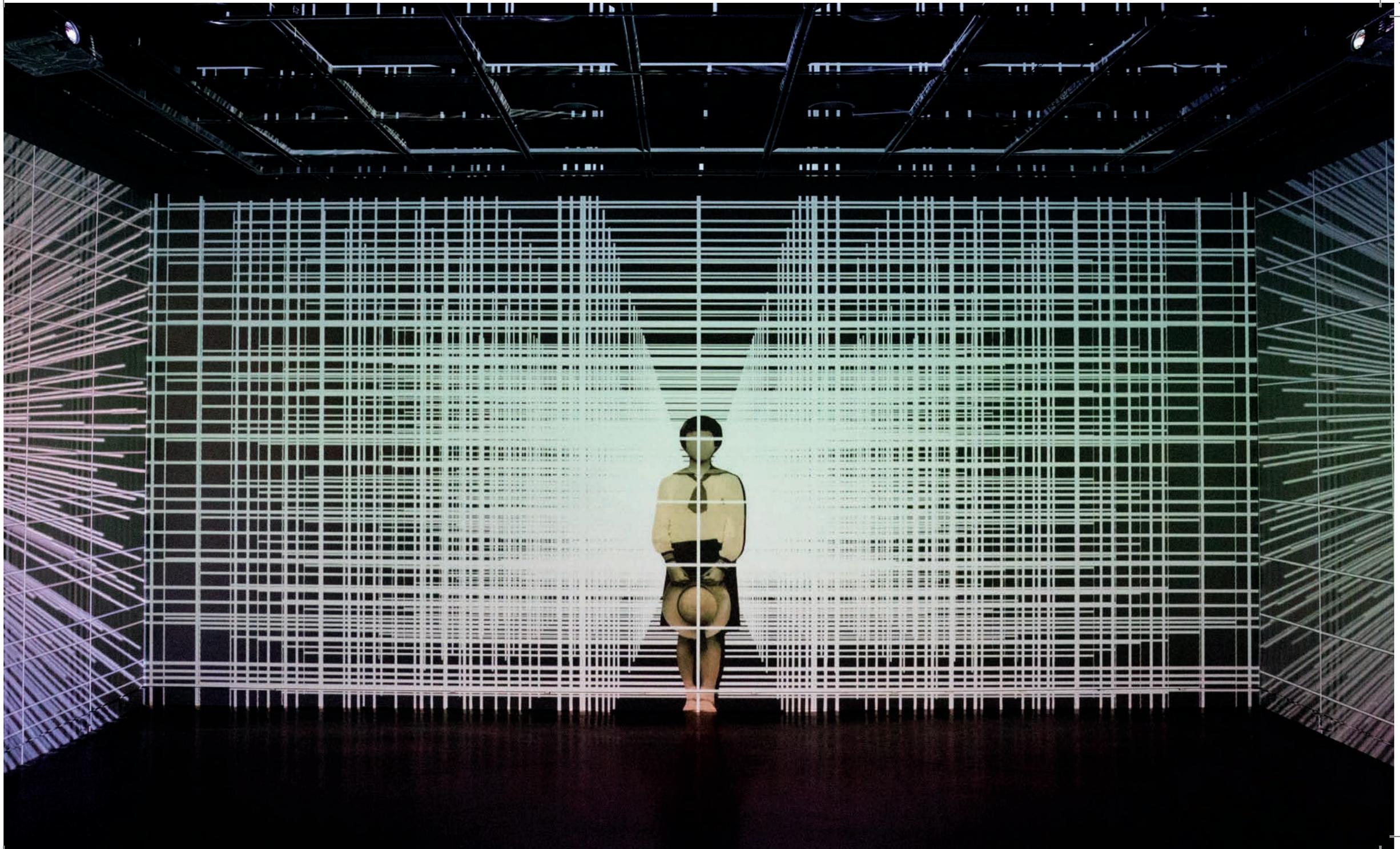
Sound is a very important part of the video work construction. Hearing is one of senses of humans. Like the visual art, sound can also express certain emotion and idea. Sound and vision both have a strong influence on humans' feelings. Particularly in terms of atmosphere creation, the art of sound demonstrates a strong infectivity. Combination of the visual art with the art of sound can enrich the layers of works. My video work emphasize an integration of hearing and vision. The phrase—"Open your eyes"—goes through the whole film. Along with the progress of the film's content, the emotional intensity of the sound changes. For example, at the end of the film, "Open your eyes" evolves from a self-whispering to a howling. The howling-style of "Open your eyes" changes the audiences to awaken from slumber and the content of the video moves into the light immediately. Therefore, sound can not only supplement and enhance the video content but also lead development of the film's content.



Negative Impulse
Three Channel Video
5 mins 20s loop
2017

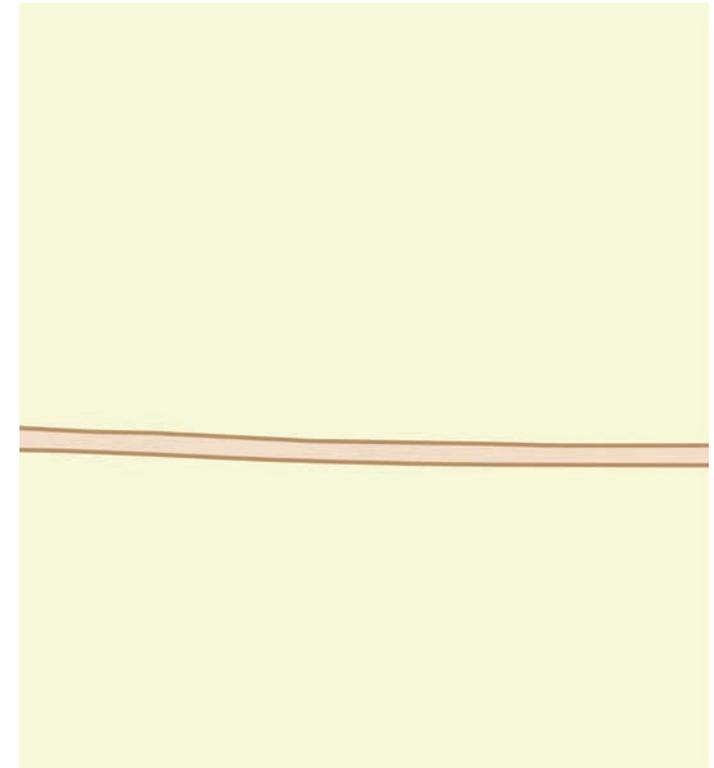
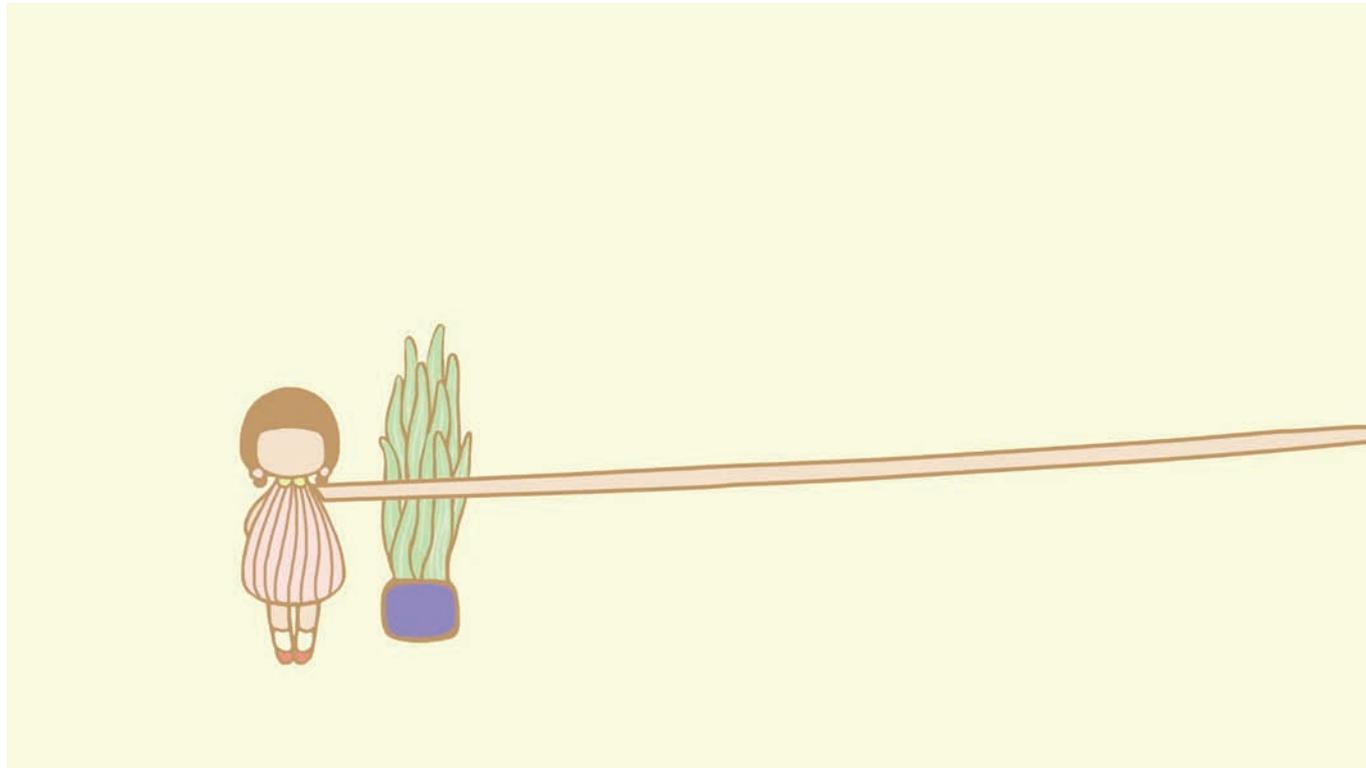


Negative Impulse
Three Channel Video
5 mins 20s loop
2017

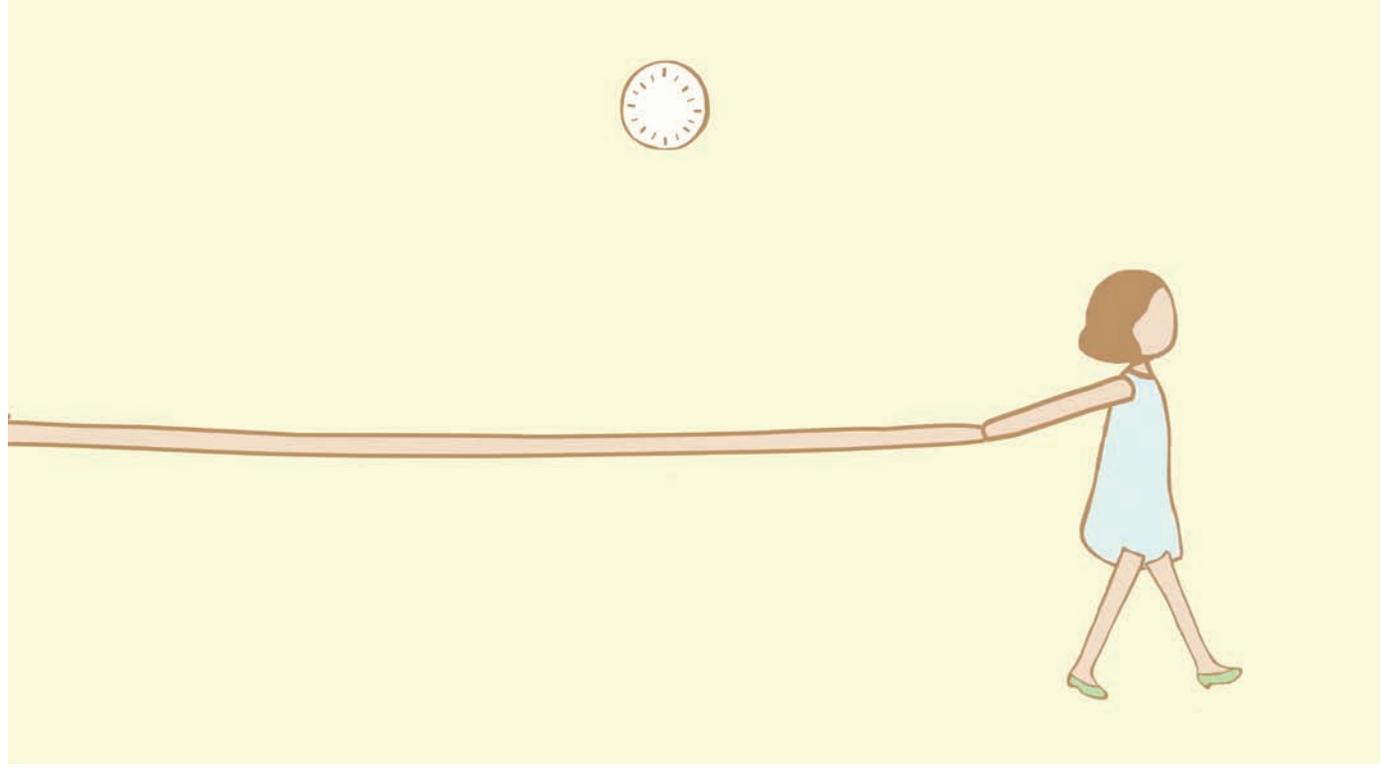
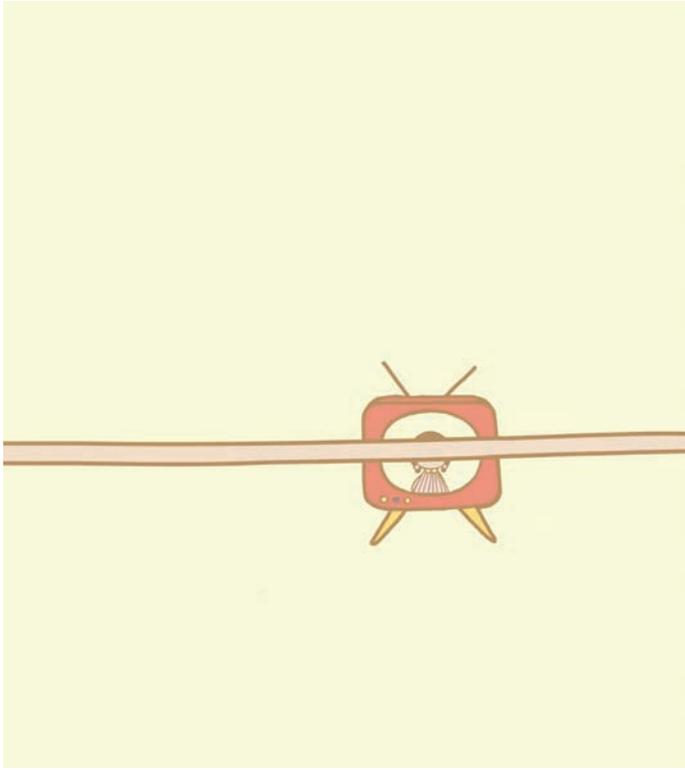


Arm Stretch

Arm Stretch is a three channel animation. Animation was invented in the late 19th century which is in essence a creation of the illusionary world on the basis of simulation. Animation is an amplification of our imagination. The theme of this animation is derived from a extraspace thinking about the relationship between parents and child of Eastern culture. In the Eastern culture, parents tend to rigorously teach and discipline their children, and child's personal wishes are not very important. The girl of the movie stands still, and her mother enters the screen from the left side and pulls up her hand. Mom does not look at the child and keeps walking, and child's hand is getting longer and longer by her mother, but she still walking away and ignoring child. The three channel animation incorporates synchronization technology so that the mother character on the left screen can pull her child's hand, continuously through the middle screen to the screen on the right. The mother pulls her child's hand through two screens, and her child's arm is drawn into a long line.



Arm Stretch
Three Channel Animation
1 mi ns 29s loop
2017



In terms of the means, the colorful styles strengthens the content of animation which also creates a sense of warm in visual. In the choice of colors, in order to highlight the soft and lovely feeling, I chose a warm, low-saturation color. Because the content of the animation work can be frightening, I utilize a lovely way to balance uncomfortable content. The more lovely, the expressive way is, the more terrifying, the content will be. In the line selection of character design, I also deliberately simplified the complex lines, using smooth and simple representations to explain complex and serious issues. The use of this balancing means is a good way to present the two extremes.

Memory



Memory
42.6"
Digital Prints
2018

Another work on the second floor of gallery is large prints consisting of 6 old family photos. In the *Memory*, the character's faces are blank. One of the most interesting thing is their posture, the characters in each print are sitting in a stiff way. What each person is wearing is similar and their body orientation is the same.



1975. 1. 21.

Memory
42.6"
Digital Prints
2018



Memory
42.6"
Digital Prints
2018

The choice of printmaking paper is Star 3 Ply Xuan paper from Anhui Province which texture is thicker than normal Xuan paper. Star 3 Ply Xuan paper is warm in color and echoes the atmosphere of memories and old photographs. Xuan paper has eastern connotations which also matches the content of my digital prints work. The location and position of the prints is also an issue to consider. When the location of the prints is parallel or lower to the eyes of viewers, it has the closer sense psychologically. When the position of the suspension is higher than viewer's sight, one has to look up to see the contents of the prints. It creates a sense of psychological distance. I want to reinforce the digital prints' distance and sense of past. I hope the hanging method can extend the spatial distance between the audience and the works, which can let audiences realize that these characters in the prints come from the past and exist as memories. In the choice of lighting the prints, I consider lighting should match the theme and atmosphere of the works. In *Memory*, I choose a point light source, deliberately lower so that the light can only radiate from the center of the picture to the edge of the picture, which highlights the empty faces. Viewers will focus on the empty faces of characters to understand the work more intensively.



Memory
42.6"
Digital Prints
2018



Memory
42.6"
Digital Prints
2018

Conclusion

By analyzing the topics and concepts which I am concerned with in my works as well as the symbolic elements and the creation methods, I can see a deeper sense of myself. When an artist opens his or her eyes to examine the process of his or her art creation, he or she can gain a better understanding of the work as well as of himself or herself. In fact, this is also true to everyone in daily life. As long as you open your eyes and imagine the implications of life through different ways, you will have a deeper method to reflect on your life. So, why not open your eyes to see a more rich self and world? This is a process for you to know yourself and others more.

Technical / Materials

Backpack and Knives

Acrolic Rod 72"

Rainbow Knives

Pink Backpack

14" Sony Trinitron Cube Monitor

MedeaWiz Sprite Media Plyaer

Panisonic 4K camera

After Effects

Family Video

BenQ SP891 4000lumen Projector

DayTon Aduio T-amp Amplifier

Monitor Audio RS6 Speakers

After Effects

Final Cut Pro

Sound Interactive Work

Macminis

40" Sony Bravia LCD Monitors

Saramonic SR-ULM5 USB Microphones for PC or MAC

Wacom intuos3 Mpde; PTZ-631W

Max Sync Patch Elight_2_0_3_Parent/Chilren.maxpat

Arm Stretch

27" Apple Cinema Display

Macmini

Wacom intuos3 Mpde; PTZ-631W

Max Sync Patch Elight_2_0_3_Parent/Chilren.maxpat

After Effects

Photoshop

Memory

42.6” Star 3 Ply Xuan Paper from Anhui Province

Watercolor_Canon_6400 printer

Magnets

Photoshop

Iclone6 / Double system (Mac / Windows) / Corel Painter / Processing / Unity / Microsoft Xbox Kinect / Mac book Pro / Go Pro2 / Leelbox
AR Headset

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