

## **Johan Grimonprez**

*Every Day Words Disappear*

11 November - 16 December 2018

Opening: Sunday 11 November 2018, 14:00, in the presence of the artist.

### **Press release**

With his film *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, one of the discoveries of Documenta X (1997, Kassel), the Belgian multimedia artist and film-maker Johan Grimonprez (b.1962, Roeselare) conquered the international art world from a position of apparent obscurity. He subsequently received worldwide acclaim with his films *Double Take* (2009), *Shadow World* (2016, winner of the Ultima 2018, the Flemish culture prize for film), and *Blue Orchids* (2017).

This is Grimonprez' first solo exhibition in Belgium following his retrospective at S.M.A.K. in 2011. At the heart of the exhibition is a selection of six recent short films, shown in an intimate, specially constructed space in the gallery, and which play on a 40-minute loop. We will also be showing a range of photographs and the artist's exceptional and rarely exhibited drawings. On the street side, a video work interacts with casual passers-by.

The exhibition takes its title from the film *Every Day Words Disappear* (2016), in which Grimonprez combines a dialogue with Michael Hardt and images from Godard's *Alphaville*. We live in an increasingly complex world, in which the image of man and society are in jeopardy, and political affairs progressively resemble a surreal form of theatre. In 1515, Machiavelli stated that it is better for the Prince to be feared than to be loved. Some 500 years later, Michael Hardt, political philosopher and co-author of *Empire, Multitude and Commonwealth*, wonders what it would mean to base a political system on love rather than fear. How could we redefine a society that is being increasingly upended by a fear-oriented media industry? In the dystopian city state of Alphaville from Godard's film of the same name, all words or concepts that refer to love and affection are banned. When actress Anna Karina tries to express her feelings, she has to reinvent the words, because the concept of love is so alien. Are we perhaps facing a similar task, and should we reinvent the words and means by which we can collectively deal with politics?

Grimonprez' films move elegantly between art and cinema, documentary and fiction, theory and practice, and are based on fragments from reportages, historical archival documents, home videos, found footage, news images, advertising, video clips and films. In a world in which we are overwhelmed by images, Grimonprez weaves new and personal stories from the same visuals, which move us, and make us feel that other realities are both possible and accessible. The short films in this exhibition are full of poetry, and touch upon major existential and philosophical questions.

*From SATIN ISLAND* (2015) follows a man who leaps to his death due to a failed parachute. Written and narrated by the British author Tom McCarthy. The film is a meditation on human vulnerability, and the precarious nature of our belief in the things that surround us, including the system.

In *What I Will* (2013), the flashing images of military parades and anti-aircraft artillery are drowned out by Suheir Hammad's biting protest poem. A resistance that stills to an exhalation and makes a sparkle of hope palpable.

In *Raymond Tallis, On Tickling* (2017), neuroscientist Raymond Tallis argues that consciousness is not an internal construction, but rather a relational concept. Through the intriguing observation that you can't tickle yourself, as this can only be done by someone else, Tallis explores the idea that we can only become ourselves through dialogue with others.

... *because Superglue is forever* (2011) is a study of the history of happy endings and is based on a casting session in Los Angeles in which children re-enact love scenes from films, advertisements and YouTube clips. The film takes aim at our overconsumption of images in a witty, moving way.

In *Two Travellers to a River* (2018) the Palestinian actress Manal Khader recites a poem by the late Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish: a beautiful, concise reflection on how things could have been different.

Johan Grimonprez' projects have been exhibited in museums throughout the world, including the Hammer Museum (LA); the Pinakothek der Moderne (Munich); the MoMA (NY); The Fruitmarket Gallery (Edinburgh); Blaffer Museum (Houston); SMAK (Ghent). His work has been shown in major exhibitions and museums worldwide such as the Whitney Museum (NY), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Tate Modern in London. His work is included in the collections of the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and Tate Modern, London. Johan Grimonprez is a researcher at the HOGENT/KASK, which enabled the making of the films. More information can be found on the artist's website ([www.johangrimonprez.be](http://www.johangrimonprez.be)) and that of the gallery ([kristofdeclercq.com](http://kristofdeclercq.com)).