Matthias Tharang

Selected Works

MOTHERLAND

Video Installation
Black Board, White Noise, Video Loop

Igor Metropol (Budapest, 2016)

CLICK FOR VIDEO
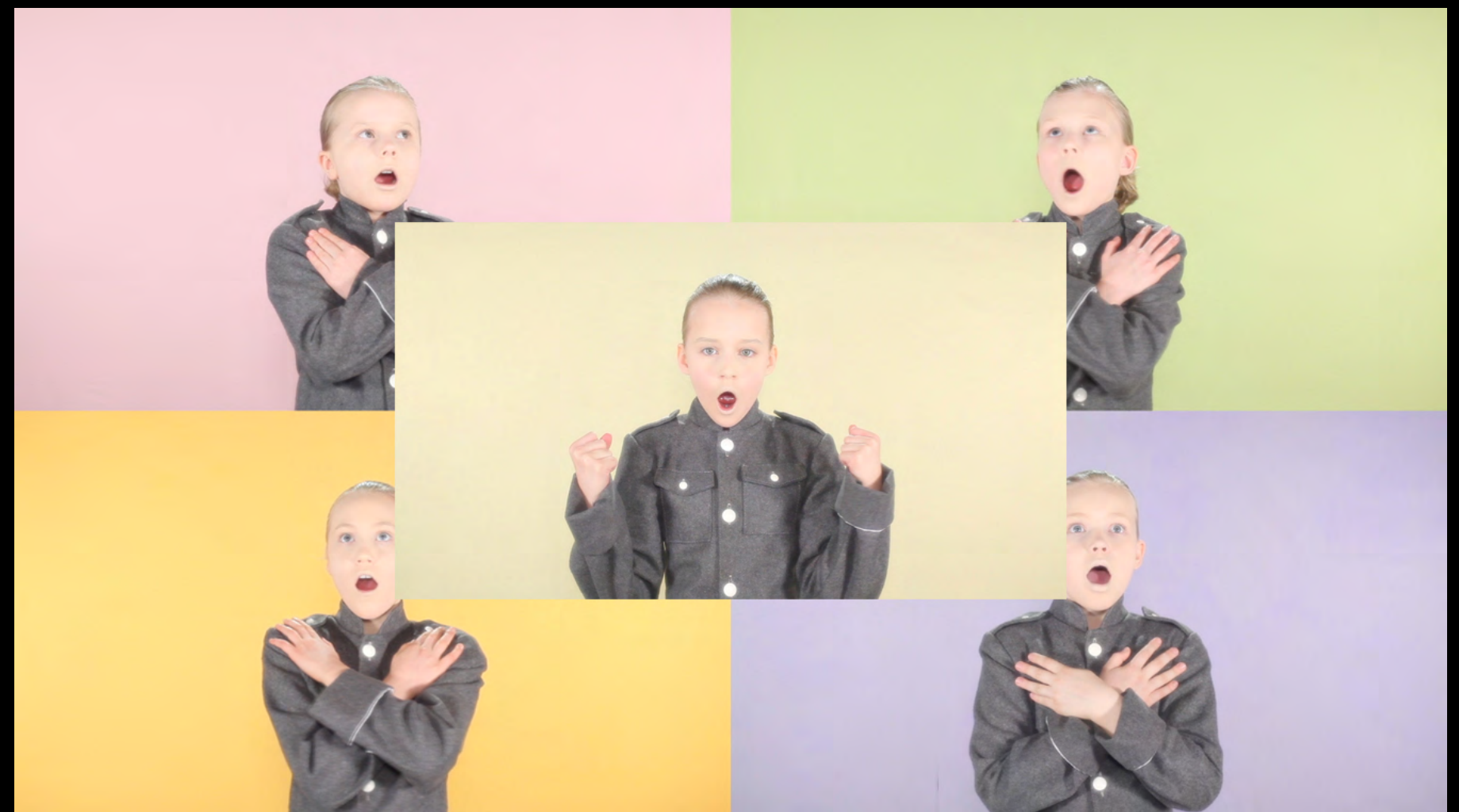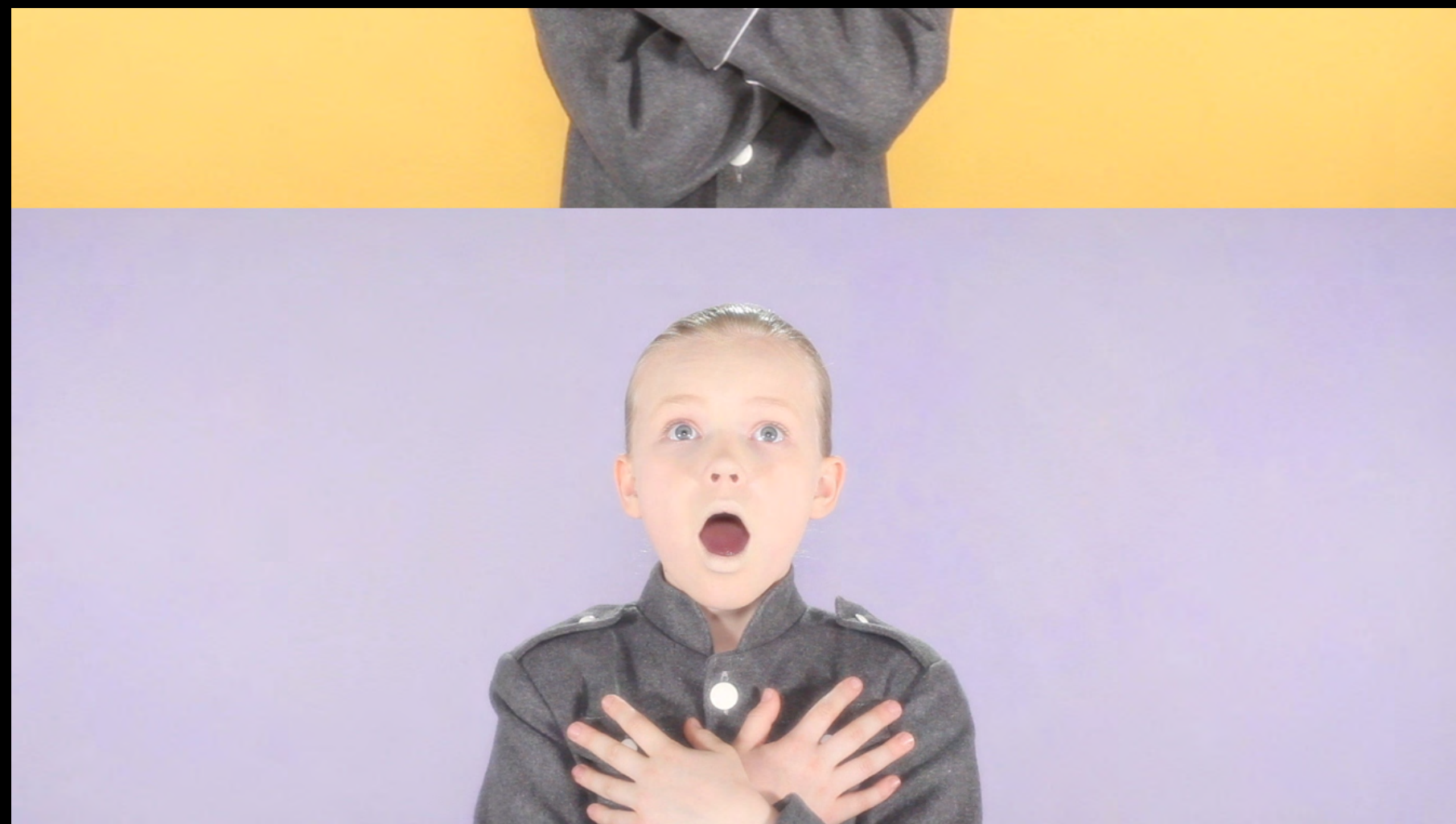
INSTALLATION VIEW

IMPOSSIBLE IS NOTHING

Video Installation
Plinth, HD Video 2:12 min

Government Art Collection (London, 2015)

IMPOSSIBLE IS NOTHING   Video Installation, 2:12 min   Video stills

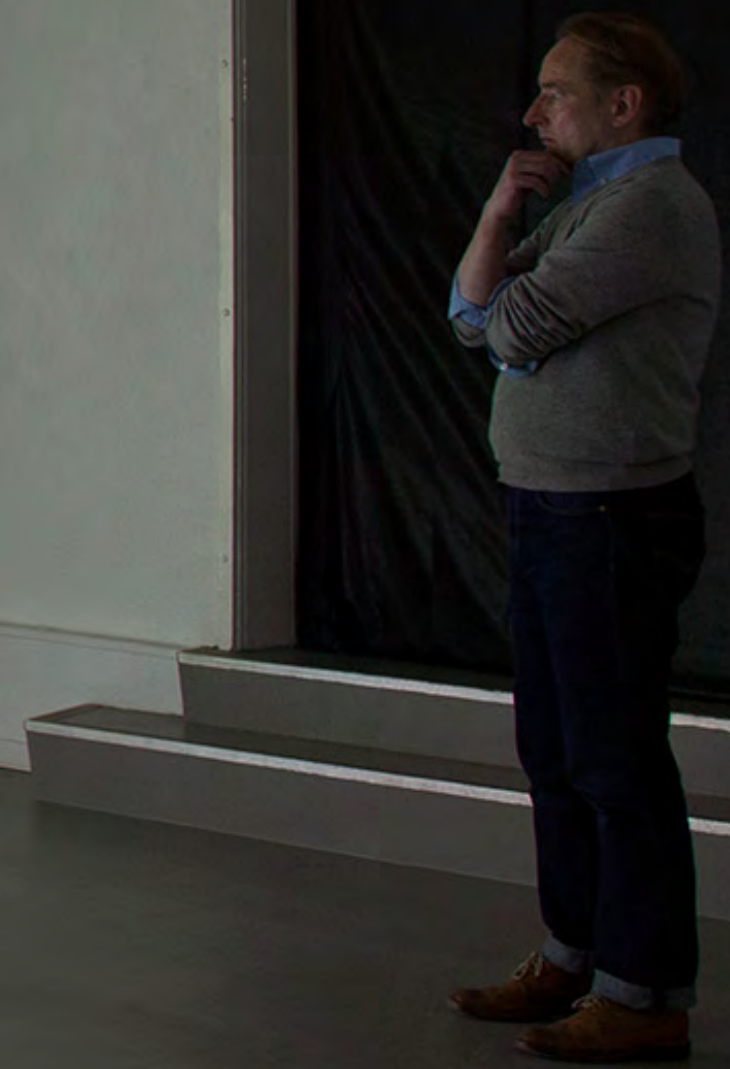IMPOSSIBLE IS NOTHING   1–Channel Installation, 2:12 min   Installation View

CLICK FOR VIDEO

EXCERPT

FORWARD

1–Channel Installation
HD Video 3:20 min

Luminous Flux (Arti et Amicitiae — Amsterdam, 2014)

The peaceful vastness of a desolate landscape is disturbed by a demanding and intimidating appeal: Forward. This bullheaded persistent order endlessly repeats itself, spit out by a mechanical speaker into the still scenery. From this absurd juxtaposition, questions start to arise: Who is called to move forward here? Should the water run faster, should the grass grow quicker, should a mountain move away, or should the clouds hurry up? What is the ambition of such a demand? The placid lands of northwest Wales, where Matthias Tharang shot his film, respond with calm ignorance…

The nineteenth century Romantic landscape tradition can be read as a source of inspiration for the choice of the composition and the general mood for the piece. Contemplative, melancholic, and sensitive, Forward follows the visual language of Caspar David Friedrich. At the same time it tackles a modern problem: the ongoing process of human alienation caused by mechanization. In a similar way as Friedrich's Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon inspired Samuel Beckett to express the senselessness of the eternal hope for salvation in Waiting for Godot, it inspired Tharang to create Forward.

The Marxist origin of the imperative Forward as a militant socialist doctrine proposes an unlimited drive for growth and a striving for a far-off ideal, a bright time to come for the hard-working labour class. Yet the reality of northwest Wales (which currently suffers from the highest rates of suicide and unemployment in the UK) is far from the expectations of the past, the promises of the market economy and the geopolitical solutions of the post World War II period.

Produced in the year when Obama used the slogan Forward as the motto of his election campaign, sometimes criticized for its totalitarian connotations, the piece assumes a broader significance in the context of world globalization. It seems to gesture towards the concept of inverted totalitarianism, coined in 2003 by political philosopher Sheldon Wolin to describe the emerging form of the United States's policy and to illustrate its similarities and differences with totalitarian regimes such as the Stalinist Soviet Union. In his book Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism (2008) Wolin analyzed two totalizing dynamics of power in the contemporary world, that aim to create fear (outward) and control by generating economical and social insecurity (inward). From this perspective Forward could be read as a critical reflection on neoliberal economy that supports instability and the ultimately fragile state of balance between prosperity and austerity.

Forward gathers together a number of historical and contemporary layers, which touch upon the most pertinent themes of our times: the interrelation between ecology, economy, and power relations. It has managed to ambiguously address the effects of inequality and oppression with accuracy and intensity, depicting the hopelessness and paralysis of modernity.

—— Katia Krupennikova

FORWARD   1–Channel Installation, 3:20 min   Video stills

FORWARD   1–Channel Installation, 3:20 min   Video still

CLICK FOR VIDEO

TRAILER

STRENGTH THROUGH JOY – BEAUTY OF LABOUR

2–Channel Installation
HD Video 2:19 + 8:47 min

Bloomberg New Contemporaries (Spike Island — Bristol, 2013)

BEAUTY OF LABOUR

1 of 2–Channel Installation
HD Video 8:47 min

Video still

BEAUTY OF LABOUR   1 of 2–Channel Installation, 8:47 min   Video stills

CLICK FOR VIDEO

TRAILER

STRENGTH THROUGH JOY – BEAUTY OF LABOUR

2–Channel Installation
HD Video 2:19 + 8:47 min

5th Biennale of Contemporary Art (Moscow, 2013)

When a fat elderly man who looks like an eunuch takes on a Sisyphean task, and when cloned girls in short white dresses frolic around mindlessly in a mountainous landscape full of red balls — at that moment, beauty and ugliness, labour and play, earnestness and humour, slyness and innocence, perversity and wholesomeness, violence and tenderness, carnage and nursery rhyme, aesthetics and politics, fucking and caressing, rearing and idling, authoritarianism and libertarianism cease to exclude each other and art is born. —— Alexander Garcia Düttmann

STRENGTH THROUGH JOY

2 of 2–Channel Installation
HD Video 2:19 min

Video still

STRENGTH THROUGH JOY   2 of 2—Channel Installation   Video stills

CLICK FOR VIDEO

▶

TRAILER

PER ASPERA AD ASTRA #1

6–Channel Installation
SD Video 0:09 to 3:51 min

ZHDK (Zurich, 2011)

PER ASPERA AD ASTRA #1   6–Channel Installation   Video stills

PER ASPERA AD ASTRA #1   6–Channel Installation   Video stills
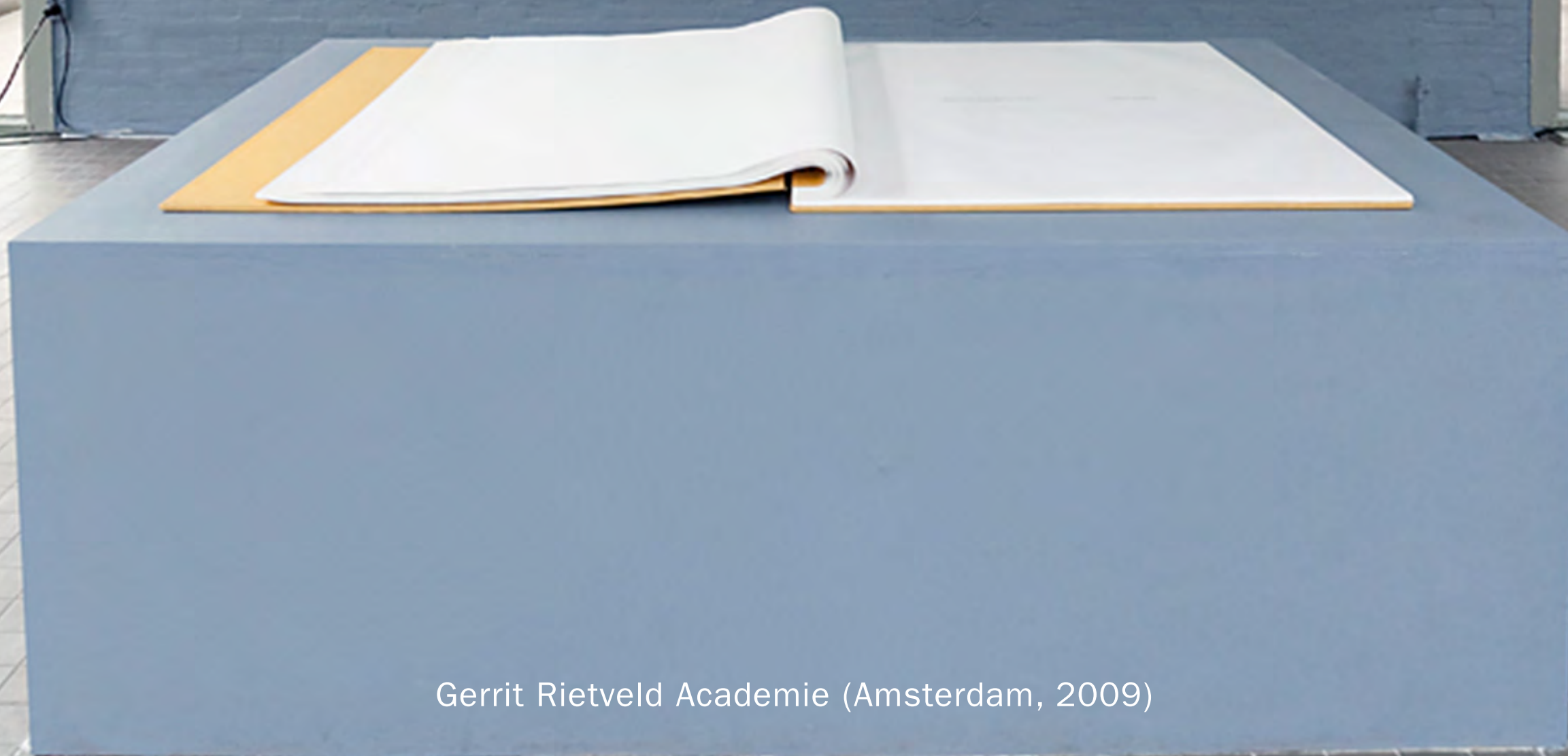
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TRAILER

PER ASPERA AD ASTRA #2

Sound Sculpture — Book Installation

Gerrit Rietveld Academie (Amsterdam, 2009)

"Per Aspera Ad Astra" is a collection of phone numbers of the 193 recognized governments in the world – bound in an A0 telephone book – and accompanied by a sound installation of recordings of each government's reaction to the playing of martial music over the phone.

In contradiction to the effortless lightness of turning an almost weightless sheet of paper, which contains the seriousness of a presidential office, the decision to present this collection in the monumental Size of A0 (119cm x 84cm) is the corollary of transferring the unreachable significance of those ruling residencies into a pseudo-divine appearance, and to create a sculptural-heavy quality.

On each side of the book, the capital, office and phone number of each centre of power is presented in a typeface designed by Matthew Carter. While becoming the most common telephone font because of its excellent readability – even though using fast printing techniques and cheap paper – it communicates a certain simplicity and straightforwardness of mass-media production in contrast to the seemingly important value of the content.

The associated sound installation is the execution of calling the 193 governments of the world, while playing Emil Laukien's bombastic military march "Durch Nacht zum Licht – Per Aspera Ad Astra" in deafening sound. Consequently "Per Aspera Ad Astra" becomes an absurd sound sculpture, which wiretaps the various reactions of the presidential headquarters to disturbing march music.
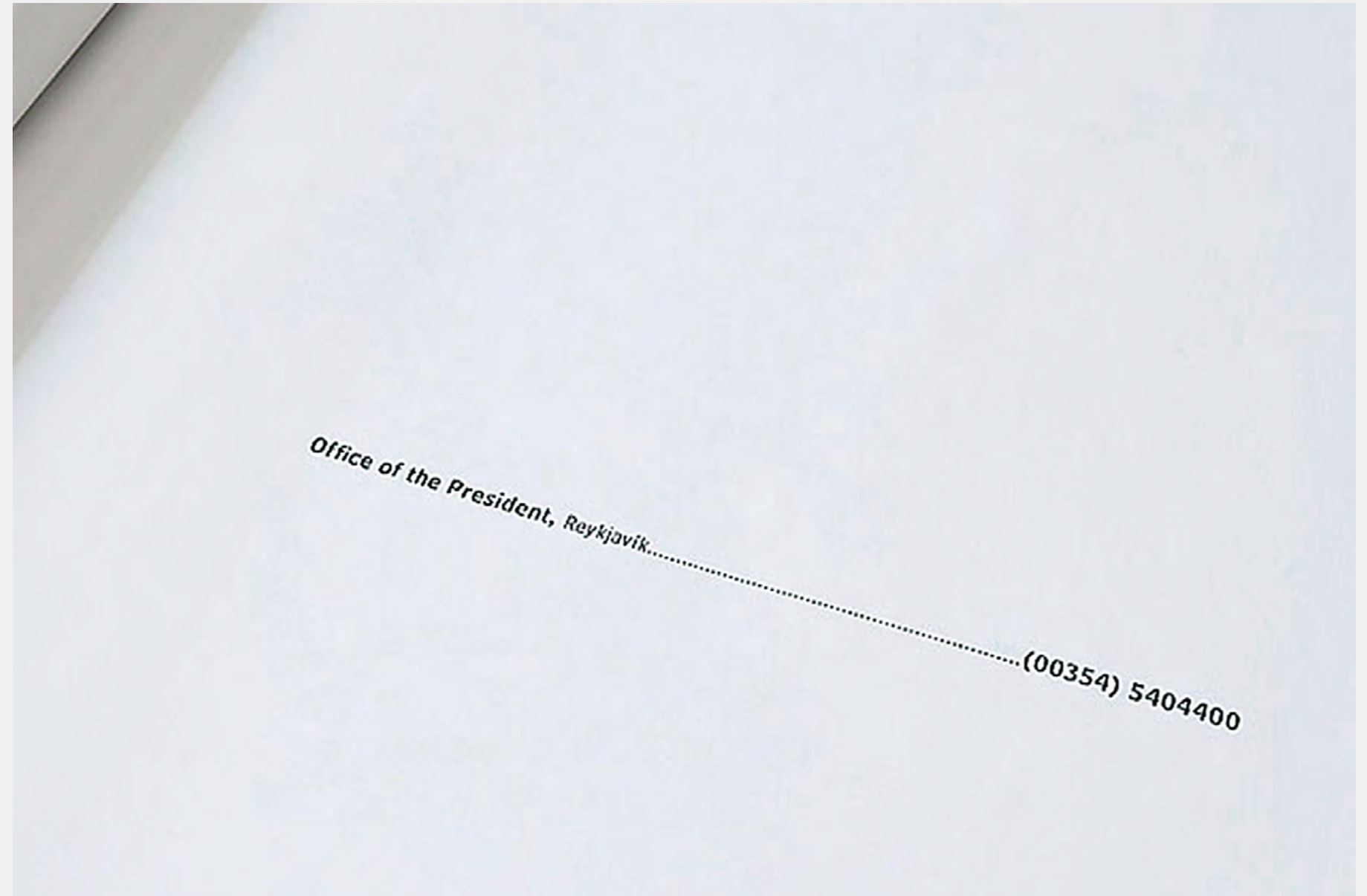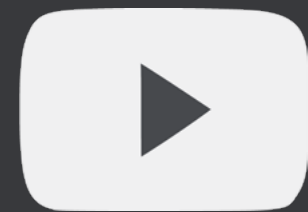
PER ASPERA AD ASTRA #2   Sound Sculpture — Book Installation   Installation view

CLICK FOR VIDEO

TRAILER

TO EACH HIS OWN

SD Video 20 min

SMART Project Space (Amsterdam, 2009)

TO EACH HIS OWN   SD Video, 20 min   Video still

CLICK FOR VIDEO

EXCERPT