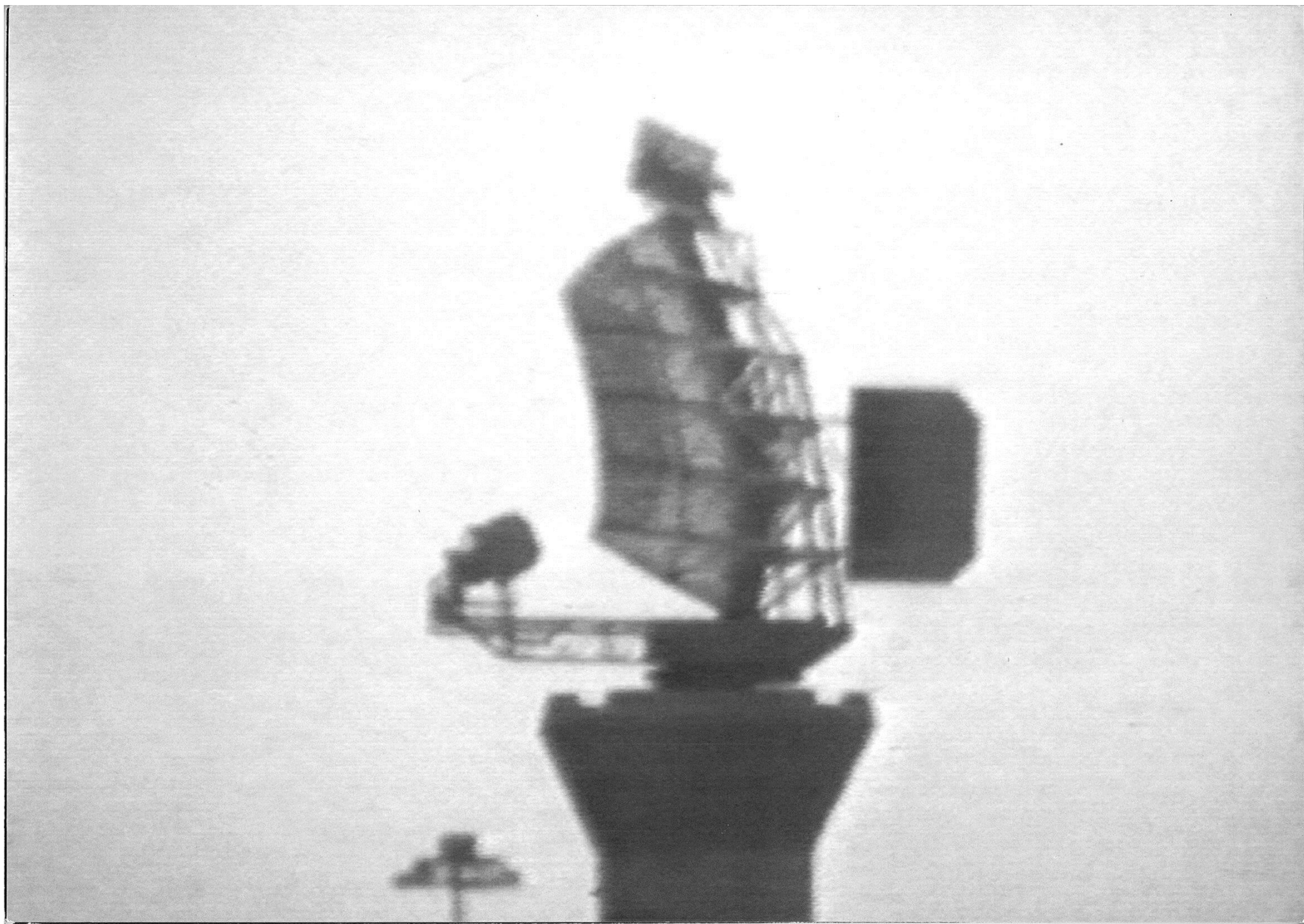


Dryden Goodwin



# Dryden Goodwin recent video work

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Supported by Accrington & Rossendale College

# Foreword

It was somewhere between an inflatable doll and a cardboard control panel that I first came across Dryden Goodwin. This was not the annual meeting of *Fetishists Anonymous*. This was *New Contemporaries '97*, the yearly and trend-setting showcase for graduate talent emerging from art colleges throughout the U.K.

At Goodwin's student film, *Hold* (1996), I stood transfixed, hypnotised by the sounds of sustained violins, the flickering images, the rapid succession and multi-layering of figures occupying an urban environment. In the artist's words, *Hold* explores the nature of memory and the tension that exists between our desire to 'hold onto experiences against the inevitability of the passing of time.'

In later works, the documentary *Ospedale* (1997), and the video installations *About* (1998) and *Within* (1998), this implicit 'humanism' becomes increasingly pronounced. As Goodwin's use of technology develops, the layering and juxtaposition of images become more complex and sophisticated. As the camera's relationship with its subjects gains intimacy, these subjects are allowed to emerge momentarily from the anonymity of the crowd and, in their meeting the camera's eye, we are invited to read a multitude of meanings into a casual glance, a snippet of conversation, a transitory encounter.

This is Dryden Goodwin's first solo exhibition of work in Britain and it brings together three video works produced by the artist in the last five years. Commencing with his first film, *Heathrow* (1994), this leads to *Ospedale*

and the exhibition culminates with the triptych, *About*. This final piece was commissioned by Kettle's Yard in Cambridge for the exhibition *Paved with Gold* last year and was funded by the Arts Council of England. It is appropriate that Simon Wallis, Exhibition Organiser at Kettle's Yard, has written the following essay, providing a valuable insight into each of the works on show.

On behalf of Mid Pennine Arts, I would like to thank both Dryden Goodwin and Simon Wallis as well as all those who have assisted in the realisation of this exhibition. I would also like to make special mention of Anthony Panas for his sensitive handling of the catalogue design.

Fiona Venables



# Dryden Goodwin recent video work

Dryden Goodwin's work contains an energetic fascination for the ephemeral nature of the world and its myriad visual seductions. For Goodwin, the city becomes a flâneur's playground. He drifts around its arterial transport systems and public spaces that are punctuated by incessant departure and arrival, crossing paths and chance collision of lives. He captures the glimmering allure of the metropolis as his camera pans across it, recording the visual surfeit of modern life and moulding it into a compelling humanist story consolidated by the viewer's interpretations. Goodwin works with a hand-held video camera; the same equipment tourists wield in documenting their leisure time and sojourns abroad. In these situations video footage can often act as a haphazard and incidental testament to presence, but Goodwin's use of this populist medium is far more knowing and deliberate. He understands how to use the camera as if it were an organic extension of his vision, and conversely, when to hide behind its glass eye by adopting the persona of the tourist. In his hands, the camera reflects every nuance of looking at the urban environment and its populace, capturing the rich poetic quality in otherwise prosaic experience.

After gathering his video footage, Goodwin manipulates fragmented images and composes with layers of sound, creating multi-sensory and complex narratives that carry the potential for many meanings. He holds onto a childlike fascination for diversity and movement: from the passing overhead of a streaming succession of aircraft, to high speed glimpses of cars and pedestrians. Many of his works offer up synaptic bursts of flickering information, emphasising a disconcerting uniformity through the rapid succession both of people and objects.

He is neither embarrassed by, nor dismissive of, what is to be found at hand in the world; his work implies a faith that the commonplace can be made extraordinary and is worth being reconsidered through these filmic transformations.

The documentary impulse is something the mass media overloads us with, showing us almost too much of other people's lives in the most normative and superficial ways. Ubiquitous cheap television documentaries trawl through the minutiae of subjects such as supermarkets, cruise ships, vets' practices and traffic wardens' routines. At their best, documentaries can offer a deep insight into personalities and organisations - at worst they confer a stultifying norm on daily life that doesn't admit any play of the imagination in thinking about things differently. This occurs because documentary programmes often hide their own fiction to emphasise a tenuous and laboured veracity that lets us go no further than what we are presented with as the 'truth'. In contrast, Goodwin's work plays with a documentary style through its gentle invasion of privacy and exploration of daily experience; adding a carefully constructed sense of mystery, longing and unease to the process.

*Ospedale* (1997) is a perfect example of this imaginative recuperation of reality. It was filmed in an Italian hospital that Goodwin gained unlimited access to through building relationships with its staff. The film treads on familiar ground - we all know the scenes that can unfold in such an emotive environment, both through real life experience and fictionalised dramas - but *Ospedale* has a visual imperative that eschews the realm of tired cliché; we are drawn into its

spaces, lingering and prying into what they might mean, or what may occur in them. In these surroundings his work can traverse the boundaries between life and death, and the gravity of the situation is palpable. Goodwin dwells on those who wait in the hospital's corridors, unconsciously knotting and fidgeting with worry and boredom. Fragments of conversation underscore the images, emphasising the responsibility, reality and fate that surrounds the body during illness. The camera's rapid movement through labyrinthine corridors is echoed in shots of blood coursing through coiled plastic tubes, so that the body and the building become momentarily conflated. Green surgical smocks are juxtaposed against both virulent red blood and a traumatised, prawn pink, new born baby; highlighting the struggle between the sterile and the visceral.

Goodwin visually catalogues the restless tensions of this place, showing them as simultaneously hopeful and fatalistic. This film is suffused with lives at very different stages: some just beginning to unfold, some ebbing, as the camera zooms into patients' rooms from the outside, emphasising emotional displacement, human presence and visible pain. The morbid finality of the stainless steel clad autopsy room, with its laid out cadaver, is redeemed with a romantically metaphysical image of the hospital helicopter taking off like a departing soul, offering a bird's eye view of the city. However, this ethereal flight is abruptly cut short as a burst of garbled noise smothers the ascending soundtrack and somehow seems to force the aircraft to land. The footage quickly snaps back to the fragmented images of anxious figures in the corridor, bringing the film full circle.

*Heathrow* (1994) contains the fantasy of flight and escape in an environment that tries to normalise what is, in fact, extraordinary. Narrative vignettes concentrate on passengers moving around the airport terminal while the warm grainy film quality gives this airport a dazed oneiric luminosity, reflecting the mindset of the traveller. The sky is depicted as a form of mystic space where we might undergo a loss of self or become overwhelmed by elemental fear in the blue void. This meditative quality is ripped through by the palpable roar of a plane passing overhead. The camera witnesses passengers' ant-like comings and goings; their countenances conveying a sense of purpose, confusion, or the joy of homecoming and reunion. In this early work Goodwin already uses the formal elements of video to great poetic affect and he has sought out a place that allows this formalism to become more than the sum of its parts in grasping the *genius loci* of the airport.

*About* (1998) has many of the febrile qualities of his other videos but entwines them with a greater range of orchestrated moods and movements. This piece - filmed from a barge, a bus, a train and on an underground escalator - offers an epic eulogy to the city and its inhabitants. The camera and soundtrack explore a range of shifting emotional nuances that inflect one another in unexpected and forceful ways across the three screens on which it is presented. *About* summons up our presence as witness and actor in the city, whereby we momentarily delve into other people's worlds only to reflect back on ourselves and our memories before moving on. This work seems to mirror the active mediation of events in the world, foregrounding an alert readiness to lend things meaning and predict consequences.

Goodwin's work deliberately offers itself up to multiple interpretations, allowing room for the viewer to develop the hermeneutic process that is at the heart of any aesthetic experience. The work follows no one linear narrative: it circles back on itself, either literally in a film loop or by restructuring the synchronisation of playing orders and soundtrack, creating new implications on each occasion. In works such as *About* and *Within*<sup>1</sup> this shifting of meaning is deliberately built into the film's formal construction through editing and presentation on several screens. We lose the possibility of a single viewpoint - that seductive doorway to escapism - and can feel a descending anxiousness over which way to turn, keeping us on our guard and making us look that much harder and longer at the images playing before our eyes. Goodwin forces us to be active in our viewing, playing with our attention spans and inquisitive fascination for the lives and appearances of others who we will probably never know. He visually offers the beginnings of stories that we are encouraged to imagine unfolding as an empathetic act of reaching out to gain knowledge.

These films are never merely a report on reality - as if such a thing were ever truly possible - but rather highly subjective framings of the world that still allow room for manoeuvre in their interpretation. This is overtly played with in the carefully constructed soundtracks to his videos, that punctuate and tease shifting moods from the images, analogous to cinema and television advertising that has to hook people in a short amount of time. He composes in a fluid, layered way that leaves us unsure of his intentions while encouraging us to be aware of the fiction involved in the process of constructing these works.

Goodwin films places, and from situations, that are themselves ever fluctuating. The camera intrudes and surreptitiously captures images as it shifts in and out of focus, reflecting our economy of energy in the city and emphasising the equation between looking and meaning that is inherent in our daily lives. His work contains very particular temporal qualities where time is never merely linear, but instead, uncomfortably compressed by fast editing or drawn out through repeated slow panning shots that emphasise the machinations of memory and anticipation locating us in the physical environment. Goodwin creates a fiction about the world that enhances our own place in it - daily life appears richer and becomes a site for hidden meanings to gradually reveal themselves, keeping the world uncertainly poised between fatalism and hopeful possibility.

## Simon Wallis

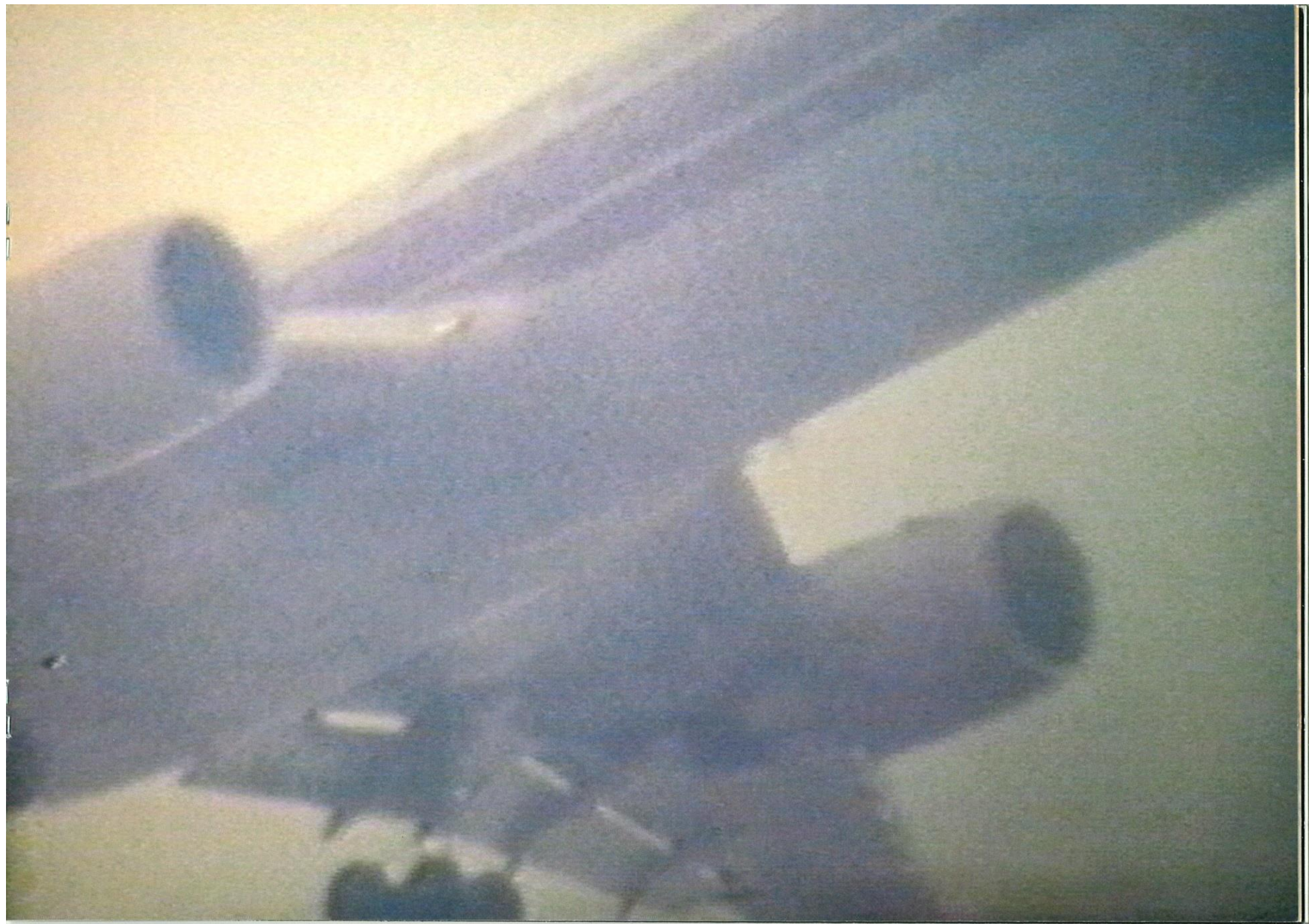
### NOTE

1. *Within* is a four screen video installation produced in 1998.

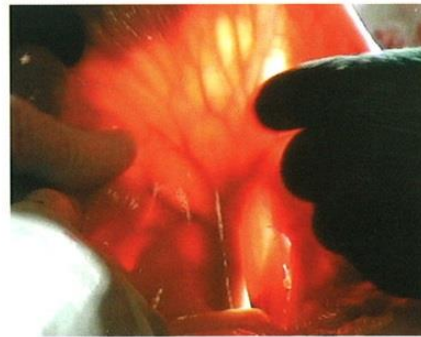
It was commissioned by The LUX Centre, London and first shown as part of the *Pandaemonium Festival* 1998.





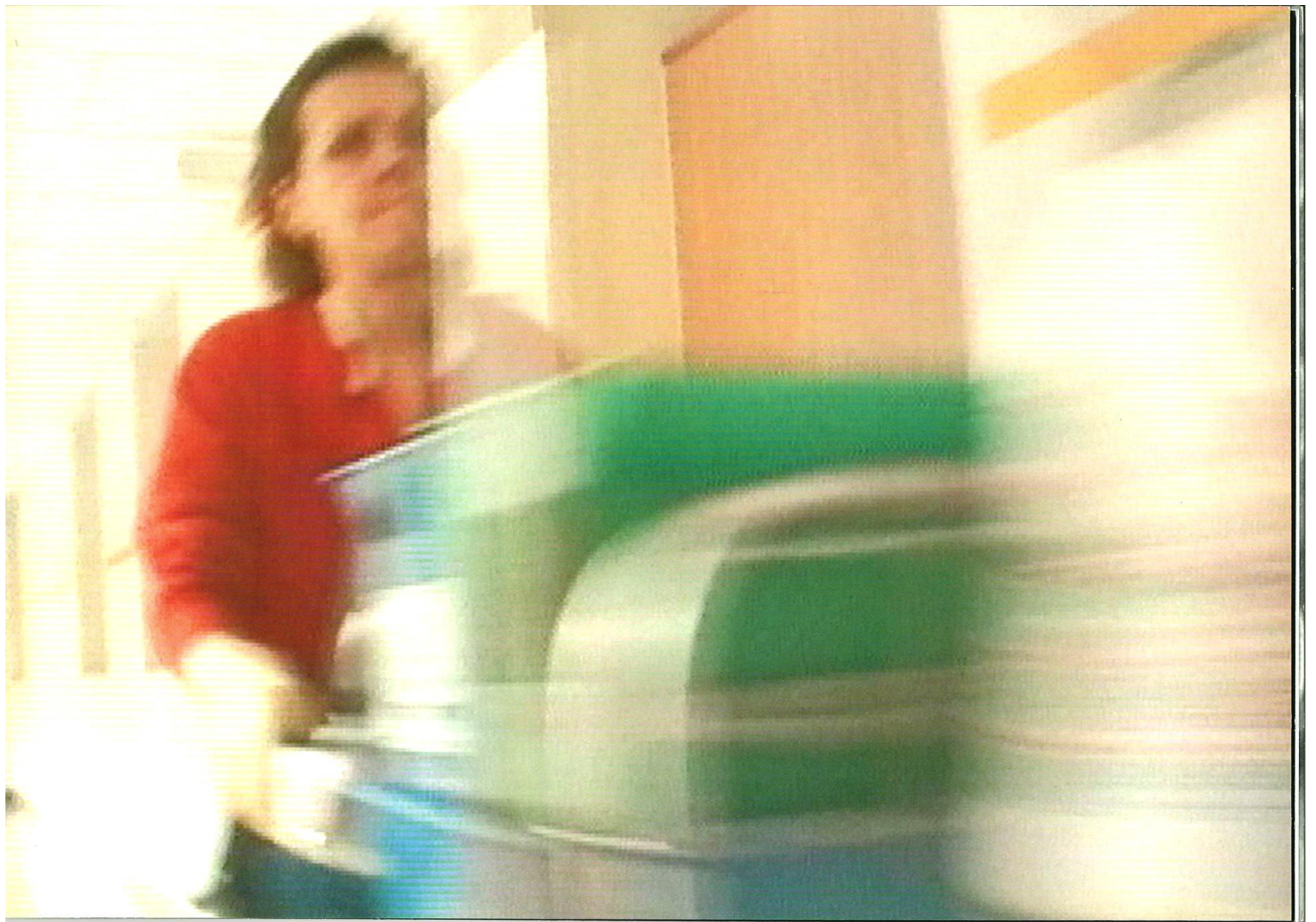






*Ospedale*





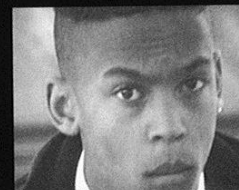
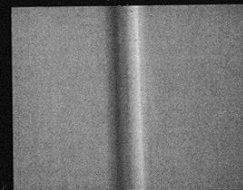




*About*







# Dryden Goodwin

(born 1971)

Studied at the Slade School of Fine Art.

Works with different media including video, film, sound, painting, drawing and bookmaking.

Awarded a fellowship for a year at Fabrica, an art and communication centre funded by Benetton, Venice, Italy, 1996-97.

Exhibited in the *New Contemporaries 97*.

Recent exhibitions include,

*Paved with Gold*, gallery commission, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, 1998.

*SOLO x 9: Artists in Clerkenwell*, Berry House, London, 1998.

*Pandaemonium Festival*, gallery commission, The LUX Centre, London, 1998.

A solo exhibition, Galerie Frahm, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1999.

*video cult/ures*, ZKM / Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnology, Karlsruhe, Germany, 1999.

*Traffic*, gallery commission, SITE Gallery, Sheffield, 1999.

Recent international film and video festivals include,

*Melbourne International Film Festival*, Australia, 1997.

*Transmedia Festival*, Berlin, Germany, 1998.

*British/Canadian Video Exchange*, Toronto, Canada, 1998.

*International Film Festival Rotterdam*, Holland, 1999.

*Video forms - Festival of video creation*, Clermont-Ferrand, France, 1999.

Work in collections include,

The Arts Council of England collection and Doris Lockhart Saatchi collection.



