

# secession

Vereinigung bildender KünstlerInnen Wiener Secession  
Friedrichstraße 12, A-1010 Wien  
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## Press release

## JAMES RICHARDS & LESLIE THORNTON

### *Crossing*

September 14 – November 4, 2018

Press conference: Thursday, September 13, 2018, 10 a.m.

Opening: Thursday, September 13, 2018, 7 p.m.

James Richards and Leslie Thornton are showing their first collaborative project *Crossing* (2016) at the Secession. This video installation materializes an intense phase of exchange between the artists who belong to two distinct generations and contexts. Thornton, a media artist who herself was influenced by Paul Sharits, Yvonne Rainer, and Joan Jonas often deploys projections complicated by ample sound-image interactions. Likewise, musical composition is key to Richard's practice. Both artists' work is motivated by their understanding of cinema and video as original languages and forms of thinking.

The work's title evokes the artists' mode of working together, traversing their practices and sharing their views. "Thornton and Richards uploaded their files via digital networks, downloading each other's material, amending, deleting, inverting concurrently. Feverishly working in their respective time zones (Thornton's late-night editing would segue into Richards' early morning work), each version of *Crossing* accrued more extensions and variations. When the pair finally met in Minneapolis for the Walker screening, work continued until the final sequence was finished on a laptop in the back of a cab on the way to the cinema premiere. *Crossing* only gained a physical body once, when it was transferred to a hard drive in the projection booth, shortly before the public arrived in the auditorium."

(Quoted from: Mason Leaver-Yap, "James Richards and Leslie Thornton's *Crossing: Deep Water*", <http://rodeo-gallery.com/exhibitions/crossing-test/>)

Equally, *Crossing* alludes to *Crossroads* (1976), a short film by Bruce Conner that reworks footage of the U.S. 1946 nuclear tests in the Bikini Atoll. Conner confronts the viewer with slow-motion imagery which is at times out of sync with a soundtrack composed by experimental music pioneers.

Similarly, the strictly organized frame of Richards and Thornton's video allows the artists to juxtapose, modulate, and iterate recurring image fragments and sonic impulses. Assembled from both found material and original footage from their own extensive archives, *Crossing* moves through multiple stages and eventually morphs into an audiovisual note on artistic production and collaboration.

"Harnessing an associative logic that guided its construction early on, *Crossing* takes the material undercurrents of *Radio At Night* (James Richards, 2015) and *They Were Just People* (Derek Jarman 2016), as its dual starting points. Both of these aforementioned works commune around the most fundamental aspects of the moving image: firstly, around an obsession with the aperture and the frame,

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wherein holes—rendered as pits, bullet holes, voids and pupils—symbolise the space of vision or entry into the body; and secondly, both videos restlessly engage with the limits of vision technology, dealing with scopic intimacy and its opposite: the weaponisation of the mechanised, surveilling eye. *Crossing* braids such impulses together and, in places, inverts its content as if to test the comprehension and veracity of its vision. This is a work full of overlays and sutures, creatures artificial and living. Everywhere in the video one sees not just holes but eyes. This, after all, is a dense habitat, teeming with life—stormy, wet, fecund.

[...]

One strains to identify narrative thread amongst the formal repetitions and echoes within the material, but this is a world untethered from sequential logic and language. Rather, it is the imitation of another's vision, where that vision is imagined from a distance. *Crossing* is the product of the desire to enmesh personal coherences, to offer oneself up to another's process. It is a way of visualising a world where, as one of the artists describes, 'something special can happen that goes beyond conscious expectation or design'". (Mason Leaver-Yap)

The artist book *Event*, in which Leslie Thornton applies her technique of montaging imagery and textual material to the book medium, is published in conjunction with the exhibition.

Leslie Thornton born in 1951 in Knoxville (Tennessee), lives and works in New York.  
James Richards (born 1983) is a British artist who lives in Berlin and London.

The exhibition program is conceived by the board of the Secession.  
Curator: Annette Südbeck

### **Curators' guided tour**

Friday, September 28, 4 p.m.

Guided tour through the exhibitions with curators Jeanette Pacher, Bettina Spörr und Annette Südbeck

### **Publication**

An artist book is being published in conjunction with the exhibition.

#### **Leslie Thornton. *EVENT***

Softcover, 21,6x28 cm

120 pages

Concept: Leslie Thornton

Texts: James Beacham, Michael Doser, Maria Fidecaro, Leslie Thornton, Thomas Zimmer

Secession 2018

Distribution: Revolver Publishing

ISBN 978-3-95763-434-4

EUR 29,-

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## **Press images**

Installation views are available for download at: [www.secession.at/en/presstype/aktuell](http://www.secession.at/en/presstype/aktuell)

## **Press contact**

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