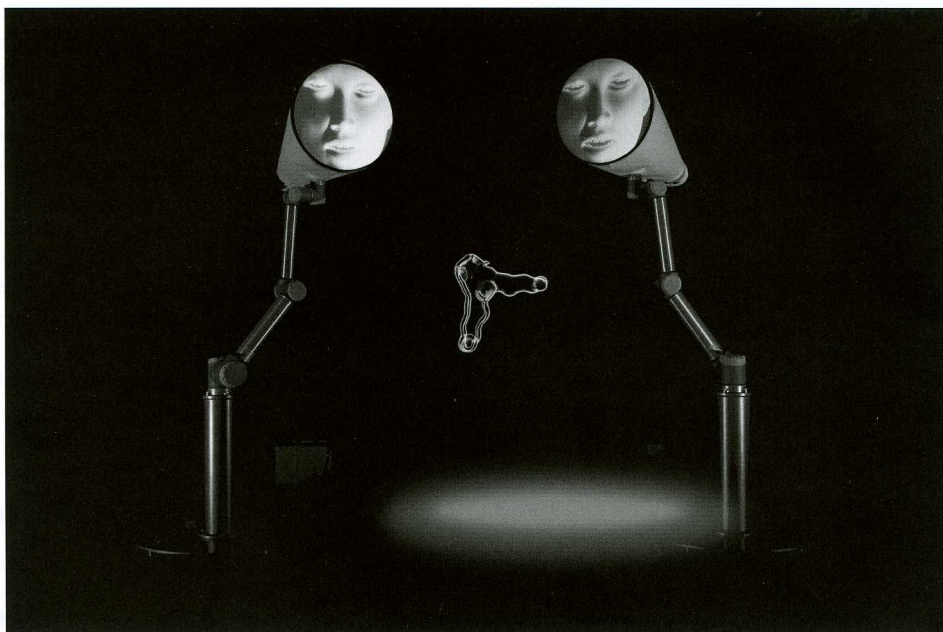


Lindsay Seers
*Every Thought
 There Ever Was* 2018
 installation view



including Hildegard of Bingen and Teresa of Avila. Around the corner from this absorbing sound installation hang the '12 Signs of the Zodiac', a series of undated paintings by Ariella Widzer, who is Shani's aunt. Her personifications of astrological signs as androgynous humanoids with elongated limbs and blank eyes, bordered by Art Nouveau-style foliage, could be alternative portraits of the women of 'Semiramis'. Their ice blue, peachy pink and custard yellow colour palette is reminiscent of the tones Shani used on *Dark Continent: Semiramis*, evidence of the matrilineal kinship that nourishes the entire project, stretching as far back as the 13th century and de Pizan's conception of a city of women. ■

Ellen Mara De Wachter is based in London and author of *Co-Art: Artists on Creative Collaboration*, Phaidon, 2017.

Lindsay Seers: Every Thought There Ever Was

Focal Point Gallery Southend-on-Sea
 8 September to 23 December

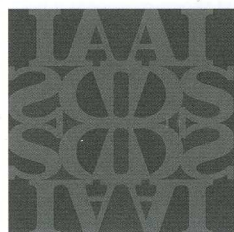
Despite its litany of somewhat clichéd abject metaphors for states of distraction, infiltration, infection or superstition (think fluttering moths, meat flies, writhing larvae and alchemical symbols), a monstrous image worthy of Lindsay Seers's hyperbolic exhibition title lay at the core of her titular film *Every Thought There Ever Was*, 2018: a testicular glob, kaleidoscopically bejewelled with myriad autonomous

eyeballs, suggestive of a mammalian evolution of the compound optics of an insect. This pulsing oracle provided a disquieting bodily allegory for Seers's idiosyncratic exploration of consciousness, namely, the experience of heightened forms of perception reported to occur in the event of psychosis.

As such, the work attempted to create the dysphoric conditions through which a state of unease and piqued receptivity might be induced in a viewing subject through an admittedly impressive display of kinetic projections, heavily echoed audio and animated spotlights. While a large central orb projected onto the back wall of the gallery relayed the film's most consistent series of images, it was a pair of smaller projectors, each housed within their own bespoke conical screens and mounted onto the arms of industrial robots, that performed a kind of cinematic interjection, feeding their imagery into the work as a series of paranoid discordances.

Developing an interest in a recently successful form of psychiatric treatment known as Avatar Therapy – in which digital personages are created to simulate and thus provide a form of safe exposure to the hallucinated persecutory entities encountered in schizophrenia – Seers had derived her film's narrative through the emulation of a therapeutic process. The viewer becomes a patient confronting an intermittently glimpsed robotic avatar tasked with helping them understand their own agency in a state of mental distress, illustrated here by animated emblems of telecommunication and arcane knowledge that appear and recede rhythmically in a flux of nightmarish fits.

The film's avatar channelled the life of James Miranda



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Barry (1795-1865), a military surgeon born Margaret Ann Bulkley who lived a life of ambitious medical practice as a man, eventually serving as Inspector General of the British Army. Called into existence from a hazy future, Barry's avatar executed a form of post-human fictioning through which he declares that his robot form has in fact been determined by a parochial presumption of how a human future might appear, opposed to the reality of which the avatar itself is born: a kind of wetware, hive-mind, hermaphroditic futurity that seems to recast the omniscient symptoms of psychosis as holistic oneness. In other words, a future characterised by fluidity and the absence of 'filtering systems', be they cognitive or bodily.

Such a sentiment, that a 'soft, organic system arises more effectively', was galvanised by a backdrop of hopeful swelling strings that it was difficult not to be seduced by. But this is where the film appeared to splinter into a series of questions that I'm not sure it was immediately equipped to address. Soft systems are no less ideologically constituted or politically instrumentalised than the hard machinery of industrial capital. Similarly, emergent and digitally appended models of psychotherapeutic care are no less invested with normative expectations and cultural oversights than existing clinical practice. If Barry's avatar arose to invoke a reassuring future in which the symptoms of schizophrenia are placated (normalised) by a borderless networked consciousness, then surely the patient is responsible for emulating a therapist's fable as a mode of self-regulation? What might such a practice actually do to a person?

Seers is deeply reverent towards the subject and experience of schizophrenia, as is attested by her wall-mounted research library and co-authored works (with participants undergoing therapeutic support for mental illness) displayed in Focal Point's corridor and second gallery. But I couldn't shake the feeling that the title work prioritised an artistic fascination with the metaphorical potential of the altered realities and perceptual peculiarities of psychosis, rather than engaging some of the broader and more challenging problems it provoked, for example in the material configuration of the work itself:

Mark Wallinger
Birdman 2018



slick animations and hyper-fetishised robotics. Principally, what was needed was a fuller acknowledgment of its own complicity within the ubiquitous distribution of images that cultivates schizoid subjects.

Evan Calder Williams has coined the brilliant phrase 'Shard Cinema' to describe the digital ecology of fractured screens, anxious distractions, composite images, prolonged render times and the insufficiency of the labouring human body to comprehend, let alone manufacture, the plethora of seamless images that comprise the technologically suffused present. *Every Thought There Ever Was* performs a shard cinema of its own, its many thematic splinters provoking a series of troublesome propositions that it will no doubt take a while to tease out. ■

Jamie Sutcliffe is a writer and publisher in London.

Mark Wallinger: The Human Figure in Space

Jerwood Gallery Hastings

21 July to 7 October

In 'The Human Figure in Space' Mark Wallinger (Interview AM175) complements work from 2007 (but not shown in the UK before) with a related new piece to produce a whole suited to the slapstick seaside atmosphere of Hastings. The visitor's starting point is the large Foreshore Gallery, empty apart from grids on three walls, which are mirrored on the fourth. The grids are not drawn, but made from three miles of kite line, carrying a suggestion of restricted flight forward into the rest of the show. The effect, in beautiful natural light, is a minimalism subtly modulated by variations in string thicknesses and their layering. The point, though, is to reproduce the set-up for Eadward Muybridge's pioneering series of 19th-century photographs 'The Human Figure in Motion': their scientific imprimatur was emphasised by a 120ft-wide gridded backdrop. Wallinger's similarly sized grid is divided into 260 sections – numbered in mirror writing, so that we see the digits reflected legibly, measuring us as we pose or jump. The grid encourages us to imagine ourselves as if photographed by Muybridge – but without the sequencing. In line with how Wallinger has tweaked Muybridge's title, motion is exchanged for space.

Wallinger used the same backdrop for *Undance*, 2011, in which he had ballet dancers enact movements inspired by Richard Serra's *Verblis*, 1967-68. Extracts play in the lobby en route to the other work from 2007, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*. Five TV screens show brief, grainy loops from videos submitted to the TV show 'You've Been Framed' (running since 1990). That programme – rather predictably – collects the absurdities of 'surprising' happenings caught on camera. Wallinger hones in on just those moments when, say, subjects swinging on ropes start to lose control, and slows it down tenfold to allude to the zoetrope animations of Muybridge's photographs. The conclusion – such as a fall into water – never takes place, but is instead tragically deferred. In an art gallery, this inevitably recalls both Bruegel the Elder's eponymous painting and Bas Jan Ader's films of falling, as well as the originating Icarus myth. All are