

# Metteurs en Scène

**APROPOS OF PROPS:** the venerable concept of mise en scène sets the stage (for what else can it do?) for *Metteurs en Scène*. Remarkable in its transcendence of the vagaries of academic Film Theory, mise en scène continues to naysay the individualist orthodoxies attendant at that intellectual tradition's birth in the pages of *Cahiers du cinéma* and the cinémathèques of 1950s and '60s Paris. There and then, to designate a filmmaker as a metteur en scène rather than an

auteur was to damn with faint praise, privileging an idea of creativity as a matter of individual imposition rather than collective conversation and mutual facilitation. Thankfully, however, mise en scène still metteurs today. Roughly translatable as 'putting on stage' and encompassing all visible and audible aspects of a movie, mise en scène conceives and celebrates creativity as collaboration. In its specifically cinematic application mise en scène proposes we apprehend film language as a babelesque babble of interrelated dialects (cinematography + costume + sound + set + props + performers and so on) endlessly figured then reconfigured in dialectic relation, rather than a monoglot lexicon articulated by splendidly isolated auteur-orators ('a film by

Alfred Hitchcock, Jean-Luc Godard, Howard Hawks, Michael Powell, etc'). Moreover, in the detailed attention it pays to the sensual and physical, mise en scène also asks us to understand cinema as a multi-dimensional physical and imaginary space rather than a liquid sheet of light and colour pouring straight onto and then straight off the sheer face of an impermeable 2-D screen; it ushers the viewer into the room beyond the window, and it's perhaps here that no small part of film's fascination lies. It's something very like that invitation, to come away in and set yourself down on set, which the organisers of *Metteurs en Scène* reissue to you now.

**Dr Jonny Murray**  
*Unsung & Unsound*

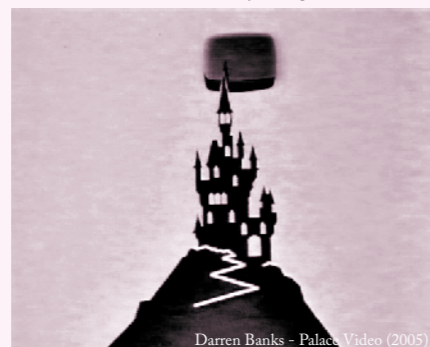


Newcastle viewed from Workplace Gallery

**KEEPING IT REEL:** For such a small conurbation Newcastle and Gateshead boast an extraordinary number of internationally renowned art organisations, including a-n the artists' information company, VANE (1997-) and BALTIC (2002-) in addition to two art schools. Tyneside has longer been famed for its artist led culture – from Waygood Gallery and Studios to the site and performance related work of The Basement Group (1979-84), Projects UK (1984-92) and Locus+ (1993-). Two of the area's newest organisations expand this artist-run infrastructure by occupying unusual locations, finding new supporters in their midst, and different means of survival. Building on the Workplace (2002-) organisation founded by artists Paul Moss and Miles Thurlow, Workplace Gallery (2004-) [www.workplacegallery.co.uk](http://www.workplacegallery.co.uk) is situated in Owen Luder's Trinity Court shopping complex in Gateshead town centre, the Brutalist megastructure that made infamous in Get Carter. The centre is in its last days, destined for demolition – allowing Workplace to operate provisionally in a space which is, by national standards, enormous (but very very cold). Rather than operate by committee, the organisation represents artists – including Marcus Coates, Darren Banks and Catherine Bertola – on a commercial basis. Taking advantage of the global boom in the market by attending international art fairs in London, New York and Miami ensures that artists in the North East of England are able to make a living from their work while keeping a local art economy afloat. Emerging out of the Side Cinema (2001-05), Star and Shadow Cinema (2006-) [www.starandshadow.org.uk](http://www.starandshadow.org.uk) is located in Stepany Bank, Newcastle in the former Tyne Tees television warehouse. The independent cinema, bar, exhibition foyer, darkroom and arts office space was constructed entirely by volunteer artists and cinephiles – among them

Susie Green and Ilana Mitchell – to support innovative practice by encouraging community participation. Its cooperative membership-based structure is perhaps more familiar to Scottish artists. The Embassy shares Workplace and Star and Shadow's concern with performance, film and video based work and identifies with their independent character.

**Alexandr Petrovsky**  
*Hayes Argot Pit, Monaco*



Darren Banks - Palace Video (2005)

*“Did you know that the sole reason we called 'The Embassy' The Embassy was because initially we were trying to secure an old cinema foyer on Dalry as the gallery space? It fell through in the end but the name kind of stuck. You should have a look at it – it's now a tattoo parlour round the corner from Dalry WASPS studios. A beautiful space, it has two symmetrical ascending staircases that lead to nowhere; long ago bricked up as the theatre was demolished and is now axis car rental warehouse”*

**Tommy Grace**, founding committee member of The Embassy, Edinburgh  
*Hackney Gazette, Londres*

**M-en-SC.uration:** We seem to live in a time when ideas of authorship cause a great deal of confusion. In the world of architecture the grand design houses of Rogers and Foster appear to be responsible for every major building project, but it is doubtful that the doyen of either company sits down in front of their iMac of a day to actually design or even co-ordinate the design of many buildings. The logistics of global corporatism would suggest otherwise. There has been a tendency in recent years, with the biennialisation of the art world, for curators to take on the mantle of the auteur, to become the guiding genius providing meaning for the benighted audience, artist and market alike. Your biennale lacks balls? Send for Obrist. Need to sex up your city's cultural calendar? Where is Catalan? In this morass Edinburgh College of Art's MSc in Contemporary Art and Art Theory provides both challenge and opportunity. In a course designed to engage with debates across the visual and cultural field, the chance to curate an exhibition at The Embassy gives us a valued opportunity to put theory into practice. The challenge comes with the need to do this as a group. Yet the problems of realising an exhibition of a professional standard with as diverse a band of collaborators as we have, has led to its own resolution. In challenging notions of authority which now seem outmoded as a theoretical model, the task of collaboration opens new perspectives. An international group working with galleries in different cities, collaborating with artists whose work examines the notions of space, location and interaction offers a model of working practice in diametric opposition to the exclusivity of the auteur theory. Theory, practice and practicality have come together optimally. *Metteurs* over mise any day.

**Paul Steer**  
*Joppa-sur-Mer Rapporteur*

**Marcus COATES** London born artist, Marcus Coates continues his quest to 'become animal' in his most revealing role to date. The Embassy proudly presents "Journey to the Lower World" starring Coates as a performance artist who – dressed as a stag – tries to help a group of Liverpool residents. We see Coates perform an ancient shamanistic ritual, claiming the ability to diagnose and cure human suffering through communication with the spirit world. Coates' work has long been pre-occupied with the notion of humans 'becoming animal' and in this film we witness the extremes he is willing to go for his art. Set in the sitting room of a flat in a soon to be demolished tower block in Liverpool, we watch in wonderment and intrigue as Coates goes on a mental journey to the animal spirit world. All his supporting cast can do



Marcus Coates - Journey to the Lower World (2004)

is sit haplessly looking on. At first bemused, a contoured look of disbelief, awe and even a little fear gradually sweeps over their faces as Coates falls deeper into a trance. An engaging and completely unscripted film that's sure to send the viewer into fervent reverie

**Ailbhe Clyne**  
*The Irish Exhibitionist*

**Catherine BERTOLA's** work is site orientated, process based and quite often temporary in its nature. She uses the histories and contexts of a site as a starting point from which to physically interrogate and enhance the poetics of the space, by embedding her own perishable trace and adding other layers of meaning. Work presented in The Embassy is set in the 'unnoticeable everyday', it tells a story of a collector and her peculiarities. This thrilling intrigue takes us through the evidence of human presence and traces of ongoing activity. Although made from quite different materials, both works (*The Dust Carpet* and *The Flight of Fancy* – Manchester circa 1900) create an unforgettable collage, built on the rubble of the everyday ambience that we are steeped in. They intimate vulnerability and abundance. Objects excavated from space devoid of human existence and staged in the context of history and function of the space re-enter a new circle of life, creating a new dimension into which we are invited.



Catherine Bertola - Flights of Fancy (Manchester circa 1900)

Throughout this spectacle of the staged spirit of the past, we are reintroduced to objects endowed into daily matters. Objects that from now on will exist in the illusive dimension of our granted consent. Objects that, if we permit, will take show us a new way of experiencing time.

**Kasia Dobrowolska**  
*Cienkim Glosem International Magazine*

**Susie GREEN:** 'I am always so unsure of what exhibition openings 'do', so decided to formalise, choreograph and in turn create a pastiche of these events' – Susie Green. Green is a Newcastle based artist. In the exhibition *Metteurs en Scène*, the most significant of her works are presented: *The Set Up* (2005) – a film created in collaboration with Ilana Mitchell – and *Portafolio* (2006-2007), a mysterious performance inaugurating the exhibition.

Green stands in a critical position towards the contemporary cultural industries – the art world, the media and the music industry. By deconstructing and remaking mechanisms of the cultural industries she lets us see daily artefacts and events – such as video clips (*The Set Up*) or exhibition openings (*Portafolio*) – from a different angle. Green is an artist who communicates. Underlining your importance, rethinking your position, her works are dedicated to you – the viewer. By controlling how long and in what way you can look at her works, she wants you to become aware of your relationship to them, both physical – how you are seated, standing or moving whilst looking at it – and emotional: do you feel seduced, comfortable, enraptured or bored? Green is an artist creating beauty. Whilst most neo-conceptual artists ignore aesthetics, she does not. She creates something that is conceptual and rational but at the same time dreamlike and beautiful; works making your everyday life in a noisy city more glamorous and picturesque.

**Eglė Mikalajūnaitė**  
*The Vilnius City Star*



Susie Green Audience viewing Portafolio, Star and Shadow, Newcastle

## MITCHELL / GREEN

**The Set Up ★★★★★**

16 mm film installation, 2005

Duration: 33 minutes

Single takes of private musical performances. The collaborative debut of Ilana Mitchell and Susie Green bring us the glamour, atmosphere, nuances and mistakes of live performance caught on film. Nine bands played live and were filmed within a constructed set in Mitchell's living room, transforming a private home into a public space. No live audience was present at the time, but later the film had its premiere in the same space when it was shown to its first audience.

*"Unlike a music video which distracts with changing shots and fast cuts, The Set Up allows the audience to concentrate or drift in and out of the performances as they would in a live situation."* – Ilana Mitchell

Both directorial facilitators are intrigued by the interaction of performance, performer and viewer. From an elaborative planning process of dreaming and drawing wonderful structures to host *The Set Up*, the project has grown into a timeless stage where audience is displaced and



Susie Green and Ilana Mitchell - 'The Set Up' (2005)

viewer invited. On general release from 23rd June 2007, *The Set Up* will be showcased to another intimate audience.

**Ilana MITCHELL** is currently working between London and Newcastle. She makes solo work and is part of a number of collectives and collaborations. Mitchell is programme coordinator of *Platform North East* – an informal organisation supporting live work in the region; licensee for the new *Star and Shadow* cinema in Newcastle; and group film maker with *Film Bee*. She exhibits regularly in a variety of spaces and occasionally puts on events in her flat under the name *Starboard Home*. From May to August 2007 she is artist-in-residence at Camden Arts Centre. Working on a project called *Camden Communality*, she will continue her exploration of dialogical art in a project that revolves around the growing of a gardening patch. Made up of the gentle interplay between accidental and intentional communities, Mitchell is fascinated by the many invisible contributors to this communality. Visit her online at [www.camdencommunality.co.uk](http://www.camdencommunality.co.uk).

**Talitha Kotze**  
*The Glocal l'Africain du sud*

**Darren BANKS:** 'I want to use video in the same way I would use a piece of string or an ironing board.' – Darren Banks.

Born in Orsett, Essex in 1978, Banks is a graduate of the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne in both BA Hons and MA Fine Art. Banks is a resident of Newcastle and is represented by the Waygood Gallery that dwells in the iconic shade of "Get Carter Car Park".

Banks works primarily within the framework of video, installation and the mechanics of found objects. The ocular aesthetic of Banks' work is frenzied, irregular, humorous, playful and at times unnerving, as is evident in his film *Interiors* which explores the rooms of an old rickety house to the accompaniment of John Carpenter's synth score from the seminal slasher flick *Halloween* (1978). Banks' working strategies include breaking down and re-building familiar objects, tactics evident in his Roswell inspired *Mothership* (2005), an amalgamation of everyday kitchen utensils, and environments. The domestic hybrid *Tea Shrine* (2005) is imbued with a potent scent of uncertainty and nostalgia. His *Palace Video* (2005) at this year's New York Art Fair was said to give rise to "...a mental blackhole sucking us into a world of throw-away VHS culture circa 1987."

Banks unquestionably doesn't aim to stick to a ceremonial approach, rather he keeps subverting the very bits and pieces we take for granted or that have perished with time, coating them in a impious veil of joie de vivre. As Michael Caine's Jack Carter would say: "Now behave yourself!"

**Ben Newell**  
*New Norwich Times*