

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Press release



The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents on November 29, 2018

Diana Thater: A Runaway World

Diana Thater: *A Runaway World*

- Dates: November 29, 2018–March 3, 2019
- Curator: Manuel Cirauqui
- Film & Video Gallery (103)

From November 29, 2018 to March 18, 2019, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents Diana Thater: *A Runaway World*, an exhibition by the Californian artist Diana Thater (San Francisco, 1962), a pioneer of video installation and the application of new technologies to the moving image. This is the third and last exhibition to be held in 2018 in the Film & Video Gallery, where the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao programs shows that explore major works of video art, video installation, and the moving image as artistic language.

The works of Diana Thater engage in dialogue with key references in art history, from Impressionism to Minimal art, while addressing major concerns in contemporary culture. In the Film & Video Gallery, Thater presents three pieces that explore one of the key themes of her work: the life conditions of animal species as a result of human activity. Two of the videos form twin installations produced recently in Kenya that explore the lives and habitats of two species that are close to extinction—rhinos and elephants—and evoke the dangers that threaten their survival.

As Radical as Reality (2017) follows Sudan, the last living male of the northern white rhino species when the film was made, protected by guards at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy. *A Runaway World* (2017), the work that lends its title to the exhibition, portrays a herd of bull elephants and their habitat in Kenya's Chyulu Hills. Both works display a similar distant, descriptive, sometimes wandering gaze; both observe their objects in silence, and tacitly invite us to consider their existence on earth, and their imminent disappearance. Each installation, conceived as both a portrait and a landscape, consists of two projections on two intersecting, double-sided screens in the middle of the gallery, which is itself also transformed by colored light filters. As a result of this ambient light filtering, each screen's color is altered when reflected upon the neighboring one, and also when its light is mirrored by the gallery floor.

Thater's interest in these interactions manifests itself as strongly in *Time Compressed* (2017), presented at the threshold of the exhibition. This wall video also looks at a group of animals in their fragile habitat of Chyulu Hills. Using a signature display mode in her work, the artist superimposes the abstract and the descriptive whilst provoking a collapse of moments in a short loop. As sheer color shots confront documentary images, the pace and relations between visual components of the landscape defy the alleged realism of the documentary image.

One of Diana Thater's singularities is her manipulation of light in the exhibition space to create immersive, color-saturated video environments that dramatically affect the hosting architecture.

These environments suggest what the artist herself calls the "tension between science and magic", meaning a counterposition of the objectivity of the image and the subjectivity of vision, an experience "as radical as reality" between beauty and criticality.

Thater's approach to image-making painstakingly addresses the contradiction between the human desire to observe and the need to represent—or in other words, to construct—the identity of the other. In her works, the recurring presence of the artist holding the camera acts as a reminder of the ethical dimension involved in the act of filming. Meanwhile, her installations skillfully point out the nuanced differences that distinguish seeing from looking. Each work presents itself as an ecosystem where surfaces, sounds, volumes, and atmospheres coexist with historical memories, signs, and gestures produced by various species of living creatures.

Diana Thater. Biography

Diana Thater (San Francisco, 1962) lives and works in Los Angeles (California). In 1986 she graduated in History of Art from the University of New York, and in 1990 from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. The artist has been a pioneer in the development of video installation in recent times, and in the combination of new technologies of the moving image with forms that defy the narrative conventions of film and video.

Thater has had numerous solo exhibitions at international museums and institutions, such as Borusan Center for Contemporary Art (Istanbul); The Mistake Room (Los Angeles); San Jose Museum of Art; Aspen Art Museum; Fonds régional d'art contemporain Bourgogne (Dijon); Santa Monica Museum of Art; and Dia Center for the Arts (New York), among others. In 2015, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) organized the broadest retrospective of her work to date, *The Sympathetic Imagination*, which then traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago.

Talk with artists: Diana Thater (November, 29 at 18:30)

Diana Thater will be in conversation with Manuel Cirauqui, curator of the Film & Video Gallery, about the artist's work and the exhibition *Shadow Play*, on November 29 at 18:30 in the film & video gallery. After the discussion, there will be a Q&A with the audience.

Diana Thater hablará con Manuel Cirauqui, curator del Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, sobre su trabajo y la exposición *Un mundo en fuga*, el 29 de noviembre a las 18:30 horas, en la sala film & video del Museo donde se ubica su obra. Tras la charla tendrá lugar un coloquio con el público asistente.

Film & Video (gallery 103)

The Film & Video gallery is a space devoted to video art, video installation, and contemporary practices addressing the moving image. Featuring work from various collections in the constellation of Guggenheim Museums, as well as other international collections, the programming of this gallery began in March 2014 with Christian Marclay's installation *The Clock*, which was followed by *The Visitors*, by the Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson, and *The Krazyhouse (Megan, Simon, Nicky, Philip, Dee)*, Liverpool, UK, by Rineke Dijkstra. Shown in 2015 were the *Thread Routes* series by the conceptual artist Kimsooja, *Parallax* by Shahzia Sikander, and *The Cloud of Unknowing* by the Singaporean artist Ho Tzu Nyen. In 2016, the turn came for *The Annunciation – Marian Ilmestys* by the Finnish artist Eija-Liisa Ahtila, *Sigh* by Sam-Taylor Johnson, and *Disorient* by Fiona Tan. In 2017, the Film & Video gallery featured the disturbing *(Untitled) Human Mask* (2014) by the French artist Pierre Huyghe, along with *The Guests* by experimental cinema pioneer Ken Jacobs, and the ambitious performance-based film work *Winter* (2013) by Amie Siegel. In 2018, the turn came for *Closed Circuit* by Michael Snow and *Shadow Play* by Javier Téllez.

Cover image:

Diana Thater

View of the installation Diana Thater: *A Runaway World* at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, 2018

Right: *A Runaway World*, 2017

Installation for two video projectors, two media players, and Altuglas Visio screens.

182.9 x 325.1 x 325.1 cm

Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner, New York/London/Hong Kong

Left: *As Radical As Reality*, 2017

Installation for two video projectors, two media players, and Altuglas Visio screens.

182.9 x 325.1 x 325.1 cm

Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner, New York/London/Hong Kong

For more information:

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All information about the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is available at www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus (press room).

Press Images for
Diana Thater (*A Runaway World*, 2017)
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

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At the press area (prensa.guggenheim-bilbao.es/en) you can register and download high resolution images and videos featuring the exhibitions and the building. Sign in to get access. If you are already a user, log in here (you need your username and password).

For further information, please contact the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Press Department: tel. +34 944 359 008 and email: media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus

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Diana Thater

Time Compressed, 2017

9-monitor video wall

Overall: 182.6 x 323.9 x 11.4 cm

Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner, New York/London/Hong Kong



Diana Thater

View of the installation Diana Thater: *A Runaway World* at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, 2018

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