



## EXPERIMENTA

# New Films by George Barber

### IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

**Preview: Brainwashed: Sex-Camera-Power + Nina Menkes in Conversation**

Wed 10 May 18:00

**Dario Argento in Conversation**

Fri 12 May 18:20

**Mark Kermode Live in 3D at the BFI**

Mon 15 May 18:30

**TV Preview: Best Interests + Q&A with Sharon Horgan and Jack Thorne**

Mon 22 May 18:15

**Preview: The Old Man Movie:**

**Lactopalypse! + Q&A with directors**

**Mikk Magi and Oskar Lehema**

Fri 26 May 18:15

**World Premiere: Straight 8 2023 Top 25**

Sat 27 May 18:00

### REGULAR PROGRAMME

**Woman with a Movie Camera:**

**The Headless Woman (La mujer sin cabeza) + intro by Zeina Durra**

Thu 4 May 20:30

**African Odysseys: Abolition Abolição + intro by Brazilian MP, Benedita da Silva (pre-recorded) and panel discussion**

Sat 13 May 14:00

**Art in the Making: The Case of Marcel Duchamp + intro by BFI National**

**Archive Curator Steven Foxon**

Mon 15 May 18:15

**Silent Cinema: The Unknown + intro by BFI curator Bryony Dixon**

Sun 21 May 14:00

**Seniors' Free Matinee: The Man Within + intro**

Mon 22 May 14:00

**Relaxed Screening: A Glitch in the Matrix + intro and discussion**

Mon 22 May 18:25

**Projecting the Archive: 29, Acacia Avenue + intro by BFI curator Josephine Botting**

Tue 23 May 18:15

### UK ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

**Opening Night: Sanaa + intro and Q&A with Sudhanshu Saria and lead actor Radhika Madan**

Thu 4 May 17:45

**Film Wallahs: Luminaries + intro and Q&A with Dishoom co-founder Shamil Thakrar, director Sanvir Singh, and animator and illustrator Gagandeep**

Thu 11 May 20:40

**Short Film Showcase**

Sat 13 May 12:00-14:00

**Screening and Awards Ceremony**

Sun 14 May 13:30 – 17:00

The leading-figure behind the Scratch Video phenomena of the 1980s, in turn influencing music video, television, alternative film and beyond, George Barber's influence and standing in British artist and alternative filmmaking is significant. Working across a number of modes, and channelling humour, personal anecdote and a canny appreciation for society's ever-evolving obsessions and preoccupations, his rich, imaginative work takes many different forms and shapes.

We are thrilled to present a BFI National Archive showcase of new and recent works by Barber. The programme displays his typical eclecticism, musicality and sharp sense of humour while yet again revealing an underlying sensitivity to the alienation that underpins consumerist, modern life. Six films by George Barber to take you to several different places. We also look forward to welcoming Barber for a live, in-person conversation with Barbican curator Matthew Harle.

### Film programme

#### Mind Wandering in a Van

UK 2022, 28min

A van travels around London. Participants are asked to listen to music and then tell us what they are thinking about.

#### Thirty Minutes of Crawl

UK 2015, 5min

The problem of swimming while expecting a Fed Ex delivery.

#### We Need to Speak Tony

UK 2017, 16min

After being briefed individually and fed anecdotes about Tony Blair by George Barber, a group of improvisers 'channel' themselves into being the ex-PM for the afternoon.

#### Garden Centre

UK 2015, 2min

George Barber relates his new artistic manifesto involving NOT being at the centre of things but preferring to be something intriguing at the edge of the frame. It's all going well too.

#### Video Marilyns Andy Never Thought Of

UK 2022, 5min

Barber took a photo of Marilyn and put it through analogue and digital processes in four short chapters.

#### Uprooted

UK 2020, 20min

A poetic response to childhood, growing up in Guyana and leaving once Barber's parents retired. It also combines, ecological issues, Jim Jones, observations travelling in one of the last pristine rain forests in the world.

**George Barber's** early work on 'The Greatest Hits of Scratch Video' is internationally known and has been featured in many galleries and festivals across the world.

*The Independent* and *Sunday Times* ran features on it, and the tapes, unusually for video art, sold in record shops. His two famous works of the period, 'Absence of Satan' and 'Yes Frank No Smoke' are screened regularly and many of the other works are considered seminal in the history of British Video Art. Many younger artists, including James Richards and Hanna Perry have acknowledged Barber's influence.

His work is diverse and over his career, he has had an installation at Tate Britain entitled 'Automotive Action Painting' (Film & Video Umbrella) and shows of his video sculptures, 'The Long Commute' at Jack the Pelican Presents Gallery Brooklyn, New York. He has also been part of numerous programmes at Tate Modern and had retrospectives at the

## THE COMIC STRIP PRESENTS...

**A 41st Anniversary Celebration**  
featuring

**Peter Richardson & guests**

Fri 19 May 18:20

**The Strike and GLC: The Carnage Continues...**

+ Q&A with Peter Richardson

Sun 21 May 16:00

**Bad News Tour & Churchill: The Hollywood Years – The Director's Savage Cut + Q&A with Peter Richardson**

Sun 21 May 18:30

## CINEMATIC SORCERESS: THE FILMS OF NINA MENKES

**Magdalena Viraga**

Sat 6 May 13:20; Wed 31 May 20:30

**The Great Sadness of Zohara**

Sun 7 May 16:10; Mon 29 May 16:20

**Queen of Diamonds**

Tue 9 May 18:20 (+ Q&A with Nina Menkes);

Wed 24 May 20:30

**Dissolution (Hitparkut)**

Tue 9 May 20:30 (+ Q&A with Nina Menkes);

Sat 20 May 18:20

**The Bloody Child**

Thu 11 May 20:30; Sat 27 May 13:40

**Brainwashed: Sex-Camera-Power**

From Fri 12 May

**Phantom Love**

Sun 14 May 18:15; Mon 22 May 20:40

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ICA, New York Film & Video Festival and recently at La Rochelle Festival, France. He has been written about by Paul Morley and Gareth Evans, the *Time Out* & *Vertigo* magazine critic. Victor Lewis Smith once devoted a page of the *Evening Standard* to 'Upside Down Minutiae' on 14 Dec 2001 after its broadcast on Channel 4's Slot Art. Film & Video Umbrella released a monograph. Seventeen Gallery and Anthony Wilkinson have also shown his work. His DVD release from the LUX gained glowing reviews from *Art Forum*, *Art Monthly* and the *Daily Telegraph* among others.

Barber is eclectic, his ideas varied. After *Scratch*, Barber created many low-tech video pieces and was influential in defining an emergent 'slacker' aesthetic. Narrative and found footage seem to be at the centre of much of his work, either deconstructing it or trying as an artist to evolve an approach that is contradictory to the maker's original intention. His 'Passing Ship' has been widely screened at festivals, as too his 'Hovis Advert' and 'Walking Off Court'. Barber's skills as a writer have led him to produce many lyrical works too, including 'Ansaphone', 'Withdrawal' and 'River Sky'. 'River Sky' toured in, 'Figuring Landscapes' starting at the Tate Modern. (Film & Video Umbrella)

His monologues like 'Refusing Potatoes' or 'I Was Once Involved in a Shit Show' are simple performances that carry the viewer into a genuinely odd confessional world. The monologue form particularly suits Barber as his instinct for the incongruous is appealing. Here, as in *Scratch*, he is trying to 'layer' another of his own stories and thoughts onto someone else's creation, and piggyback on the original's cultural familiarity. This project also continues in his latest found footage work, 'Following Your Heart' and 'Losing Faith' 2008. Both use off-air adverts and TV films, mostly American. The central conceit is to take found footage and manipulate it into a new artistic experience. The adverts and dramas all essentially present clichéd dialogue but by the use of repetition, music, the work rises away from being humdrum television into something more disturbing and effecting. The ingredients of television are inverted and put to new purposes. He has always had a relationship to popular culture and his use of other people's footage is seen as way of puncturing ideology and getting away from the subjective, the idolised hand of the artist. However, this doesn't stop his work seeming personal and unique in other aspects.

He has also produced a number of 'language' free, conceptual works, like 'Automotive Action Painting' and 'The Shouting Match Series' or 'Beyond Language' which reference early video art yet are original too. 'Automotive Action Painting' won First Prize at the 24th Hamburg International Short Film Festival.

'Gibberish' attempts to interrupt and convey meaning using nonsense language.

'Gibberish' seems to be sense, yet most of the recognisable language spoken is ludicrous and spontaneously thought up. The work starts in a garden with a discussion about lost suitcases at an airport, and over 5 minutes develops through various scenarios into being about a loved kitten and the end of the world.

The first 'Shouting Match', is a well-known work that has been shown as a single screen work at the Tate Modern, DCA and Miami Basel. Three other versions have been made, one in Tel Aviv, Bangalore, and New Orleans. This four screen installation of all shouting matches was first shown at Chapter Arts, Cardiff to much acclaim.

[georgebarber.net](http://georgebarber.net)

**Matthew Harle** is a writer and curator from London. He documents cultural histories and everyday life in books, exhibitions and live events.

He has written and edited books on the archives of writers and artists, mythic television plays, cultural heritage, lost address books and football.

He is Curator of Public Programme at the Barbican, where he oversees the Centre's cross-arts programme of talks, performances, exhibitions and screenings across the Centre's venues and public spaces. Previously, he was part of the team assembling the Barbican archive and before that, the BFI's archive television unit.

Matthew taught at Birkbeck before visiting lectureships at King's College and Yale, leading courses on postwar British culture and cities. He has also taught extensively in museums, galleries and adult education.