

MIT List Visual Arts Center

List Projects 23: Andrew Norman Wilson

October 22, 2021—January 9, 2022

Press Event: October 21, 2021

Andrew Norman Wilson's first solo presentation at a United States institution premieres his new film, *Impersonator* (2021)



The MIT List Visual Arts Center is pleased to announce *List Projects 23: Andrew Norman Wilson*, the artist's first solo presentation at a United States institution and the premiere of his new film, *Impersonator* (2021). The Los Angeles-based artist works primarily in moving image and installation, drawing on the visual languages of animation, documentary, and structural film to examine intersecting histories of cinema, image circulation, and labor. The corporate and political interests that undergird the so-called creative economy are a persistent theme for Wilson. Past works have taken a critical eye to Google (*Workers Leaving the Googleplex*, 2011) and Eastman Kodak (*Kodak*, 2019) to consider how Silicon Valley, the entertainment industry, and the art world manufacture cultural products from contracted labor.

With *Impersonator* (2021) alongside his recent *Kodak* (2019), Wilson's List Center exhibition brings together two films that touch on different dimensions of the image production and entertainment industries and those they employ. Both capture protagonists at the peripheries of these economies as they grapple with a growing sense of alienation. Seen together, the films speak to Wilson's evolving interest in multilayered fictions and how media and cinema have the capacity to influence human perception, attitudes, and behavior by affecting our sense of the real.

Impersonator engages the continuity of narrative cinema through live action and a linear plot, and follows an unhoused character impersonator on Los Angeles' Hollywood Boulevard. This marginal figure seeks connection to the world through radical, Hollywood-oriented conspiracy theories they consume by way of a Bluetooth headset soldered into the helmet of a costume that appears to be an off-brand mix of Star Wars Stormtrooper, Halo soldier, and doomsday prepper. A gliding camera trails the impersonator ambling from Hollywood Boulevard to an encampment on the L.A. River where they find police confiscating their tent. Here, Wilson's cinematography references the perspective of third-person shooter video games to underscore how certain moving image tropes can render a character "disposable."

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Kodak centers on Rich, a semi-fictional former employee of the Eastman Kodak Corporation who is loosely based on the artist's father. After being blinded in a workplace accident, Rich spends his days trying to make sense of his life and work by listening to archival cassette tapes of Kodak founder George Eastman's personal reminiscences, which are also subject to the artist's embellishments. The clicks of the cassette player's advance, Eastman's recordings, and Rich's monologue are set against a mesmeric sequence of vignettes of digitally altered archival materials from the Eastman Museum and the University of Rochester, as well as images from the artist's family archive, fittingly shot on Kodak-brand film stock and magnetic tape. Incorporating both fact and fiction, *Kodak* confronts contentious labor histories at the Eastman Kodak corporation and the company's pivotal effect on image production through the invention of roll film and the development of affordable pocket cameras.

Andrew Norman Wilson (b. 1983 Millis, MA) lives and works in Los Angeles. Recent exhibitions include *Lavender Town Syndrome*, Ordet, Milan (2020); *In Practice: Total Disbelief*, Sculpture Center, New York (2020); *Hirngespenster*, Kunstverein Braunschweig (2019); *Picture Industry*, Luma Foundation, Arles (2018); and *Dreamlands*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2017). His work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, Le Centre national des arts plastiques France, the Museum of Modern Art Warsaw, the Institute of Contemporary Art Miami, the Stolbun Collection, Polyeco Contemporary Art Initiative, Collection Lambert, and the Kadist Foundation.

List Projects 23: Andrew Norman Wilson is organized by Selby Nimrod, Assistant Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center.

Exhibitions at the List Center are made possible with the support of Fotene & Tom Coté, Audrey & James Foster, Idee German Schoenheimer, Joyce Linde, Cynthia & John Reed, and Sara-Ann & Robert Sanders. Additional funding for *List Projects 23: Andrew Norman Wilson* is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.

General operating support is provided by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; the Council for the Arts at MIT; Philip S. Khoury, Associate Provost at MIT; the MIT School of Architecture + Planning; the Mass Cultural Council; and many generous individual donors. In-kind media sponsorship provided by 90.9 WBUR. The Advisory Committee Members of the List Visual Arts Center are gratefully acknowledged.

Image: Andrew Norman Wilson, *Impersonator*, 2021(still) 4K video, color, sound, 17:00 min. Image courtesy the artist.

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