

Simon Starling lives and works in Copenhagen. Since emerging from the Glasgow art scene in the early 1990s, Starling has established himself as one of the leading artists of his generation, working in a wide variety of media (film, installation, photography) to interrogate the histories of art and design, scientific discoveries and global economic and ecological issues, among other subjects. He represented Scotland at the 50th Biennale di Venezia (2003), and won the Turner Prize 2005 for his work *Shedboatshed*. Starling's work has been presented at the Villa Arson, Nice; the Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel; Mass MOCA, North Adams; Tate Britain, London; Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart; and MUMA in Melbourne.



Thuy-Han Nguyen-Chi, *Synerisis*, 2019, film still. Courtesy: the artist.

He takes a while to assess the traffic, gauging its habits, its instincts, its nature, marvelling at its variety, baffled by its homogeneity. He watches as people and animals negotiate this gorge-like cut in the city with its incessant torrent of mopeds punctuated from time to time by the occasional small truck or car. He occasionally throws out a limb into the stream, only to retract it again, testing, watching as the flow reclaims the space it momentarily commanded. In this way a trust of sorts is established — a common understanding between him and the endlessly replenished them. The leg again — consistently repellent — but once again retracted. Bolstered in his actions by the syncopated chatter of horns — a staccato commentary, neither applause nor reproach — he finally takes the plunge. Stepping forward, bespectacled-eyes now tightly shut, it's as if he's operating, momentarily at least, in a mutually negotiated bubble, a protective zone, built on a solid but none-the-less exhilarating fundament of instinct, habit, self-interest and sociability. He's engulfed, sucked forward in the slipstream, wing-like, elated. The only hazard, he speculates, might come from the inanimate flotsam that's carried along on this swell — a ladder, a bamboo pole, some wildly oversized cargo — the inevitable out-rigging of this two-wheeled-world. His head goes down a little. He loses his sense of time. He imagines the scene captured by a long-exposure photograph, all pre-cinematic paddling against the tide, then he imagines everything from above, all ripple tank refractions. The traffic's cacophony gives way to moments of clarity, pinpricks of sound puncturing the bubble, orientating his movement, guiding him on. And then suddenly it's done. This heady cocktail of recklessly selfish experimentation and something approximating collaboration, abruptly ends as one foot hits the high curb on the opposite side. The river releases him, gasping, ecstatic, on to its bank — his manic half-smile breaking into a broad euphoric grin, his eyes back in the light.

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