

the Whitworth

Press Release

July 2019

Elizabeth Price: A LONG MEMORY 24 October 2019 – 1 March 2020

This autumn, the Whitworth presents the most extensive exhibition of the work of Elizabeth Price to date. Bringing together many new and acclaimed works - including video, sculpture and prints - this exhibition engages with Price's preoccupations of technology, history, politics and pop music. A new trilogy of video works, *SLOW DANS*, will be premiered and her Turner Prize winning *THE WOOLWORTHS CHOIR OF 1979*, remembering that fatal fire in Manchester, will be shown in the city for the first time.

In an architectural setting designed by Elizabeth Price, the exhibition will debut new prints, pinhole photographs and the new video trilogy *SLOW DANS*, consisting of *KOHL*, *FELT TIP* and *THE TEACHERS*; the latter newly commissioned by Artangel and the Whitworth. *SLOW DANS* coalesces in a single, large-scale projection-installation presenting a fictional past, an imagined future and a parallel present. Each work touches upon recent social and political histories ranging from the systematic abandonment of coal mines, through technological and demographic revolutions of the office, to the corporatisation of education

KOHL (2018) When coal-mines are abandoned, one invisible result is that groundwater swiftly floods the underground tunnel systems. This is the premise for *KOHL*, which imagines the subterranean architectures of coal mining unified as a single network by the liquid that now courses through them. The work is set in a fictional past, which in many ways resembles our own. In this, the dark water that runs through abandoned mines acts as a supernatural medium of transmission, and draws on connections between the ancient histories of coal, ink, make-up and alcohol. The work features photographs by Albert Walker which show mine-head architectures during the main period of mine abandonment in the UK between the late 70s and the late 80s. Walker's archive of photographs, on loan from the National Coal Mining Museum for England, will be shown as part of the exhibition.

FELT TIP (2018), a two-screen video, features a collection of men's neckties c.1975-1991, which bear imagery that calls to mind electronic systems of data transmission and storage. The ties are used as a repository of knowledge from which demographic and technological revolutions of office work can be

extrapolated. This process is undertaken from an imagined future in which the wearing of these ties has been recently revived as a form of feminist drag in which they are known as 'FELT TIPS', or 'longue-tongues' in which they become repositories for other sexual histories of the office.

THE TEACHERS (2019) is a satirical tale, set in the parallel present of a culture similar to our own. It concerns a contagion of elective muteness that has spread rapidly through certain professional classes. As a proxy for speech those affected make and wear elaborate costumes and perform absurd and profane rituals. The story is delivered by a group of four academic authors, who dispute the origins and meaning of this silence, using the arcane and haughty linguistic mannerisms of academic research.

THE WOOLWORTHS CHOIR OF 1979 (2012) is a film installation which comprises three distinct sections: the first examines the choral architecture of churches, the second concentrates on coordinated dance routines performed by pop groups and backing singers while the third focuses on archive footage from a fire at the Woolworths department store in Manchester in 1979. Physical gestures recur throughout the film, and parallels are drawn between the movements of hands waving to fire services for help and those of the dancers and singers, twisting and moving their arms for musical emphasis. When combined with the recurring sounds, music and graphics, the effect is that of a dissonant chorus, which floats somewhere between social history and fantasy.

Other video works to be shown include *K* (2015) and *At the House of Mr X* (2007).

Notes to editors:

THE TEACHERS is newly commissioned by Artangel and the Whitworth. KOHL and FELT TIP have been shown at the Walker Art Center and Nottingham Contemporary; THE TEACHERS premieres at the Whitworth. SLOW DANS is a collaboration between Artangel, Film and Video Umbrella, Nottingham Contemporary, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis and the Whitworth, The University of Manchester.

Elizabeth Price was born in Bradford, Yorkshire in 1966. She grew up in Luton, Bedfordshire and attended Putteridge Comprehensive Secondary School. She studied at the Ruskin School of Art, Oxford and the Royal College of Art, London. In 2012 she won the Turner Prize for her solo exhibition, 'Here', at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead. Price makes immersive video installations, which feature diverse historical materials including film and video footage, archival documents, plans and photographs and popular music. Her works are painstakingly produced, often taking over a year to complete, and she

regularly revisits older pieces, creating new and updated versions. She punctuates the visual material on the screen with bold, graphic interventions. Texts and slogans recall the aesthetics of advertising as well as political propaganda and combine corporate and academic theories of the world, to create a strange ritualistic undertone. Aural motifs are created from the music and rhythm of finger clicks, claps, percussion and samples of vocal harmonies.

The Whitworth is proudly part of the University of Manchester and serves as a bridge between the University and the people of the city; a place to meet, play and learn in public.

Its mission is to use art for social change; founded in 1889 as The Whitworth Institute and Park in memory of the industrialist Sir Joseph Whitworth for “the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester”, with clear practical aims to counteract the malaises of inner-city life and to educate and inspire a city of makers and manufacturing.

The Whitworth re-opened to the public in 2015 after a major £17 million redevelopment by architects MUMA. It has welcomed over one million visitors since re-opening, and more than doubled its previous annual records. The redevelopment doubled the public space and created state-of-the-art new facilities to house the collection of over 55,000 works of art and included expanded gallery spaces, a study centre, learning studio, and a collections centre. The gallery was crowned Art Fund Museum of Year 2015, nominated for the prestigious Stirling Prize and named Best Emerging Cultural Destination in Europe. www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth

The gallery has historically been at the centre of civic and cultural life and this is also its future.

**For further press information and to request images please contact:
Catharine Braithwaite on +44 (0)7947 644 110 or cat@we-r-lethal.com**