

Institute of Contemporary Arts

PRESS RELEASE

Metahaven
VERSION HISTORY

3 October 2018 – 13 January 2019
Opening Tuesday 2 October, 6 – 8pm
Press view Monday 1 October, 12pm – 2pm



Metahaven, *Eurasia (Questions on Happiness)*, 2018, Still. Courtesy Metahaven

The Institute of Contemporary Arts is pleased to present *VERSION HISTORY*, the first solo exhibition in a major UK institution by artists, filmmakers and designers Metahaven, featuring an expansive new moving-image commission as part of an overview of their hybrid investigations into overlapping geopolitical, technological, and emotional conditions.

Metahaven (Vinca Kruk and Daniel van der Velden) are Netherlands-based artists, filmmakers and designers. Since 2007, they have forged an experimental and speculative approach to design that encompasses visual identities, spatial installations, publications, garments and music videos. They have developed projects around digital and physical enclaves like the Principality of Sealand and WikiLeaks, and their speculative analyses have anticipated the conditions now labelled ‘post-truth’ and ‘fake news.’

Since 2015, Metahaven have focused on moving-image work between the realms of film and digital media. Presented in exhibitions, online and at film festivals, their films use a mixture of live-action, animation and archival footage, which generate a highly seductive, hybridised form between fiction and documentary.

VERSION HISTORY centres on three moving-image works: the newly commissioned feature-length *Eurasia (Questions on Happiness)* (2018), *Hometown* (2018) and *Information Skies* (2016). These films share a vibrant aesthetic language that combines cinematic imagery with graphic, animated layers and immersive soundscapes. They are presented within distinctive installations at the ICA, including a series of murals threaded through the institute's galleries, and a hand-tufted carpet. The dual meanings summoned by the exhibition title – both different versions of history and reality, and an interface through which these versions are rendered – are at the heart of the three works.

Metahaven's films deploy what they describe as 'truth futurism' – a mode of speculation on an altered cognitive order, in which the lack of accountability of the 'post-truth' era has become emotionally processed. Building on the movement in the collective's practice between analytic reporting and affective experience, *VERSION HISTORY* revolves around a state of epistemic uncertainty, spinning off political and cultural narratives where belief and self-deception are in competition with empirical reality.

Assembling cinematic sequences shot in the Southeastern Urals and in Macedonia, archival footage and animation, *Eurasia (Questions on Happiness)* sets forth on a journey towards the Eurasian steppe where it meets the New Silk Road. Imagining a fractured continent in the thrall of self-learning data sites that trigger world events, the film confronts various forms of hoax, from cut and paste political doctrines to neo-classical facade architectures. Mapping ideological and political currents that are presently unraveling the European Union, *Eurasia* describes fake news as a man-made proxy of the indifference that an artificial intelligence may feel toward the human condition. Through modes of science fiction, documentary, and folk tale, *Eurasia* creates an immersion within layers of media production, wrapping facts in fictions, and fictions in facts.

Projecting further into a psychological space, *Hometown* and *Information Skies* portray forested hinterlands populated by avatar-like actors. Influenced by poetry, these minimal science-fictional narratives are both monumental as well as intensely personal, reckoning with experiences of belonging amid planetary-scale computational infrastructures.

Recent solo presentations by Metahaven include *Truth Futurism*, Futura, Prague (2017); *Information Skies*, Auto Italia, London (2016) and Mumbai Art Room, Bombay (2016); *The Sprawl*, YCBA, San Francisco (2015); *Black Transparency*, Future Gallery, Berlin (2014); and *Islands in the Cloud*, MoMA PS1, New York (2013). Recent group exhibitions include Sharjah Biennial 13, Sharjah (2017); *Fear and Love*, Design Museum, London (2016); *Dream Out Loud*, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (2016); *The Eighth Climate (What Does Art Do?)*, 11th Gwangju Biennale (2016); *All of This Belongs to You*, Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2015); *Private Settings: Art After the Internet*, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw (2014); and *Frozen Lakes*, Artists Space, New York (2013). Recent publications include *Black Transparency* (2015), *Can Jokes Bring Down Governments?* (2013) and *Uncorporate Identity* (2010). Music videos by Metahaven include *Home* (2014) and *Interference* (2015), featuring musician, composer and artist Holly Herndon as part of an ongoing collaboration. Metahaven's full-length documentary, *The Sprawl (Propaganda About Propaganda)* (2016) premiered at the International Film Festival Rotterdam in 2016. Its successor *Information Skies* (2016) was nominated for best European Short Film at the 30th European Film Awards in 2017, and their latest short film *Hometown* (2018) was shot in Beirut and Kyiv, and has been exhibited at IZOLYATSIA in Kyiv. *VERSION HISTORY* is organised concurrently with Metahaven's solo exhibition at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, opening Saturday 6 October 2018 and running through 24 February 2019.

Accompanying *VERSION HISTORY* and the concurrent exhibition of Metahaven's work at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, the new publication *PSYOP* draws out the collective's cross-disciplinary engagement, including with musicians, filmmakers, theorists, fashion designers, and poets. A series of public programmes curated with Metahaven will expand on these areas of exchange, and the web of aesthetic and theoretical inquiries active in their work.

Eurasia (Questions on Happiness) (2018) is produced by the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, and co-commissioned with the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and Sharjah Art Foundation. The film is supported by the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw and Creative Industries Fund NL and generously assisted by Strelka Institute, Moscow.

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