

Film and Video Umbrella presents:

OUR MUTUAL FRIENDS

**A new online art project with launch event, 6-9pm on Thursday 30 August 2012
at Jerwood Space, Union Street, London SE1 0LN**

www.ourmutualfriends.com

Twitter: @OMutualFriends #OMF

Our Mutual Friends is a Film and Video Umbrella project presenting four newly commissioned online artworks that take Charles Dickens' allegorical novel and find echoes in the present. Manifesting in locations both on and offline, **Our Mutual Friends** connects the contemporary phenomenon of social media with the legacy of Dickens. The project mobilises Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites and apps to consider Dickens' satire on 'society', 'celebrity' and the superficiality of friendships in the light of our contemporary cultural moment. The new works by Gayle Chong Kwan, Graham Hudson, Thomson & Craighead and Janice Kerbel will be available online at www.ourmutualfriends.com and through various social networking sites from 30 August when London's Jerwood Space will host a launch event. Other partners in the project are Turner Contemporary, Margate and Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth.

Our Mutual Friends draws on two key themes from Dickens' tale: the scrapheaps and dustheaps of Victorian London and the superficialities of the salon-society social whirl. It explores how those motifs might resonate today - the dirt and debris of the riverside dustheaps superseded by the virtual/digital junk and clutter we carry around in our heads/Blackberrys/phones, and the social whirl extended and accelerated by Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc; a never-ending source of that very same disposable but insidiously cluttering material.

Gayle Chong Kwan's *The Golden Tide* peruses the flotsam and jetsam of the River Thames, and traces how the images of the objects that she finds there later wash up online. Following the course of the river from London to Margate, Chong Kwan records small-scale, everyday beachings - each item adding to a stream of digital snapshots uploaded to the digital photo app, Instagram. Chong Kwan selects images, which she collages together into a panorama (or 'myriorama') - its antiquated form echoing the muted 'archival' patina of Instagram's trademark look. These images will be printed as a series of posters, and fly posted on the outside of London's Jerwood Space, where they will be left to weather over time. Turner Contemporary, Margate will be hosting an online presentation and discussion by Gayle Chong Kwan in late September. For more details visit turnercontemporary.org

Making a series of imaginary incursions across London (that correspond to six Dickensian walks that have been devised for **Our Mutual Friends**), **Graham Hudson's** *Works in Progress* echoes Dickens' own way of observing overlooked details of everyday London life. Rather than recording the people who make up the capital, Hudson's focus is on the marks they make - in particular the intrusions and disruptions of road works. In an escalating

almanac of images, accessible from his Facebook page, Hudson meticulously documents these outbreaks on the surface of the urban environment – each temporary roadblock providing a pause for thought, and an opportunity to photograph what surrounds it. Fascinated by the way these public works leave rubble behind them in random sculptural arrangements, Hudson celebrates each makeshift ‘installation’, piling image upon image, and, in a special satellite of the project in Dickens’ birthplace of Portsmouth, gathering together actual physical debris from local sites. Exhibition at Aspex, Portsmouth: 8 September to 7 October 2012.

The hard-luck stories and heart-rending pleas of **Thomson & Craighead’s** *More Songs of Innocence and Experience* have been lifted from examples of that contemporary symbol of mounting junk, the spam email. Taking their place in a long and inglorious history of scams and schemes and unreeling like a karaoke autocue, to an electronic soundtrack, Thomson & Craighead’s reworking of this material prompts us to look again at these lurking presences in our lives. With online scams often parading a back-story as pitiable and poignant as any beggar on the Victorian streets, *Songs of Innocence and Experience* serves to remind us how, in over a century of technological change, human nature has stayed pretty much the same.

Janice Kerbel will blog about a fictional character called Doug. Part innocent fool, part hapless fall-guy, Doug is no stranger to the streets of the city, yet seems oblivious to its perils and pitfalls, which conspire to trip him up at every step. Without friends and with no special talent to make him stand out from the crowd, Doug is forced to live on his wits. Kerbel’s blog records his adventures and misadventures – each episode following a familiar pattern, in which Doug’s good-hearted nature leads him into a succession of scrapes, which usually end with him finding himself in mortal danger.

Our Mutual Friends is commissioned by Film and Video Umbrella and presented in partnership with Jerwood Charitable Foundation, Turner Contemporary, Margate and Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth.

Film and Video Umbrella commissions, curates, produces and presents film, video and other moving-image works by artists that are staged in collaboration with galleries and other cultural partners. Since the late 1980s, Film and Video Umbrella has been at the forefront of this vibrant and expanding area of practice, promoting innovation through its support of some of the most exciting figures on the contemporary scene. During this time, the organisation has commissioned and produced over 100 different artists’ projects, ranging from ambitious multi-screen installations to shorter film and video pieces, as well as online commissions. www.fvu.co.uk

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