

# Encounter in the third dimension

**Mark Fisher tunes in to Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard's new installation, inspired by a 1923 experiment in 3D**

Being on set at the filming for Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard's installation *Radio Mania: An Absconded Work* is a slightly disconcerting experience – in part because there's no 'off set'. We're warned that the sound field microphone they're using is so sensitive it can pick up the slightest sound, even from the corridor behind the studio. Forsyth and Pollard need such powerful equipment because *Radio Mania* is a work of extraordinary technical ambition: not only is it shot on 3D video, it is also recorded in '3D sound' – the first project, as far as anyone is aware, to have used both techniques together.

When Forsyth and Pollard were invited by the BFI Southbank Gallery to produce a work based on something from the BFI archives, they took as their starting point one of the earliest examples of 3D film, *The Man from Mars* (called *Radio Mania* in its 3D version). The 1923 film was made on a short-lived 3D system called Televue, developed by Laurens Hammond (the man who invented the Hammond organ).

*Radio Mania* fits into the artists' established methodology of re-enactment (which includes 1998's *A Rock 'n' Roll Suicide*, a meticulous re-creation of David Bowie's final performance as Ziggy Stardust, and 2003's *Five Under Sacred Music*, a restaging of The Cramps' 1978 show at the Napa Mental Institute). This

time, instead of making their own version of the film (in which a radio ham succeeds in contacting Martians, only to find that he has been dreaming), they decided to produce a fragmented work in which the actors (Kevin Eldon, Caroline Catz, Fenella Fielding, Terrence Hardiman, Ben Moor, Ben Crompton and Iain Lee) are shown rehearsing key scenes and a band (led by Hammond organist Nick Plytas) is running through the score. Forsyth and Pollard also feature, playing themselves: offscreen directors who visitors to the installation will hear but not see. During filming they stand between the two sets, while the actors go through their lines on one and the band plays on the other. When the installation is realised, it will be projected on two screens, one at the front of the gallery, one at the rear – with the effect that the audience will feel as if they are standing where Forsyth and Pollard stood.

*Radio Mania* is therefore a work that involves multiple levels of illusion. First of all, there is the familiar postmodern paradox of the filming of the rehearsals for a movie that will never actually be made. This inevitably leads to a certain amount of confusion and reality bleed on set, particularly in regard to Forsyth and Pollard. Is what they're saying a genuine directorial instruction, or are they still in character? The confusion is compounded by the fact that they will not be using edits: all scenes are being shot in one take. The artists decide they need a code word – 'Gerónimo!' – to indicate when they're speaking as themselves



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(almost like the 'safe word' used by participants in sadomasochistic play).

Kirk Lake's script reinforces the sense that *Radio Mania* is something of an impossible object. Forsyth and Pollard worked with Lake to identify key scenes from the 1923 film; according to Forsyth, the original script – presented then, of course, on intertitles – "almost felt Victorian". The new version hasn't eliminated the antique elements so much as

supplemented them with contemporary references to webcams and wi-fi, producing an anachronistic steampunk temporality.

Then there are the 3D visuals, realised by specialists Inition. Inition's director Andy Millns explains to me that the arrival of digital technology has made filming in 3D much easier. It is now possible, for instance, to monitor in 3D on set. He says the new 3D doesn't

## PHOTOGRAPHY

### Long shots from 'Close Up' master Abbas Kiarostami

