

march 5  
6 p.m.

spring 2015

conversations  
at the edge  
experimental media series

# john gerrard

## networks and power

2009–15, China/Norway/US, multiple formats, ca 60 min + discussion  
John Gerrard in person!

John Gerrard (1974, Dublin, Ireland) received a BFA from Oxford University in 1997 and an MFA from SAIC in 2000. His work has been exhibited around the world. Recent solo presentations include *Solar Reserve*, Lincoln Center in association with the Public Art Fund, New York (2014); *Sow Farm*, Rathole Gallery, Tokyo, Japan (2014); *Exercise*, Borusan Contemporary, Istanbul, Turkey (2014); *Pulp Press* (Kistefos), a permanent installation for Kistefos Museet, Norway (2013), among many others. Gerrard lives and works in Dublin, Ireland and Vienna, Austria and is represented by Thomas Dane Gallery, London, and Simon Preston Gallery, New York.

### program

#### ***Solar Reserve (Tonopah, Nevada)***

(2014, Digital Simulation)

A computer simulation of an actual power plant known as a solar thermal power tower, surrounded by 10,000 mirrors that reflect sunlight upon it to heat molten salts, forming a thermal battery which is used to generate electricity. Over the course of a 365-day year, the work simulates the actual movements of the sun, moon, and stars across the sky, as they would appear at the Nevada site, with the thousands of mirrors adjusting their positions in real time according to the position of the sun. This virtual world is meticulously constructed by the artist, a team of modelers, and programmers, using a sophisticated simulation engine. Simultaneously over a 24-hour period the point of view will cycle from ground level to a satellite view every 60 minutes, creating an elaborate choreography among perspectives, 10,000 turning mirrors, and a dramatic interplay of light and shadow.

#### ***Excercise (Dunhuang)***

(2014, Digital Simulation)

A mysterious structure in the heart of the Chinese desert, a precise system of roadways the size of a small town and apparently designed to be seen from orbit. For *Excercise (Dunhuang)*, Gerrard commissioned an American satellite imaging firm to depth-scan these markings in order to digitally reconstruct the entire structure and its surrounding landscape. Into this simulation, set wandering through the vast road network, the

artist places thirty-nine workers from a Ghangzhou computer manufacturing plant, still wearing the blue uniforms and elasticated paper bonnets from that context. Players on what may equally be read as game-board, landscape, or gigantic theatre stage, the workers' paths across the grid are calculated and determined by the A\* algorithm, as used in GPS routefinding systems. When two participants meet, the actor closest to their goal continues walking, while the other must sit or lie on the landscape and rest. After a period lasting between 24 and 36 hours, only one remains standing. The process then draws to a close, the actors reassemble at the centre of the scene, the ground-level point of view gravitates around the worker who endured the longest, and the exercise begins anew—still without our knowing why (or for whom) this game, with its perpetual, seamless drift, is being played out. The entire performance, play, competition or exercise is depicted by three different virtual cameras: from human head height, from the point of view of a circling low-flying drone, and from a satellite's vertical perspective. Tasked with piecing together the data they deliver, conducting a dispassionate surveillance, the viewer is telepresent, omniscient, yet strangely disconnected; a processing channel for information flows with a possibly violent intent, contemplating the scene, constructing the narrative from above, striving to penetrate the logic of the exercise. Like the site in which it takes place, this is a performance whose eerie calm secretes paranoia, uncertainty, and a creeping awareness of pervasive systems of technological control.

#### ***Farm (Pryor Creek, Oklahoma)***

(2015, Digital Simulation)

In early 2014, following his denial of access by Google Inc, Gerrard hired a helicopter and produced a detailed photographic survey of one of the key physical sites of the internet - a Google data server building in Oklahoma, also known as a 'data farm'. This survey was the starting point of his new work entitled *Farm (Pryor Creek, Oklahoma)*. It features a simulated 'twin' of the squat building flanked by diesel generators and powerful cooling towers. The work extends Gerrard's 'Grow Finish Unit' series, which focuses on architecturally similar, computer-controlled park production units in the Midwestern USA.

### upcoming

March 12 at 6p.m.

**Encounters: *Experimental Film and Animation from Croatia***



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Film, Video, New Media,  
and Animation

