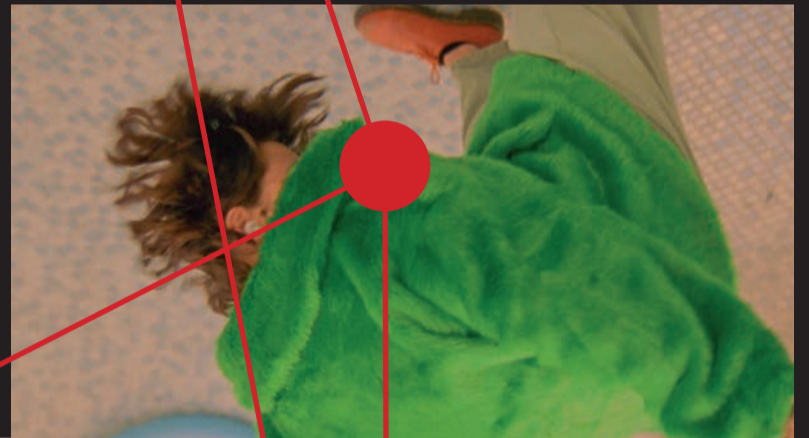
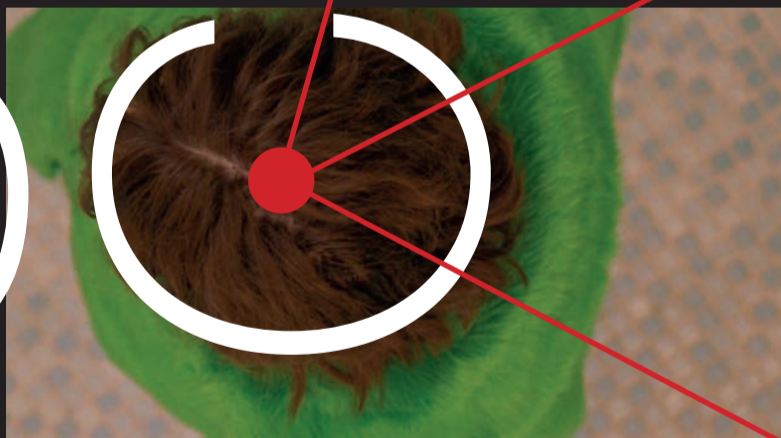


Nottingham Castle  
Museum & Art Gallery  
25 November 2023  
– 14 April 2024

# STIMMING SINEMA



WITH A  
SPECIAL STIMMING  
INSTALLATION BY  
**SAM METZ**



Artists' Moving  
Image Network



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# STIM CINEMA

## Introduction by Steven Eastwood, artist and filmmaker.

STIM CINEMA is a three-screen video installation and exhibition co-created by The Neurocultures Collective (Sam Chown Ahern, Georgia Bradburn, Benjamin Brown, Robin Elliott-Knowles, Lucy Walker) and artist/filmmaker Steven Eastwood. The exhibition invites the audience to take pleasure in discovering hidden repetitive movements, reminding us all of the joy we share in seeing actions rock and loop and revealing that such stimulation is not only common to the autistic experience but also in the DNA of the moving image.

In Gallery One are a set of zoetropes, sculptural objects that constitute the first form of moving images, proto-GIFs. Rather than familiar sequences of galloping horses and juggling clowns, these spinning drums feature minute gestures: the rocking of a person on a gym workout machine; a whipped ice cream being dispensed; the dancing movement of a branch in the wind; the flick of a table tennis bat; a figure in a green coat rocking to themselves...

In Gallery Two, we are presented with STIM CINEMA - a three-screen installation in which a young neurodivergent woman sits in a clinical setting, taking part in an eye-tracking test - often used in diagnosing autism. She is shown clips representing 'neurotypical' environments, such as a crowded city street, the shopping mall, and a gymnasium. We learn that these places, by their nature, involve repetitive behaviour. The red dots generated by the eye test apparatus track the subject's gaze, guiding the viewer into exploring every part of the image. We are shown exploded views of these scenes, revealing the delight of observing stimming movements and the hidden details previously seen on the spinning zoetropes.

Unbeknownst to the off-screen facilitator, however, the test subject catches sight of a young woman wearing a distinctive green coat, appearing deep in the background of the clips. A connection emerges. This hidden figure is also navigating the challenges of the neurotypical world. She longs to rock and move in the way that a tree branch sways in the wind but is restrained by the conventions of societal spaces, such as her place of work and the crowded pub she visits alone. Guided by a mysterious costumed figure glimpsed peripherally in the sequence, the character in green discovers an empty place where, if you look carefully, a surprise convergence occurs. Here, the characters and the installation itself can rock and stim freely.

Like a Russian doll of nested Where's Wally scenes or an array of spot-the-difference tests, STIM CINEMA invites the audience to enjoy exploring every part of the frame. Indebted to the ensemble sequences of Jacques Tati, as well as the Esper machine in Ridley Scott's Blade Runner, the artwork explores a protean form of cinema, revealing that pleasure in hidden 'Easter Egg' detail and repetition is not only common to the autistic experience but in the DNA of the moving image. This inclination to see an action repeated has been served by displays as far back as the zoetrope in the 1830s. Early experimental cinema also delighted in hypnotic circular imagery. The interest in looping remains prevalent today in the fascination found in GIFs. This commonality between stimming, GIFs, early cinema, and the avant-garde is the starting point for a series of video loops describing a world in which stimming is a desirable state. Thus, the exhibition encourages the viewer to consider our shared neurodiversity and discover stimming as a joyous perceptual and bodily possibility that challenges the notion of normativity.

Gallery Three offers behind-the-scenes insights into the co-creation method underpinning the artwork. This room includes an exploded view of the mural collaboration software used on the project to facilitate visual thinking and costumes used in the installation. On a set of monitors, fragmentary GIFs engineered from outtakes and missing scenes call and respond to each other.

Considering the themes examined in STIM CINEMA, Nottingham Castle has commissioned artist Sam Metz to create an interactive response to the exhibition in Gallery Four. As an extension of their 'Drawing as Stimming' research and practice, visitors are encouraged to enjoy the movement of repetition with their hands - twisting, shaping and contorting wire to create their own 'stim' and adding it to an ever-evolving sculptural form of stims in the gallery.

## Co-creation method

The project's co-creation method offers opportunity, inclusion and visibility for neurodivergent creatives, who are often obliged to explain their identity to audiences rather than play a central part in forming representations. The artwork takes a progressive approach to moving image production, playing to the individual strengths and aspirations of Neurocultures Collective members. This production method seeks to create new vantage points into the complex ecologies of collaborating art and filmmaking to explore how currently inadequate models might evolve to empower neurodiverse artists, audiences, and communities.

## Stimming

*The practice of physical repetition as a way of taking sensory pleasure in recurrence, or of expressing and alleviating anxiety, and a common trait of autistic experience.*

## Commissioned

By FLAMIN Productions through Film London Artists' Moving Image Network with funding from Arts Council England. Funded by Arts Council England and Wellcome Trust with support from Queen Mary University of London.

It is curated by Gilly Fox (Hayward Touring) and produced by Chloe White (Whalebone Films) and Steven Eastwood. The advisory group consists of Tim Corrigan (Project Art Works), Maggi Hurt (BFI), Damian Milton (The Participatory Autism Research Collective) and Collective member Sam Chown Ahern.

STIM CINEMA is a touring exhibition launching at Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery, and will travel to Grundy Art Gallery Blackpool, and Glynn Vivian Art Gallery Swansea.

## Credits:

- Co-created by The Neurocultures Collective & Steven Eastwood
- Curated by Gilly Fox
- Produced by Chloe White and Steven Eastwood
- Production Manager Jodie Taylor
- Featuring Sam Chown Ahern, Georgia Bradburn, Lucy Walker (as Chess), Professor Sebastian Gaigg
- Cinematography Greg Oke
- Production Design Nicola Jones
- Edited by Sergio Vega Borrego, Steven Eastwood, Christopher Allen, members of The Neurocultures Collective
- Sound Design Brain Audio
- Colour Grade Digital Orchard
- VFX Elijah Jona
- Zoetrope Rotoscope drawings Tony Comley
- Tristram Aver, Curator of Exhibitions, Nottingham City Museums and Galleries

## Project advisors:

- Tim Corrigan and Kate Adams (Project Art Works)
- Maggi Hurt (BFI)
- Dr Damian Milton (The Participatory Autism Research Collective)
- Sam Chown Ahern (artist and Collective member)
- Professor Sebastian Gaigg
- Brian Hill
- Professor Lisa Blackman
- Professor Stuart Murray
- Professor Richard Ashcroft

For more information about the associated public programme, please visit [www.nottinghamcastle.org.uk](http://www.nottinghamcastle.org.uk)



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