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The Infinite Mix, review: This incendiary mix of sound and vision is a contender for show of the year

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The Hayward Gallery in pop-up form offers a physical, emotional and cerebral viewer experience, writes Ben Luke



BEN LUKE | 24 hours ago |  0 comments



 **The Infinite Mix - in pictures**

Don't you wonder sometimes, 'bout sound and vision?" David Bowie, ever the trailblazer, perfectly expressed the impulse behind this show back in 1977. The Infinite Mix, a Hayward

Gallery pop-up staged while its South Bank home is being refurbished, features 10 video installations in which artists, mostly from the UK, Europe and North America, experiment with video and audio in myriad ways.

A veritable festival of music appears across the films, from opera to funk, post-punk, dub, dancehall and hip hop. There's spoken word too: poetry performance, a text-to-voice synthesiser, the disembodied voice of an astronaut. The imagery is similarly diverse, and diversely achieved; made using iPhones, drones, 3D cameras, found YouTube imagery, CGI animation. And that's before you even consider the breadth of subject matter, and the way the artists use the gallery space.

The incendiary combination of all these elements, together with the physical, emotional and cerebral viewer experience – and we have a very active role in the show – creates the infinite mix of the show's title. And it's an exhilarating experience.

The venue is 180 The Strand, an office building that has become a go-to space for art pop-ups. The Vinyl Factory, the art and music company that runs the building's programme and collaborates with the Hayward, seems to insist that everyone who exhibits here refers to it as an "iconic Brutalist building". It's neither, but in its stripped-out raw interior and in the glass-and-steel structure that sits within it there is plenty of room to show the 10 video

installations sympathetically.

Perhaps the best use of the space is in Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's new work *Opera* (QM.15). In a dark corridor lit only by low lights a figure lurks. It is Gonzalez-Foerster herself, in the guise of Maria Callas – a crimson phantom, sometimes fading back into darkness, occasionally so uncannily vivid that she could be there in the flesh. She lip-synches to Callas's take on *Suicidio* from Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*.

Callas is just the latest figure that Gonzalez-Foerster has conjured in holographic form, which she calls "apparitions". Through a kind of seance, her aim is somehow to tap into "the artistic vortex" – the transcendent moment where art appears in a live performance, often denied to the more detached visual artist. The audience is part of that vortex, of course, and its beauty and fragility, its very elusiveness, is captured perfectly in this shimmering figure. It's spellbinding.

In Ugo Rondinone's *THANX 4 NOTHING* (2015), John Giorno performs his eponymous poem, written on his 70th birthday. It's the very definition of an immersive installation: Giorno (who is 80 this year) appears on four floor-to-ceiling screens and on 16 monitors on the floors, shot from several angles. The effect is kaleidoscopic. It's shot in black-and-white but permanently shifts between positive and negative, so that as he stands barefoot on the stage of the Palais des Glaces theatre in Paris, Giorno's attire veers quickly between black-and-white tie.

Performance in its widest sense appears throughout the show. Stan Douglas's *Luanda-Kinshasa* captures what appears to be a Seventies jazz-fusion jam session, complete with painstakingly retro details of bellbottoms, tie-dye and afros, even down to the nicotine-haze coloration of the film. It's enjoyable just as a bunch of great musicians making some funky tunes. But it's a fiction: the images and music have been edited into a six-hour jam by Douglas.



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Martin Creed's Work No 1701 is simpler. A series of people with disabilities cross a busy New York zebra crossing accompanied by Creed's pop-punk song You Return. It is a celebration of the human body.

Acid house, Depeche Mode and Manic Street Preachers have been among Jeremy Deller's past subjects and now, with Argentinian artist and choreographer Cecilia Bengolea, he takes on Jamaican dancehall. They follow the unforgettable performance in Jamaica of a Japanese dancehall obsessive, Bom Bom. The film intersperses footage of Bom Bom's arse-shaking gymnastics with dream sequences featuring deliberately cheap effects, including a Jamaican-patois- talking chameleon who at one stage lashes out his tongue to eat Bom Bom.

Deller and Bengolea's film is a kind of collage, like other works here. But how differently the format is used. Kahlil Joseph's two-screen portrait of Compton in LA is chaotic, disturbing but often beautiful. A fusion of family videos given to him by the hip hop star Kendrick Lamar and Joseph's own portraits of the people and places in this storied zone of LA, it's accompanied by suitably mashed-up compilation of Lamar's tunes.

Elizabeth Price's K is a sinister but enthralling sci-fi collision of CGI images of yellow stockings on a production line, flashes of YouTube footage of the implausibly long-haired singer Crystal Gayle, and a

creepy synthesised voice promoting a fictional troupe of “professional mourners”.

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Rachel Rose, meanwhile, marries the voice of an astronaut speaking about a space walk and the physical trauma of a return to earth with the soulful strains of Aretha Franklin. Her imagery fuses footage of a space suit and pool at a laboratory where astronauts prepare for weightlessness, ecstatic crowds at a concert and trippy liquid imagery which could be distant space but is made with milk and food colouring. It's one of the most sculptural videos I've seen.

So, too, is Cyprien Gaillard's Nightlife, which lurks in the building's carpark. Shot in 3D, it begins with a shot of Rodin's bomb-damaged bronze The Thinker in Cleveland, Ohio, and includes a thrilling sequence shot by a drone amid a fireworks display above a Berlin stadium, before closing with imagery of an oak tree.

As a sequence of images alone it's stirring stuff but Gaillard's imagery all connects: the Rodin sculpture was bombed by the

Weathermen, a Left-wing group connected to the Black Power movement; the Berlin stadium was Nazi-built and the oak tree is the one that Jesse Owens won in 1936 in that stadium, now in a school courtyard. Accompanying them is a looped, distorted line from Alton Ellis's Black Man's World: "I was born a loser."

Hayward director Ralph Rugoff has assembled an intoxicating group of works, sensibly eschewing the long-form installations that can destroy video art shows: most films are between five and 15 minutes long and while Douglas's might last six hours it can be experienced in as long or short a burst as you like.

The Infinite Mix is proof that video and film are the most consistently creative artistic fields of this century. It's a contender for the show of the year.

The Infinite Mix is at the The Store at 180 The Strand, WC2 from Friday until December 4. Admission free. www.theinfinitemix.com

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