Alexa Raisbeck works between the concerns of film, text, sculpture and installation. Her focus is on the creation of artefacts that call attention to film: its body as material, the film frame as structure and its content as language. She is not at all concerned with the idea of film as a medium for narrative illusion. Her creative intentions echo those of the structural/materialist filmmakers of the late 1960s to 1970s, who also used a range of tactics to demystify film and emphasize its overlooked characteristics. At that time such experimental work was curtailed by the advent of video technologies, which brought new possibilities for creative exploration. Our relationship to film has since changed further; although habitually we still speak of film, cinema experiences are now mediated by digital technology.

As a foreword to her work Alexa Raisbeck asks us to consider the following facts:

- Earlier this year a major Hollywood film studio announced that it will no longer be distributing films on 35mm stock. The majority of cinemas in the UK are now digital.
- Film laboratories across the world are shutting down, no longer producing celluloid stock. This has made it increasingly difficult to work in the medium. 16mm filmmaking is no longer taught in universities and colleges.
- Over the last three years all the major cinema chains in the UK have made film projectionists redundant and their roles defunct. A profession with well over 100 years of history has now almost disappeared.

It is Raisbeck’s professional training and experience as a projectionist in 16mm, 35mm and 70mm film that has furnished her with the skills and knowledge that are central to her art practice.

Works clockwise from desk:

**Untitled**
Lightbox poster frame, 35mm film frames, splicing tape.

**Untitled** is composed from hundreds of unedited 35mm film frames each containing the word ‘Picture’. These are derived from scrap film leaders, with frames sourced from both around the world and from different eras (including old acetate and more modern polyester stock). While initially perceived as a whole, on closer inspection the detail of the work becomes apparent. It provides an example of semantic satiation, where a repeated word loses meaning, confusing the mind and the reading of the work.

**Visual Tension**
16mm blank stock, paint, 16mm rollers and constructed assembly, canvas, projector, mirrors.

The work explores the conceptual, optical and physical tensions of film. A length of hand-painted film is threaded through a series of rollers mounted upon a stretched canvas. The film continues through a projector to be projected back onto itself, thus simultaneously presenting film both as body and as illusion. The piece has both visual tension and physical tension (it could snap at any moment). Conceptually it raises the question: Is this film, or is it visual art? It embodies both, yet does not distinctly belong to either.

Raisbeck explains: ‘The technique developed to paint the film required experimentation. As a child I used to create
marbling effects with inks on paper. I loved manipulating the strong colours and wanted to recreate the process on film. Inspiration for this piece came from several works by Stan Brakhage. When I started work on this piece I was not sure if I was an artist or a film maker, but during the course of its development I came to the conclusion that I was both – a film artist.'

The Cave
Cinema seats, screen, 16mm, 35mm & 70mm celluloid and audience power.

Before entering The Cave please don one of the hard hats provided. You are invited to take a seat within the installation.

Raisbeck offers the following background:
This work plays with the idea of shadow and reflection, of what is real and what is illusion. It also questions the idea of cinema: the architectural frame in which we all sit in the dark to perceive someone else’s reflection of reality. The piece draws upon Plato’s allegory of the cave and its subsequent parallels in film theory, but takes an unusual twist by still incorporating structural/ materialist elements.

There are also references to development and Lacan’s mirror stage and Imaginary order, as well as film theorist Christian Metz’s observations on film and apparatus, body and tangibility, the relation of the viewer to the screen, reflection and perception.

About two hours of celluloid makes up The Cave, yet the ‘images’ seen on screen are very fleeting. They are also entirely subjective.’

I am celluloid [Reel 2]
35mm, Letraset, 35mm rollers, refurbished hand-cranked mechanism.

Please turn the handle of the mechanism slowly anticlockwise.

I am celluloid is made from unwanted scrap and test pieces of celluloid film known to projectionists as ‘gash’. Some parts of the film are designed to supply information to the projectionist and are not usually seen by the audience, others are emulsion runoffs left over from the film developing process. The piece also includes textual additions. All these elements are then spliced together to form one singular piece.

Raisbeck adds: ‘The set up is technically complex and requires the correct tensioning to work. It is known in projection terminology as an “interlock”. In commercial cinema chains, when an exhibitor wanted to run one film through two projectors, these rollers facilitated film movement along the wall, thus saving the cost of purchasing a second print.

The piece is narrative and linear. Like Untitled it is laid out to be viewed all at once (unlike the sequential nature of film). Its messages can be walked along and examined or, by turning the hand cranked projector handle, the viewer can remain stationary while the messages on the celluloid pass before them.’

Alexa Raisbeck studied Media Arts at Royal Holloway, University of London (2003 – 2006) and for an MA in Art and Media Practice at the University of Westminster (2009 – 2011). At the same time as her BA studies she trained in film presentation, handling and mechanics as a projectionist with 35mm. She subsequently took up technical management posts and also went to Canada to train with larger film gauges including 70mm. A highly experienced film projectionist she is one of the last still working in Leicester Square. Recent exhibitions of her work include The Brain Art Project (2012), Sydney, Australia and Hidden (2011), Shoreditch Town Hall, London. anlraisbeck.wix.com/alexaraisbeck

The Marsden Woo Project Space is curated by Tessa Peters.

The Marsden Woo Project Space is a space for experimental new work in art, craft and design and runs alongside our established programme of solo and small group exhibitions by gallery artists. The Project Space allows us to respond quickly to significant bodies of innovative work, particularly that of talented emerging artists and designers, as well as fresh directions in the work of more established artists. The exhibitions are organized at short notice, so please check our website regularly for news on forthcoming shows and events.