

**Aspen Art Museum**  
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# Educator Notes



Installation view: Nick Relph, *Three Stripped White Upon a Black Field*, 2010. Courtesy the artist, Herald St, London, Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York, and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo. © Nick Relph. Photo: Tony Prikrýl

## Nick Relph

November 26, 2014–March 8, 2015

## About the artist

Nick Relph was born in 1979 in London, studied fine art at Kingston University, UK, and currently lives and works in New York City. He works in various media, including video, drawing, and installation, and exhibitions of his work have been shown internationally. Relph often investigates the relationship between image and surface, as well as overlapping histories of artistic influence, production, and consumption.



Installation view: Nick Relph, *Lusty Ghost (11)*, 2010. Courtesy the artist, Herald St, London, Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York, and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo. © Nick Relph. Photo: Tony Prikrýl



Installation view: Nick Relph, *Lusty Ghost (10)*, 2010. Courtesy the artist, Herald St, London, Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York, and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo. © Nick Relph. Photo: Tony Prikrýl

## About the exhibition

For Relph's first solo museum exhibition in the US, the Aspen Art Museum pairs two works by the artist: a video installation (*Thre Stryppis Quhite Upon ane Blak Field* [2010]) and a series of manipulated Steinway piano templates entitled *Lusty Ghosts* (2013–14). The two works explore Relph's interest in the material and social effects of objects, or how we understand and experience images.

Upon entering the exhibition, visitors find a series of large-format illustrations of Steinway pianos to which the artist has added materials, such as vinyl, paint, textiles, and other mixed media. Within the same space, some smaller works of cut paper installed on the reverse side of a frame relate to the branding and shapes of the pianos. In the bright white-walled context of the museum's galleries, these artworks appear flat in a mostly monochromatic environment of black, white, gray, and brown. The larger works are installed close to the floor and the smaller works at eye level, tightening the space between spectator and object.

At the center of the room is his video installation that further distorts visuals, *Thre Stryppis Quhite Upon ane Blak Field*. Three superimposed videos of existing documentaries are played onto a single screen by old-fashioned projectors, connecting the histories of the Tartan pattern, Japanese fashion label Comme des Garçons, and the artist Ellsworth Kelly. These videos simultaneously play through

alternating filters of red, blue, and green light, which at times, help to distinguish between layers, and at others, make it difficult to comprehend what is seen. The audio tracks also overlap, providing further material to navigate and digest.

Although both works use very different materials, compositions, and subject matter, the entire exhibition is an invitation to find our way through how we understand and experience art and our world. The artist draws on the interplay of high and low, past and present—such as the piano illustrations, which reflect the predominantly upper economic class act of using these relatively archaic diagrams when buying grand pianos. Furthermore, Relph created *Thre Stryppis Quhite Upon ane Blak Field* following a visit to a Comme des Garçons store in New York's Chelsea neighborhood, after which, he entered a nearby gallery showing Ellsworth Kelly's work. The lingering imprint of the commercial shop's sights and smells while viewing "high culture" in the art gallery is transferred to the visitor's experience through the piece. Just as the artist draws on the multiple layers of influence from his daily life and history, the experience of Relph's work provides an opportunity to absorb colors, sounds, and forms as well as their effects.

## Questions for discussion

- | With which artwork do you connect most? Why?
- | What does the title *Thre Stryppis Quhite Upon ane Blak Field* mean to you? Why do you think the artist spelled the title this way?
- | How are *Thre Stryppis Quhite Upon ane Blak Field* and *Lusty Ghosts* similar in how you experience them? How are they different?

## Suggested activities

### RGB portraits

- | Have students create a portrait using either a photograph or a found image from a magazine.
- | Use red, green, and blue cellophane to layer over the portrait.
- | Ask students to be thoughtful about how they place the layers—how do they want the portrait to be visible? How do they want it to be obscured?

### Instruction Collage

- | Print an illustration from an instruction manual from online or photocopies, enough for each student to have three copies.
- | Provide students with scraps of fabric, paint, ink, and scissors.
- | Invite students to explore the drawings through adding layers of material and/or cutting and folding the paper.
- | Mount the instruction manuals onto board, cardboard, or heavy stock paper if students wish to build up heavier layers.
- | Invite students to hang up their works together, and discuss how each student responded to the illustration.

For more information, please contact the Education Department at 970.925.8050 ext. 133 or email [education@aspenartmuseum.org](mailto:education@aspenartmuseum.org).

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