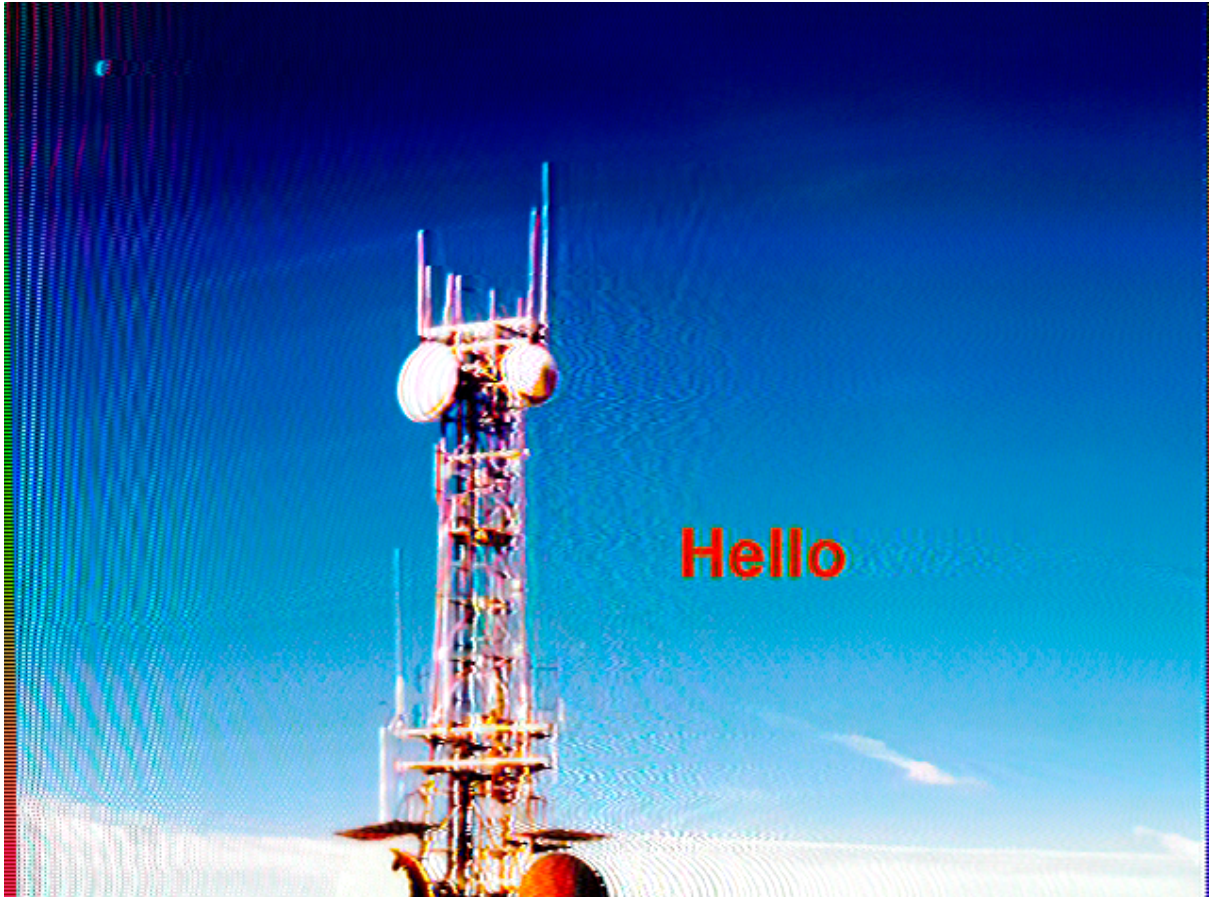


# CU Soon

A performance for humans and satellites by Nye Thompson



Far above our heads where the Earth's atmosphere shades into space, tumbles a chaotic ecosystem of functionally invisible machines. Thousands of satellites observe and mediate our lives, under the tight control of government agencies and global communications. Nye Thompson's new performance work *CU Soon*, sidesteps the gatekeepers and conventional uses of satellites to propose a different kind of relationship with these hidden machines.

The universe becomes the gallery as Thompson transmits a series of images encoded as radio waves out into space. These images are intended as fond messages to passing satellites - postcards from the world they've left behind.

The satellites that intercept these images momentarily become performers. They echo the images back down to the Earth's surface where they can be picked up by any observing antenna. Each image echoed back to Earth is changed by its journey: noise and glitches forming a unique record of the image's journey into space and back.

The performance suggests a collapsing together of observers and observed, of ground and sky, through a process of gifting and exchange.

Thompson comments: "I've long been fascinated by the developing ecosystem of satellites in orbit around the Earth. This is a wild, chaotic, ungovernable region. It's filled with machinic drama, with danger and pathos. But at the same time this domain is functionally invisible, heavily gatekept, and further obscured by a lack of language to describe it other than cold technical terminology. I wanted to find a way to have a direct, personal relationship with a satellite and see how we could create a work of art together. My goal is to create a new poetics of satellites."

The performance uses Slow Scan Television (SSTV) - a radio technology developed during the early years of space exploration. The images sent into space are converted into sound and transmitted over audio radio frequencies. Thompson deliberately chose an analogue system. "Digital images may travel across the world via undersea cable and/or satellite transmission" she explains "but through their unchanging nature they conceal all traces of their journey and the infrastructure behind it. These analogue images reveal something of their extraordinary travels: time, environment, infrastructure, all leave permanent traces on them."

The performance takes place in early 2023. It is orchestrated through the Libre Space Foundation's open source global network of satellite ground stations.

The documented performance will be presented as part of Thompson's new solo show *Vertigo* at East Quay Gallery in South West England from 20 May to 3 September 2023.

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**Exhibition information**

<https://www.eastquaywatchet.co.uk/articles/vertigo>

**About Nye Thompson**

Nye Thompson (b. 1966) is an artist turned software designer turned artist. She is known for her experimental software architectures exploring network-embedded power dynamics and machinic visions of the world.

After a Fine Art degree at YBA-era Goldsmiths, Thompson took a sideways step to immerse herself in the newly-created World Wide Web. She spent the next two decades designing software, focused on the human-machine interface and big data analytics. Returning to artistic practice with an MA in 2013, she subsequently quit her corporate software career to become an artist. Thompson is based in the UK and operates between London and mid-Wales.

In 2016 her first solo show Backdoored.io - described by C4 News as “too shocking to broadcast” - became global clickbait and triggered an international government complaint.

Since then, Thompson has exhibited around the UK, and internationally, including Tate Modern, The Barbican, The Lowry, The V&A, ZKM Karlsruhe, Ars Electronica and The Louvre. Her work has been featured on BBC, C4, CNN, the Guardian and Wired. She has been called "the new Big Brother" (Vogue) and "a contemporary Jacques Cousteau" (Bob & Roberta Smith).

In 2021, Thompson and UBERMORGEN were recipients of the Lumen Prize Gold Award for their short film UNINVITED. She was recently shortlisted for the Arts Foundation Futures Awards 2023. Thompson's work is included in the V&A Museum National Collection, as well as international and UK private collections.