



Spike Island

PEGGY AHWESH
VISION MACHINES

25 SEPTEMBER 2021
TO 16 JANUARY 2022

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Since the early 1980s, Peggy Ahwesh has forged a distinctive moving image practice in the ruins of originality and authority. Whether by working with nonprofessional performers, especially women and girls, or by repurposing existing images – such as a decaying pornographic film, the videogame *Tomb Raider*, or computer-animated news coverage – Ahwesh explores the critical potential of play. With a focus on the materiality of bodies and shifting media technologies alike, her works articulate a feminist commitment to the marginal and the minor.

Vision Machines is the first survey exhibition of this pathbreaking artist in the UK. Having engaged with the changing media landscape throughout her career, Ahwesh has had a profound influence on younger generations of artists and filmmakers, who have been drawn to the improvisational style of her early Super 8 films as much as the acerbic wit of her more recent animated installations. Though her contribution is already widely recognised in the world of experimental film, her work has until now been underappreciated in the visual arts field.

Ahwesh's concerns have remained constant across the decades, even as she rejects the notion of style as authorial signature and experiments with different working methods and formats. *Vision Machines* focuses on a selection of films, videos, and installations made between 1993 and 2021 that explore the relationship between corporeality and technology, spanning notions as diverse as gender, climate change, war, and the increasing virtualisation of everyday life. Taking an ethnographic interest in the world around her, Ahwesh appropriates images and conventions associated with media forms that others might deem disposable or unserious, so as to reflect on the politics of representation across so-called 'high' and 'low' forms of culture. Defying the boundary between the animate and the inanimate, these works court wonder and dread, striking at the heart of the uncanny capacity of image technologies to at once embalm the living and enliven the dead.

Image: Peggy Ahwesh, *The Color of Love* (1994)
16mm to digital, color, sound, 10 mins. Courtesy the artist and Microscope Gallery, New York

Large print and audio guides are available in the gallery and to download at spikeisland.org.uk

Spike Island is an international centre for the development of contemporary art, located in Bristol's harbour area.

Admission to the gallery is free.
Join our events and activities online.

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