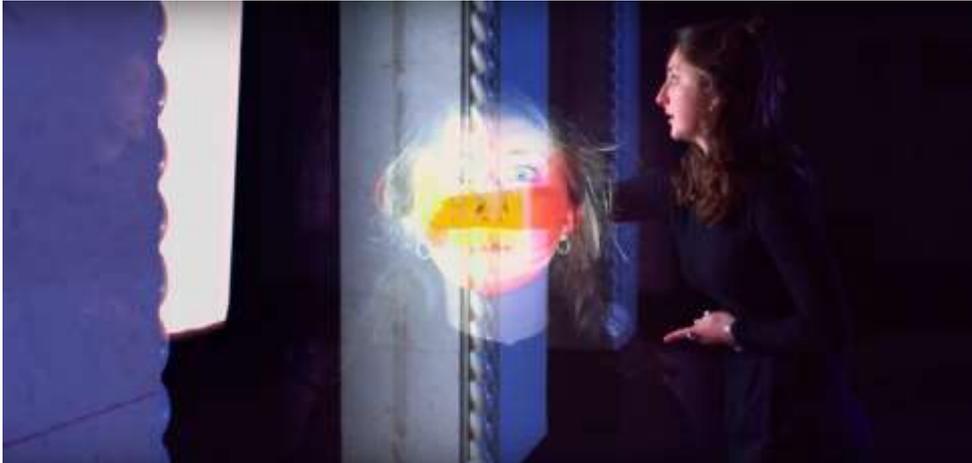


## On Filmmaking and the Internet – Harrison Kelly

*"It was certainly a milestone in our civilisation when our smartphones all started to include a camera. but the real quantum leap only happened, when these devices started to have a second lens on the back: it amazed me at the time that nobody really wanted to believe that such a technical addition would have a huge effect on our habits or our culture. Before, nobody had the absurd idea, neither with a traditional camera nor with a polaroid, of building a lens at the front and another one at the back: a gun doesn't shoot in two directions either..."*  
Wim Wenders, 'Instant Stories'



**Thanks to the Internet, it has never been so easy to be an artist. Go on Instagram - there's loads of them. So what makes you stand out?**

For those of us who are well and truly settled in cyberspace, nowadays we tend to think of innovation as something that makes things 'easier' for us by harnessing the power of the internet. We think of Silicon Valley - of phones, laptops and tablets, of consumer apps and websites.

Yet apps and websites lack a utilitarian function. Often the things that they enable us to do more easily are simply things that were pretty everyday in the first place. So, unfortunately, this proposition often tends to have unexpected ramifications for skills we used to rely on in everyday reality.

For every problem that modern technology solves, ten more seem to pop up in its place. It's like chopping heads off a Hydra, which is ironic given that you probably can't actually remember how to kill a Hydra without asking Google. (Well, can you?)

In filmmaking, as in life, there's a vast gap between the idea of a digital technology and its impact.

In one sense, it's quite apparent that modern internet technology has made film production easier. With digital camera as advanced, lightweight, and accessible as ever, and with unlimited platforms available to even the average person, it's surely an exciting time to be a filmmaker.

And yet, in another sense altogether, the internet has had a negative impact on the kinds of films being produced, as well as the ways they are distributed, curated, consumed, and engaged with by audiences.

After all, most internet video hosting services rely heavily on algorithms. Yet an algorithm can't make generic, ethical or editorial judgements, nor is it able to gauge standard of quality of a piece of content. (No-one ever mentions that YouTube and Facebook - now the websites most of our video content is hosted on - both effectively started life as dating and rating websites respectively.) It's an equation relying on an economic model that uses our previous viewing behaviour to spot patterns and predict the future, using whatever input you provide to essentially repeat your own thoughts back at you:

*"Like this? You'll love this..."*

The unfortunate result is that most internet audiences end up delving deeper into deeper into an already reinforced view. There's no room for debate, critical thinking, growth. And yet, to most humans this process of conversing with artificial intelligence is reassuring. It provides a sense of security and stability, even as it actually drives us mad.

Put simply, we're in uncharted territory.

If we want to make films in times like these, we need to be willing to adjust. And by that, I don't necessarily mean shooting from the selfie camera, nor letterboxing our films with captions that read "LOL must watch what happens next!" or "Tag a friend who does this".

If anything, we need to up our game. Our films can still be angry, or despairing, or romantic, or funny, or noble, or disturbing, or whatever else we want them to be.

After all, if it's never been so easy for anyone to make a film, then we should have a plethora of films about a diverse range of subjects and issues. But if we want those films to have impact, to have relevance, we need to think about how we get people to engage.

We must still believe that films can change minds - even change the world - but we're not going to change anything if nobody's watching.