

The narration is written in his voice, and I feel this allowed me to combine the noirish urban legend with more florid embellishments. Slipperman doesn't exist in any versions of the legend I've read, and I couldn't find much more than a paragraph in summary. So I fleshed my version out to 1400 words, for which the nonsensical narrative presented in the liner notes of Genesis's 1974 album *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* provided a lot of fodder.

AN: The narrator speaks about surfacing in Phil's head as an inner voice that questions his experience as an artist, asking: "Why do we make things?" Does this reflexive and perhaps ambivalent moment intersect with a shift you're experiencing in your creative work and direction?

ANW: To be honest, I don't really want to be a full-time "contemporary artist" anymore. The dream has continued to reveal itself as a delusion, as if I'm the unpaid intern of Andrew Norman Wilson and he's been gaslighting me for a decade.

How did I pull it off for so long? For the basics, I'm on Medicaid, food stamps, and unemployment. I see the return policies offered by Bezos and the Waltons as loan agreements; I lend them \$1500, and the interest they pay is my use of a new editing hard drive. While Turbotaxing I hallucinate a DJ software skin, transforming the expense estimate sliders into Fraud Modulator functions. Sometimes I sublet, but often I cat sit, dog sit, and plant sit — currently I'm caring for three sulcata tortoises, an iguana, two doves, and several koi pond inhabitants in Laurel Canyon. I accept unpaid exhibition offers from salaried curators and gallerists in far flung cities and tack on lecture stops at \$150 a pop, spending as much time as possible as a guest in circulation, on sofas, so as to avoid paying rent anywhere.

After *In the Air Tonight* I shot a proof-of-concept short called *Impersonator*. It was made possible by the generosity of artist friends such as Gozie Ojini, Chadwick Rantanen, Asha Schechter, Alexandra Noel, and many others, and we worked alongside a seasoned Hollywood camera crew headed by Jesse Cain. The hope now is that it will lead to a feature and further work in the film industry. While I recognize the irony in shifting towards showbiz after making *In the Air Tonight*, I'm tired of working in a cottage industry that's nearly impenetrable to all but those with advanced graduate degrees, or yachts. I want to make a perverse, shimmering, and irresistibly challenging action-thriller. ♦

Coming soon to Acropolis:

- *The Girl and the Spider* (Ramon and Silvan Zürcher, 2021)—April 13 at 2220 Arts + Archives
- *Wood and Water* (Jonas Bak, 2021)—April 15-21 at the Lumiere Music Hall

Acropolis Cinema presents:



ANDREW NORMAN WILSON: SOUND WORKS

March 31, 2022 – 2220 Arts + Archives

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

For his first ever solo show in Los Angeles, American artist-filmmaker Andrew Norman Wilson—named one of the 25 New Faces of Independent Film by *Filmmaker Magazine*—will present a survey of recent video works, in which found and appropriated sounds and songs accompany narratives of uniquely verbose and humorous wordplay. Inspired by *VH1 Storytellers*, the evening will feature six films broken up by brief discussions about the way in which sound drives the production and perception of the work.

Program:

- *In the Air Tonight* (2020, 11 min)
- $Z = |Z/Z \bullet Z - I \bmod 2| - I$: *Lavender Town Syndrome* (2020, 14 min)
- $Z = |Z/Z \bullet Z - I \bmod 2| - I$: *The Old Victrola* (2020, 14 min)
- *Ode to Seekers 2012* (2016, 8 min)
- *The Unthinkable Bygone* (2016, 2 min)
- Secret Film (2****, 18 min)

TRT: 67 min.

In person: Andrew Norman Wilson

A Conversation with Andrew Norman Wilson by Aily Nash

The following is an excerpt of an interview originally published by Flash Art, November 18, 2021

Andrew Norman Wilson's practice often interrogates the way in which artworks can infiltrate the viewer experientially. With *In the Air Tonight* (2020) he catalyzes the entrancing affects of pop music and Hollywood thrillers, repurposing their ready-made power to highlight the emotional susceptibility of consumers who long to be transported, however briefly — for the duration of a song or movie. The video makes palpable the dissociative effect of mass media, a simultaneous intoxication via emotional allure and detachment from the here and now. The ubiquitous Phil Collins track and the excerpted clips Wilson borrows from commercial cinema of the '80s and '90s operate anew, estranged from their original signification yet employing the substrate that continues to resonate inside us.

Aily Nash: Why this song?

Andrew Norman Wilson: There's an urban legend about Phil's inspiration for the song that I first heard as a teenager while getting high in a friend's basement. According to the ritual of the legend, the song is played while a narrator tells the story, syncing the infamous analog drum break of the song with the climax of the narrative. A friend of mine performed this ritual especially well, and the legend stuck with me.

During the pandemic last year, the song was on heavy rotation across several stations owned by a particular media conglomerate. While driving on the Pacific Coast Highway one night, the song came on, and I noticed a woman who seemed to be lip-syncing along to it in the car next to me. Without hearing her voice, I watched her belt out the lyrics inside her vehicle, then thrash her arms along to the drum break before turning off the highway. She was, of course, tuned into the same radio frequency as me, but the uncanniness of her puppeting the song that was playing in my car seemed to resonate with the mysterious legend and my teenage friend's masterful telling. For the past few years my work has emerged out of images or sounds I'm haunted by, so off I went.

AN: I imagine you might have wanted to avoid shots with actors so that the origins of the excerpts were less recognizable, but what did working solely with sequences without human figures do for the conceptual framework of the video?

ANW: At a certain point modernist painting and modern photographic media diverged. Painting became less reliant on the human face and even the human figure, while cinema and television have remained fixed on the face, usually in order to prescribe feelings for the audience (though the face is deployed distinctively as an abstraction in the work of Bresson, Costa, Weerasethakul, and many others). I often find the compulsion towards subjectivizing facialization to be not only a humdrum buttress for lackluster storytelling, but also a mode through which identity becomes overdetermined.

While the video — and Phil's career as a whole — is bound up with notions of white male universalism (Slipperman, the narrator, refers to him as an “everyman”), its visual defacialization serves to intensify the dissociated identities within the text in order to complicate this universalism. In the end, we realize that Phil, Slipperman, and the stranger on the beach all coexist within the same body. The video can be framed as a point-of-view flashback in the manifold mind of Phil Collins within the fiction, but also in the mind of the viewer as a consumer of commercial cinema. This integration of an urban legend with shifty perspectives and multiple image sources amounts to an inviting collective hallucination. In other words, a movie, but more depersonalized than usual.

AN: Who is Slipperman, and how did this character come to be the narrator of the video?

ANW: The name comes from the Genesis song “The Colony Of Slippermen,” which to my ears is one of the most phenomenal displays of Phil's drumming out of his entire career. Apparently “Slipperman” was occasionally used as a nickname for Phil by his bandmates, but it was Peter Gabriel who would get lowered to the stage inside a giant phallus, emerging in a beige Slipperman outfit adorned with swelling lumps, pimples, and boils.

In my narrative, Slipperman — a countercultural boomer whose references span Vladimir Nabokov to George Carlin — is Phil's alter-ego, an identity more present when he was a member of Genesis during their headier prog rock days in the first half of the 1970s. While “Phil Collins” has since become a ubiquitous global superstar, Slipperman has retreated deep into the folds of Phil's mind, still clinging to what some might call the “excesses” of progressive rock.