

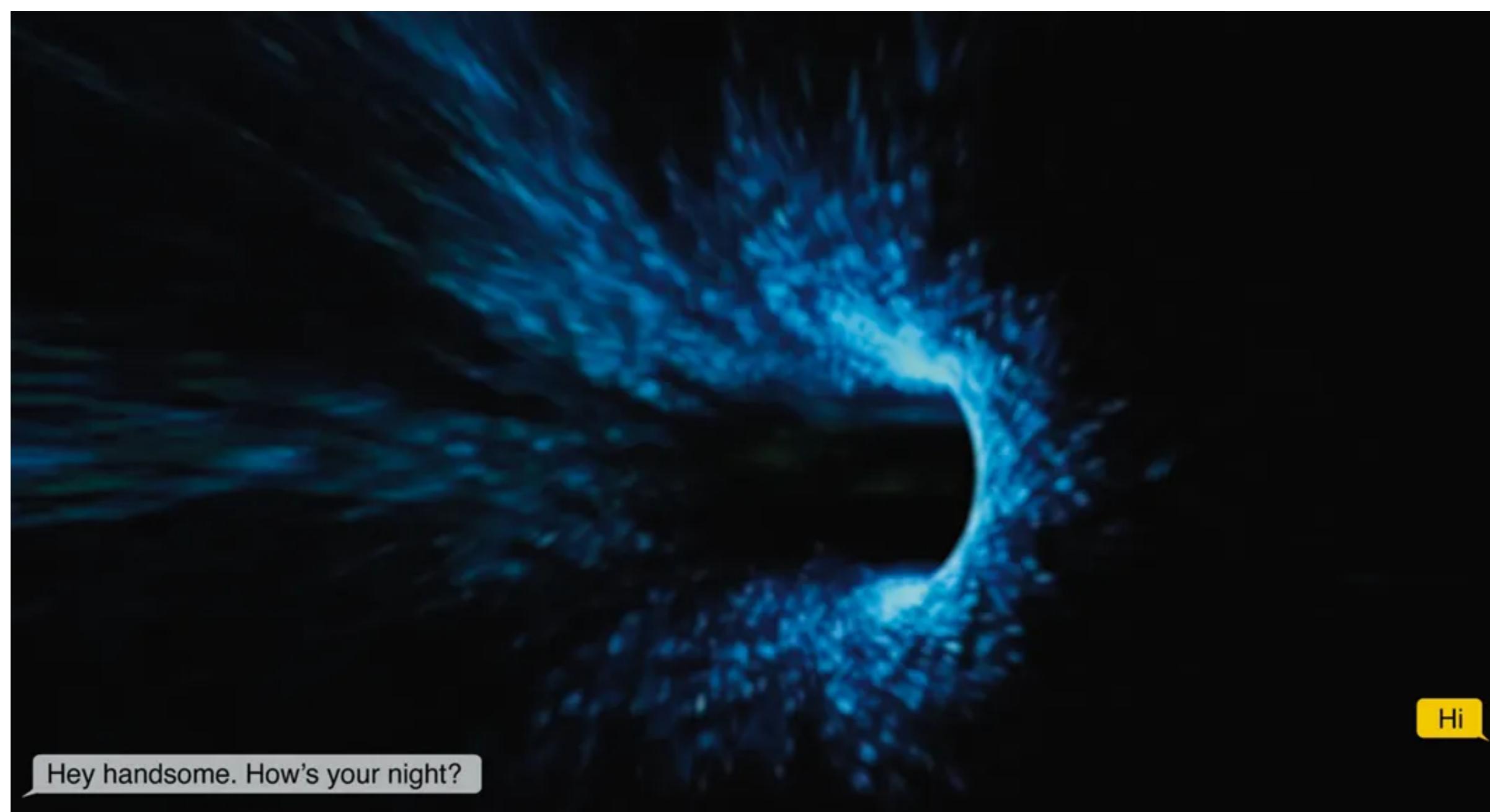


REVIEWS BEXHILL

Angelo Madsen Minax

De La Warr Pavilion

By Dylan Huw

Angelo Madsen Minax, *Bigger on the Inside*, 2022, 2K video, color, sound, 12 minutes.

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Angelo Madsen Minax's transdisciplinary documentary practice is characterized by a drive to discover ever more expressive and personalized methods of narrating desire in all its forms. Dense in both existential inquiry and emotional intensity, Minax's films operate as conversations between different facets of his own person: kaleidoscopic portraits of the artist as diarist, storyteller, lover, brother, erotic subject, erotic object, artist again. In "A Crisis of Human Contact," his first institutional solo exhibition, he guides visitors into his practice with *Rehearsals Toward an Erotic Approach*, 2022, a brief, curiously moving single-screen study of a kink-education workshop at San Francisco's Cléo Dubois Academy of SM Arts. Fixing on moments of close contact between an intergenerational gathering of budding and veteran pro-dominants, the film suggests ways to aspire toward liberating forms of tenderness, and toward something like faith in the kindness of strangers. The loose, intelligent ease of its portraiture is an apt introduction to Minax's cinema of closenesses—what Jill H. Casid's superb text for the show describes as a "kinema," or "alter-cinema of kink, kin, and kind."

Minax thematizes his filmmaking's cruisy, structural logic in *The Source Is a Hole*, 2017, and *Bigger on the Inside*, 2022, essay films that montage layers of digression around deeply personal narratives of transsexual mourning and desire. Suggestively exhibited almost (but not exactly) facing each other across the expanse of De La Warr Pavilion's main gallery, both films oscillate between theory and first-person autofiction, semi-ironic philosophical tangents and moments of raw self-revelation. Fisting is a recurring theme, as are stargazing and death. Wall text divulges that *The Source Is a Hole* has been reedited for this exhibition to comply with the British state's legislation against "possession of extreme pornographic images," designed to prevent material considered "grossly offensive, disgusting or otherwise of an obscene character" from meeting a public. Though we don't know exact details of these edits, the disclaimer is not without a certain humor, considering the gleefully unapologetic nature of what remains. *Bigger on the Inside* contains a sequence in which increasingly hornily charged messages on a hookup app,

Sondra Perry, *Double Quadruple Etcetera Etcetera I & II*, 2013, two-channel HD video, color, silent, 9 minutes.

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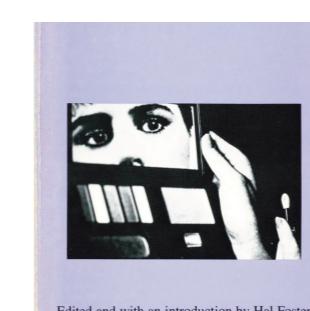
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against found-footage imagery of a black hole. Such frenzied juxtapositions make palpable Minax's artful melding of cosmic-scale sincerity and modest—not to mention frequently laugh-out-loud funny—propositionality.

Among the archives mined in Minax's roving, research-led work is the artist's own complicated family history; those who have seen *North by Current*, 2021, his feature-length excursion into a more conventional narrative documentary mode, will sense its echoes in several works assembled here. The artist further enriches his exploration of the unknowable nature of intimacy and embodiment with the poetry, sculpture, and photographic assemblages that punctuate the exhibition's four moving-image anchors. I spent as long in the company of *To Clench* and *To Not Clench*, both 2022—poems exhibited as two framed pages—as I did with some of the videos. The poems share with the videos a collage structure and a tone of dissociative frailty: "You ask what to do. / I don't know. / I do not know."

It's difficult not to register "A Crisis of Human Contact" as an institution's bold show of faith in trans-affirmative and sex-positive practices, and its refusal to condescend to the censorial strictures of the moment. Outside the exhibition's walls, a highly mobilized, sexually conservative and transphobic moral panic has become one of the United Kingdom's last export industries, lending the artist's work an unmistakable added layer of urgency and soulfulness. Here, in Minax's world, we are always looking simultaneously inward and elsewhere, toward mysterious and unnameable forces beyond the scope of even our most adventurous imagining. This elsewhere is also here, where artistic transgression, pleasure, and experimentation are equally necessary strategies for negotiating our environment of perpetual crisis.

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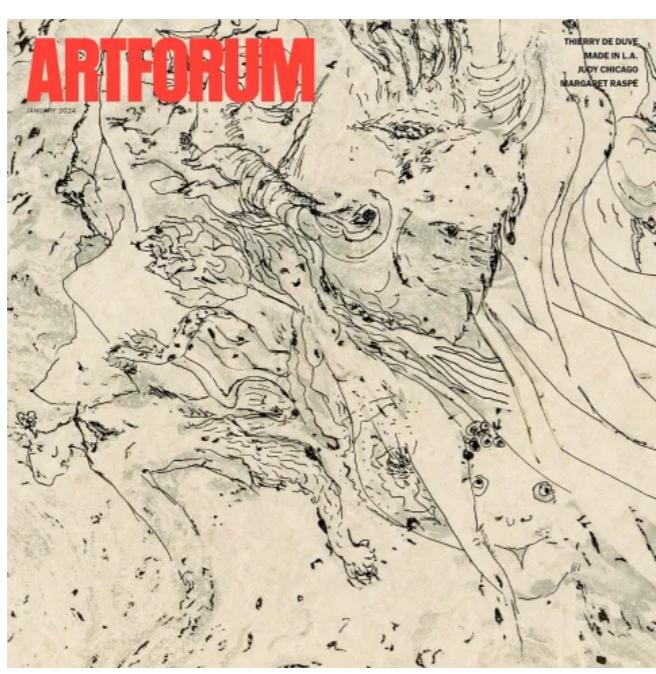
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