A Celebration of Love and Life
With Yuki Higashino
Slide projection on silk and audio
2013 – ongoing

In this piece, produced in collaboration with Japanese artist Yuki Higashino, we explore the positions and functions of “nature” in modern art, and by extension through the modern and contemporary culture at large. Here, nature is broadly defined. It includes the actual uncultivated eco-system, concept in pop-psychology (as in “One’s hidden nature”) and depiction of exotic cultures as something closer to nature than the western civilisation.

The piece is comprised of an analogue slide show with sound. The photographs were taken in Murnau am Staffelsee in Germany. It is a town on the edge of Bavarian Alps, where Gabriele Münter and Wassily Kandinsky established an artists colony and developed the style that was to become Der Blaue Reiter and German expressionism. It is also the place where Expressionist filmmaker F.W.Murnau took his pseudonym from.

In this piece, light functions as the conceptual tool to organise our ideas. The vivid colour of nature seen in stark light was vital to the visual language of Münter and Kandinsky’s art from this period, as well as for many other artist colonies established throughout modernity. Light also played central role in Murnau’s films, particularly in his iconic Nosferatu (1922) of which absence and avoidance of light are the chief concerns, and his last film Tabu (1931) which were shot entirely under natural light in Tahiti.

The work consists of 80 identical Dia positive slides projected on a specially constructed screen made of silk chiffon. The photographs were shot on a site in Murnau am Staffelsee in mid-October 2012. The image refers to the tradition of European landscape painting. However, each image was taken with different combination of aperture and shutter speed, making some of the images completely underexposed and others overexposed. The slideshow will progress from totally black to totally white with perfect images in-between. As the slide show progresses from dark to bright, like night moving towards daybreak, the image is gradually “destroyed”. It is as though the sunlight is burning the image onto the films, and the last images are as though they have burst into white flame like vampire under sun.

Moreover, we will install a small, self-built light sensitive sound generator on the wall where the slide will be projected. It produces low frequency sound when exposed to weak light, and the frequency will get higher as the projection brightens, culminating in the high pitch screech resembling the dying scream of a vampire.

There are three versions of this slide piece, each consisting of 80 slide films. The
images were shot during sunrise, noon and sunset respectively. The sunrise version, titled “A Celebration of Love and Life (Dawn)” was shown in at Platform Sarai in Frankfurt in October 2013. The exhibition was titled “Daybreak”.