

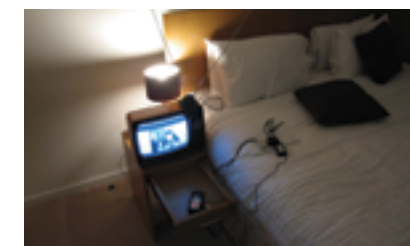
National Portrait [the last transmission]

National Portrait [the last transmission] A Bluecoat commission, is the product of two years of research by Schaefer. The concept of the piece centres around the deadline for the switchover from analogue to digital television in Liverpool, as part of a UK-wide 'upgrade' programme to switch off the analogue transmitters that began broadcasting in 1936.

At midnight on the 1st December 2009 the analogue television signal was turned off in Liverpool. Schaefer recorded the last 24 hours of each of the five analogue television channels as they were broadcast across the city. From this 120 hours of raw material, he then created a shuffle mode sound portrait of a day in the life of Britain.

Featuring vertical stripes of red, green, blue, black and white, the vibrant walls of the gallery reference a television test card, an anachronistic graphic still beloved by many. The installation centres on vividly painted old domestic TV cabinets which frame a collection of classic television sets. Each displays a ghostly sound reactive flickering screen, and presents the sound of a whole day's broadcast from one of the terrestrial channels. Each of the five recordings is cut up into random length short clips that play back the sound bites randomly.

The sound bites create continuously new sonic relationships: jump-cut sound sentences that crackle and collide throughout the gallery. Adverts fade in and out of reality shows, and the solemnity of news reports merge with melodramatic soap opera storylines. *National Portrait* presents a serendipitous and infinite remix of space, place and time, or as Schaefer has characterised it, a portrait of the nation - ironically a nation often defining itself through an immediacy of choice, control and satisfaction. So while celebrating a significant moment in television history at the switching point between analogue and digital culture, *National Portrait* simultaneously reveals how we define ourselves through our channel-hopping mass media persona. At least that's what Schaefer believes, and his strategic decision to locate the



installation in the Bluecoat's most public gallery supports this. Featuring large windows facing College Lane, a busy pedestrian thoroughfare in the new Liverpool One shopping centre, Schaefer understood that passers-by would casually peer into the gallery, curiously window shopping the culture within as they meandered their way through the consumers' paradise. The gallery, like television, fits neatly into the wider landscape of popular consumption.

