Irineu Destourelles *Faint Light of the World with Contradictions*
4 Channel Installation with Sound 26 minutes 2026

Content Warning: This work contains moderate light transitions and fluctuating sound levels. Audio elements include banging, ringing, repetitive high-pitched sounds, jeering, and references to gunfire, alongside more melodic passages. As the work references colonialist historic film, the work includes sonic references to war and violence which audiences may find distressing.

Irineu Destourelles trained in Fine Art at the Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam and Central Saint Martins in London, and holds a PhD in Film Studies from University College London. His solo exhibitions include *Subtitulizar / Subtitling* at the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum (Lisbon), *The Beat That Makes You Dirty* at CAPC (Coimbra), and *Tainted Verbal* at Transmission (Glasgow). He was included in the survey exhibition *Project a Black Planet: The Art and Culture of Panafrica*, co-organized by the Art Institute of Chicago and MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, in collaboration with Barbican (London) and KANAL-Centre Pompidou (Brussels). His work has also been shown in venues including MAMA Showroom (Rotterdam), Videobrasil (São Paulo), and Deveron Projects (Huntly). Destourelles was born in Cape Verde, and lives and works in Glasgow.

Natalia Palombo is a curator based in Glasgow. She has led reputable, inspiring and place-responsive arts organisations in Scotland, and produced high quality programmes across the UK and internationally that address urgent social, cultural and political issues. Natalia is a Founding Director of Many Studios where she also developed an international programme—The Gallow Gate. Between 2021–24, Natalia directed Deveron Projects, a pioneering socially engaged art organisation in Huntly, Scotland, and in 2024, she stepped down from her role to work independently between Scotland and Italy. She is currently Interim Head of Programmes at a-n The Artists Information Company.

Outer Spaces is a contemporary visual arts organisation and charity established in 2021. We support a network of over 1000 artists, and produce a public programme of commissions, exhibitions and events. Our spaces—offered on a temporary basis—offer a unique environment for professional development, artistic research, studio practice and collaboration.
www.outerspaces.org

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Glasgow-based artist Irineu Destourelles works with moving image, text, drawing, and performance to explore the complexities of internal multiplicity. Drawing on the artist's own experience of Creoleness, migration, and diaspora, his practice reflects the experience of being between languages, places, and histories. His work examines how identity is shaped by translation, memory, and the internalisation of colonial narratives, questioning how otherness continues to be constructed in contemporary life.

In a newly-commissioned installation titled *Faint Light of the World with Contradictions*, Destourelles explores how conflicting historical narratives are embodied within postcolonial, multilingual, and diasporic identities. This work, both a continuation and departure from his practice to-date, interprets the tensions between colonialist and anti-colonial ideologies in a sensory, spatial encounter.

Faint Light of the World with Contradictions has two primary points of departure—the first a retrospective look at Destourelles' childhood encounters with colonialist films, and secondly a translation of those viewing experiences into sound and colour. The artist grew up in Lisbon watching Portuguese colonialist films made during the era of the Estado Novo dictatorship, but as a child was without the language to articulate the discomfort felt as a viewer. What has endured for him—and what the installation attempts to give form to—is the sense of unease and disquiet which these films left him with.

Destourelles describes his realisation in adulthood of the influence upon Portuguese colonialist films from those originating in the Anglophone world—often sharing cinematic language, especially in terms of structure and ideology. A prime example from Anglophone cinema is the 1935 film, *Sanders of the River*. Directed by the Hungarian-British director Zoltán Korda, it was made shortly before he found success with the production *Elephant Boy*, resulting in Korda leaving Britain for Hollywood. *Sanders of the River* was at the time of its release a significant commercial and critical success. It was based on the stories of English writer, Edgar Wallace, who had worked as a news correspondent during the Second Boer War and later a reporter in the Congo Free State to report on the atrocities committed under King Leopold II of Belgium. *Sanders of the River* has been described as an "unwavering celebration of British colonial rule,"[1] with the film's leading roles played by Leslie Banks, Nina Mae McKinney and Paul Robeson (who later disowned the film). Its plot follows the fictional British District Commissioner R.G. Sanders deployed to colonial-era Nigeria, working alongside Chief Bosambo, together holding off attacks from the rebel leader Mofolaba, all coinciding with Sanders' return to England to marry.

Faint Light of the World with Contradictions queries how sound, generally added in post-production, shapes our experience of meaning in film. Destourelles' soundwork forms the backbone of the installation, purposefully created as a cacophony of sounds, reflecting the artists' engagement with Concrete Music from the 1950s and 1960s, and industrial music as a genre which explored the sonic properties of noise. Destourelles has particularly responded to the experience of acousmatic sound: a feature of Concrete Music, where sound is heard purposefully without seeing its source, creating a productive ambiguity. The work is installed in a freestanding structure in which the build has been conceived to heighten the sensory experience, in contrast with the historic nature of the Glasgow Room within The Mitchell Library.

In the creation of this new work, Destourelles has selected a number of segments featuring character dialogue from *Sanders of the River* where relations with the coloniser are antagonistic, ambivalent, or cooperative. He has interpreted them through pairings of colours and sound, including a silent pause in-between each segment. The colour on-screen is not static, but instead transitions through varying hues and saturation, often arriving abruptly into another sound and colour. These interpretations are informed throughout by the artists' interest in the experience of synaesthesia and the psychology of colour as understood and applied in the West—the colours we are primed to associate with emotions and vice versa. The attribution of a specific colour may in various moments appear to jar for the viewer—as they sit within the structure enveloped by colour appearing across all four screens—where the artist's pairing of sound and colour sit in contrast to the viewer's own understanding or affinities with specific tones.

Destourelles' work has consistently engaged language as both subject and material—often fractured, re-assembled and made visual across text, sound and installation. Language has been something to play with through redaction, appropriation and invention. By removing text altogether, *Faint Light of the World with Contradictions* deepens the artist's exploration of language and demonstrates the complexity of translation, this time through sound and light. Rather than offering resolution, the work sustains contradiction, inviting audiences to inhabit a space of uneasy familiarity where complicity and resistance coexist.

Faint Light of the World in Contradictions probes contemporary identity as a layered and unresolved historical condition, constricted by colonialist narratives that continue to resonate in the present. Through the work, Destourelles asks the audience to question the consequences of what 'we' communicate—through digital culture and social media—in a moment where we are increasingly removed from the reality of how our words impact others.

[1] Mark Duguid, BFI Screenonline, Available: www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/438878/index.html

Glossary

Concrete Music was developed in France by the composer, engineer, and theorist Pierre Schaeffer. Its composition uses real-world, recorded sounds as its raw material rather than traditional musical instruments, and laid the foundational framework for modern electronic music, sound design, and sampling.

Creole refers to the cultural groups, languages, and cuisines which emerged in colonial societies (particularly in the Americas and the Caribbean) through the mixing of European, African, and Indigenous populations. Identification as a person of Creole heritage is deeply localised, and its various meanings can conflict or vary from region to region.

Diaspora refers to a group of people dispersed from their original homeland across various regions globally. Whether this dispersal is voluntary or forced, the group collectively maintain strong emotional, cultural, and political ties to their ancestral roots.

Estado Novo (in English 'New State') was the regime which emerged in Portugal under Prime Minister Antônio de Oliveira Salazar, recognised as the longest-lasting right-wing authoritarian regime in 20th-century Europe.

Synaesthesia is a neurological phenomenon where the stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway automatically and involuntarily triggers an experience in another. For example, reading a word may trigger a specific taste, or an individual may see a specific colour when hearing a musical note.

Colonialist films are a historic genre of cinema which depicted, glorified, or explored the dynamics of imperial expansion, the suppression of Indigenous populations, and the narrative of the white saviour or hero character arc. Anti-colonialist films conversely used cinema to expose and dismantle the historical and psychological impacts of colonial rule, with a number produced from the 1960s onwards coinciding with the liberation struggles of the era.

Faint Light of the World with Contradictions

5 – 20 June 2026

Irineu Destourelles
presented by Outer Spaces & Natalia Palombo

Glasgow Room
Mitchell Library
North St
G3 7DN

Monday–Saturday 10am–4:30pm
(7:30pm Tuesday & Thursday)

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