More than more visible: Luke Willis Thompson, *autoportrait*, (2017), Chisenhale Gallery, 2017

On the 6th July 2016, 32-year old African-American school worker Philando Castile picked up his girlfriend Diamond Reynolds and her daughter and was driving home through the majority-white suburb of Saint Paul, Minnesota. Two police officers, Jeronimo Yanez and Joseph Kauser, were following. Radioing that his "wide-set nose" resembled that of a robbery suspect, they pulled Castile over, citing a broken brake light. 58 seconds later, Yanez had fatally shot Castile.

Still in the car, Reynolds broadcasted the aftermath on Facebook Live, narrating who said what and when. She swings between horror and evidence-giving as she is detained; her battery low, she calls for assistance. Recently released dashcam footage supports Reynolds' description: Castile was complying and had reached for his paperwork not his licensed firearm, yet Yanez's first reaction had been to shoot seven times into the car carrying Castile, Reynolds and her four-year old daughter.

Luke Willis Thompson's work has been concerned with racialised life and death for some time. And it was while working in London on *Cemetery of Uniforms and Liveries* (2016), film-portraits of the relatives of two Jamaican women, Joy Gardner and Dorothy 'Cherry' Groce, killed by the Metropolitan police, that Thompson saw Reynolds' video. Afterwards, he said, "there was no more important conversation about the image, than in these videos."

Two days before *autoportrait* opened, Yanez was acquitted. Though interpretation of evidence was skewed to favour the officer, Thompson's work, a "sister image" to Reynolds' footage, offers more questions than to the visibility of these events.

The scale of *autoportrait,* Thompson's response to Reynolds' call, is at once breath-taking and intimate. Made in collaboration after long and careful negotiation, Reynolds is shown in just two black and white scenes. Shot low and side-on, one framed close to her face, then from the waist up as she sits, echoing the composition of Reynolds' own footage. Filmed in 35mm and

projected onto the full height of the gallery by an exposed and rumbling cinema projector, the film loops between the scenes in silence.

Absolutely pared back, it contains no other context than the two outfits Reynolds chose for the portrait. At first appearing almost peaceful, resolute, eloquent in her mourning, Reynolds' eyes and then her head drop again and again. As the first scene spools into the second, she wordlessly mouths what looks like a song, softly rocking and abruptly stopping.

Since the killing of Trayvon Martin and acquittal of his killer George Zimmerman, Black Lives Matter have brought increased visibility to police violence towards people of colour through street protests and careful use of video on social-media. Discussing this in *Art Forum* ("In Plain View," 2016) Louis-Georges Schwartz compares the precedence given in the courtroom to police-bodycams over citizen-made footage in cases of police violence. Officiated, made fastened to an officer's uniform, jurors see bodycam videos "literally framed from the patrol's point of view … a vantage point that moves with the bodies of police, helping to ensure that the violence committed by patrols remains structurally invisible in court."

Watching *autoportrait* I struggled to connect it to utopian claims made in art about the transformative effects of mobile and networked video — often appealing to a belief in "democratised" representation, but less in how it is still judged, by the institutions that produce situations of structural violence, against the body which had made the footage. Yet as Schwartz makes clear, the work of Black Lives Matter has also shown the power of this footage to lie in how it serves organization. Something not lost on *autoportrait*.

Aiming to offer another relationship to Reynolds, *autoportrait* is very different to her urgently made video. While silence enabled the work — Reynolds couldn't give interviews while Yanez was on trial — it also generated the specific qualities of a work situated within very particular institutional economies of interpretation. As Thompson describes, the second scene, where Reynolds sings inaudibly, was designed so that "the audience has to mentally interpolate whatever they need or want to hear." And it did open a space between an urge to empathize and an unavoidable recognition of the gulf between us. Asking me the viewer to participate, *autoportrait* positioned me through that act of projection: not simply implicated in witnessing, but in the

institutions that index, interpret and profit from these videos, pointing at the continued changes necessary to them.

(719 words)