

4. *Take a Better Picture*

Dorothee Elisa Baumann

The short video work is displayed on a screen about one metre 20 wide and 60 centimetres tall. It sits within the section of the exhibition entitled 'Camera Play/Playing with the apparatus'. In the lower right-hand side of the frame, a Canon camera with a zoom lens stands on a tripod – the legs of the tripod are out of shot. The lens points directly towards us. A hand moving down from the top left of the frame smashes a heavy hammer onto the camera's shutter release button. The action is repeated, heard on the soundtrack as a regular pulse. At first, the camera merely shudders and returns to stillness. As the blows continue, the metal housing becomes battered and the zoom lens flops forward, broken. Eventually the camera is wrenched off the tripod by the repeated hammering. The silvery top of the tripod remains in the frame, motionless. The film lasts for about four and a half minutes.

For Dorothee Elisa Baumann, the camera is not a neutral object: she likens the camera to a weapon that produces power relations between subject and object. Technological advances increase the gap: the faster or more easily a picture can be taken, the less need there is to deal with the reality of life on the other side of the lens.