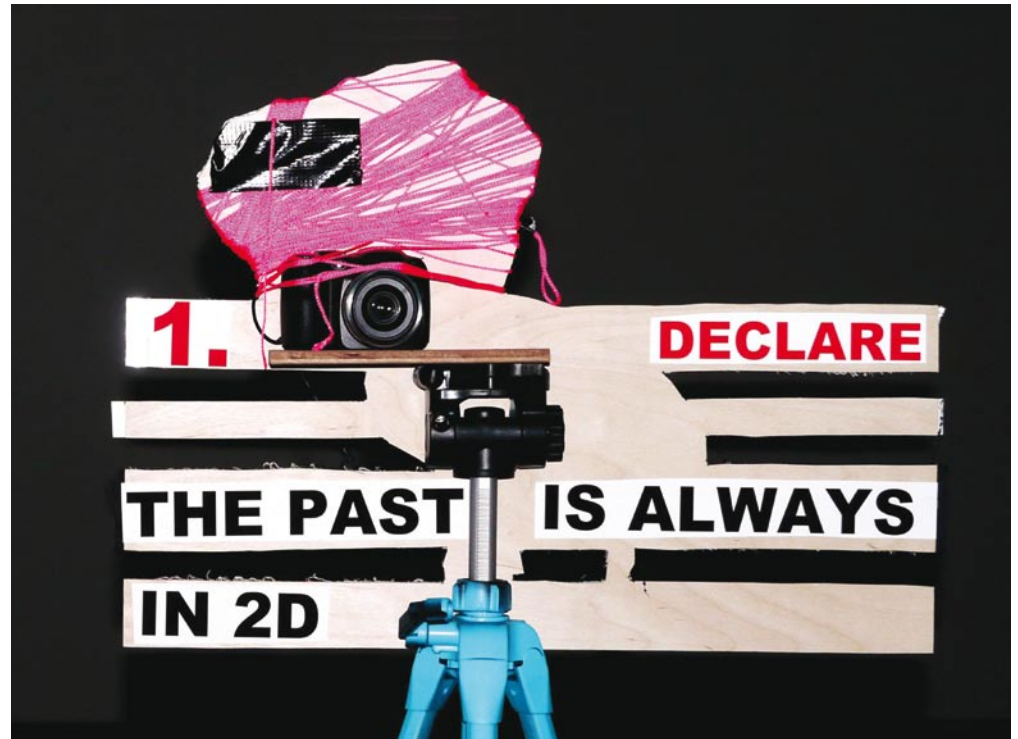




For her upcoming solo show at Matt's Gallery, Emma Hart is planning to fill the space with her 30 assistants. Don't be fooled into thinking that these are human helpers, however, because her 'assistants' are actually cameras, both still and digital video, though it might be best to think of them as birds. Birds wearing a fair amount of hi-vis apparel. Well, they're a bit of both: let's call them bird-cameras. They look a bit like birds – there's an odd beak here, a claw or two there, but they're also definitely cameras. You can see the lenses. And these bird-cameras, a ridiculous confusion of avifauna, workwear and technology: they're helping the artist make her work.

The camera elements of these unholy fusions are either recording the action in the gallery for the duration of the exhibition or they're playing back on their LCD screens a cacophonous collage of abstract colours and text. The cameras, which point at visitors, combined with the presence of handwritten signs that appear to convey a set of directions or instructions, suggests that a performance is to be expected and that the bird-cameras are there to assist the artist in an action yet to come.

The camera doesn't play a passive role in Hart's practice; indeed, much of her work exposes the folly of thinking that this device is merely a cold tool of documentation. *Lost* (2009–11) sees another role for the technology, that of explorer. In the film, presented to the viewer as a towering projection, a video camera delves into a series of nooks and crannies – between filing boxes in an



# EMMA HART

office, deep under a car seat. The camera, and viewer, are able to see into crevices that otherwise largely remain inaccessible in everyday life. It proves useful: at one point we see the artist's hand retrieve an evidently misplaced paintbrush from one such space. The camera becomes the catalyst for the film's subject. In *Chasing Animals* (2007–10), a series of films that saw the artist stalking sheep, geese, horses and rabbits in the British countryside, the camera moves from explorer to predator. The moment the animal clocks its voyeur, the artist runs full tilt at it, and a chase ensues.

If the methodology of Hart's practice sounds like some unreal nightmare from the recesses of one's unconscious, then the artist has succeeded in her aim. Her work seeks to counter the idea of the camera as mere cipher or coordinator of external information by trying out various new, ever imaginative roles for the technology.

Emma Hart: *To Do* is on view at Matt's Gallery, 28  
September – 20 November

OLIVER BASCIANO