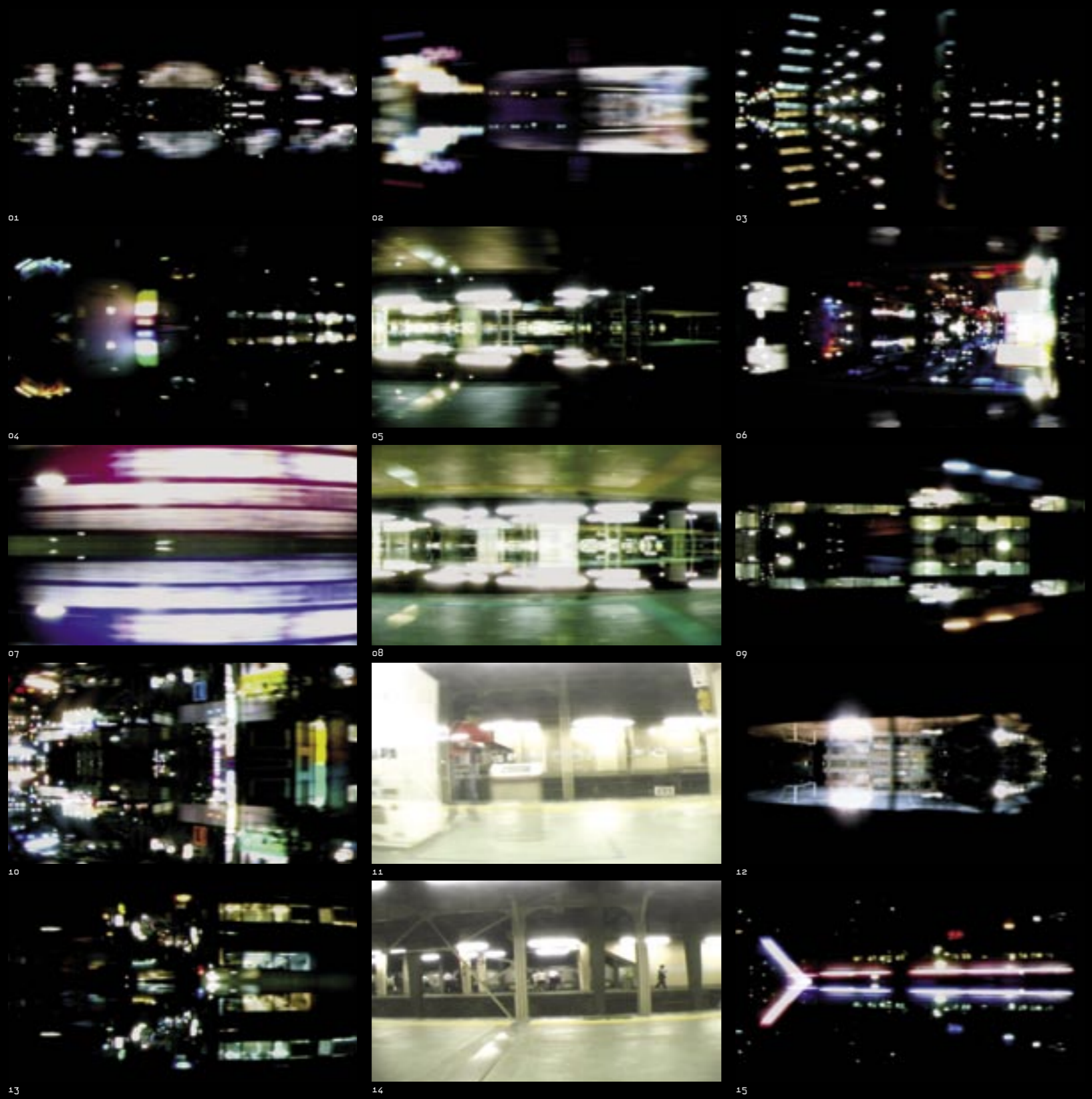


# ed holdsworth



Holdsworth began experimenting with moving image while studying furniture and product design. It was a hands-on approach that led him to animation and motion graphics full time via his self-taught experiments. Recognized as a Creative Future by Creative Review magazine, and with regular work appearing in onedotzero festivals, he became a target for production companies. His work has a thoughtful, abstract quality to it, even when he is dealing with narrative works. Holdsworth seems to be a serial experimenter, which keeps his work surprising and unusual, whether it is for a personal installation, music-based work or commercial projects.

01-15  
**Arrive**. Short film. An exquisite, abstracted Japanese odyssey based on Holdsworth's first trip to Tokyo. A meditation on travel and arrival – perfectly communicating the explosion of the senses and the audio-visual burst that intoxicates you on a first arrival in the multi-layered metropolis – and a sense-driven experience that connects on a visual level and imparts huge emotive information to viewers, it is accompanied by beautiful music from Dom Mino, and was commissioned by onedotzero.



16-18  
**Static**. E4 spot. An extended ident for Channel 4's digital entertainment channel. Holdsworth managed to create a distinctive fusion of filmed organic footage and graphic cut-outs.

19-30  
**BBC Radio 1 xtra**. Commercial. Holdsworth remixes the city to a cut-up music mix that ensures this radio show spot connects with the 'street' but in an intelligently contemporary urban way.

01-16  
**overleaf**  
**King Pylon**. Short film. A mesmerizing and absorbing narrative written and directed by Holdsworth, produced almost entirely in Flash with ultra distinctive results, this is almost a detective story, tracking down the elusive King Pylon in an attempt to glean vital information. It leads to what could be a red herring or the discovery of memories of the future. A Blackwatch production for Channel Four's Mesh scheme.

Are you concerned with only a look or with deeper issues attached to the work? In some pieces of work, the end result sometimes appears almost purely aesthetic and aurally driven, but the work never starts out like that. Take *Arrive* as an example, the end result may not appear to have any levels beyond aesthetic values. But that work was driven from very powerful experiences. Arriving in Japan for the first time after a long haul flight late at night, and wandering around the airport, I found my way to the train terminal, and purely by accident I caught the Skyliner train into Tokyo.

I have always loved train journeys, and suddenly passing through Tokyo suburbia, I found a rush of euphoria. By the time I arrived in Tokyo central station my arm had gone dead from holding the camera so hard against the glass. The image cuts out abruptly as that was my stop. I was up at 6am the next morning wandering around the streets listening to a friend's electronica on Mini Disk and really getting into the atmosphere. It's difficult to describe how going to a new country for the first time can be so much like being on a drug induced trip and I think *Arrive* was my attempt to explain that feeling.

On the other hand the way something looks is a really good way of getting attention for an idea. The first few pieces of work I made were heavily narrative driven, and I used a 'look' in the way they were put together as a way of hooking people in. Centrally I like focusing more directly on the idea.

What drives your thinking behind the development of new ideas?

I have a range of interests that stimulate me, some of them are political, some of them are socially or experience driven, some of them derive from dreams, generally good things happen when two or more threads coincide or work off each other.

My ideas are constantly evolving in order to become a project that I feel is realisable, and that the result will mean enough of what the idea meant to me initially. Sometimes an idea becomes stuck and won't evolve for a while. This happened with the idea for seed that had been in the back of my mind for 10 years. I was asked to pitch an idea for the Onedotzero V&A Late project which had to be a reflection on one of the permanent collections, interpreted with regard to modern technology. I focused on the Japan room. During the process of examining the inlaid pieces and prints and textiles, I remembered about an idea I had for an animation of a tree growing, drawn very



figuratively. That is a project that I had sat down to a number of times since making the original drawings, but had not managed to find the right angle to start the piece in a way that I felt would succeed. Finally it felt like it would work.

Dreams stay with me if they have a really strong sci-fi quality to them. Usually they have an edge that leaves a strong feeling of an other reality, that I can remember exactly how it felt for years afterwards. I try to write them into treatments for music videos, when something in the music reminds me of them, so far without much success, but some day there will be a chance when two ideas cross over.

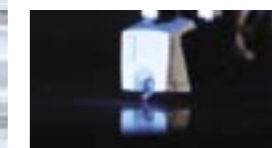
Is narrative an important factor in your work?

The majority of the work I have made has been narrative driven to a high degree but sometimes the narrative is more abstract than at others. The *Radiohead Sit Down, Stand Up* video I made was a direct response to the music without going any further. The central vocal in the track carries the line on repeat "we are raindrops". I listened to that track on loop one night whilst walking across London, and the idea welled up that the video should be from the perspective of a conscious raindrop. It is a very sparse narrative, but if you watch that video with that idea in mind, then there is a strong narrative in there. This is an idea that I repeated from an alternate angle for the Four Tet *High Fives* video.

You came to moving image from a rather oblique direction – how has this unusual trajectory helped or hindered your creative direction?

I'm not sure it was the easiest way, but I don't think I would be doing the work I am if I had followed a traditional route into film. One of the features of the evolving films scene is that a large number of people have migrated into moving image work from other fields as the technology has made production more feasible. At the time I was choosing what to study, this field didn't exist in the same way as it does now.

I started off studying to be an engineer before retraining on a foundation course and completing a product and furniture design degree at Leeds Metropolitan University. My main interest was lighting design, but gradually I got involved in making visuals for installation and clubs, built an analogue moving image machine, and made animations from series of photographs. I migrated into making visually driven short films because it seemed like the best way to combine all the things I liked doing.

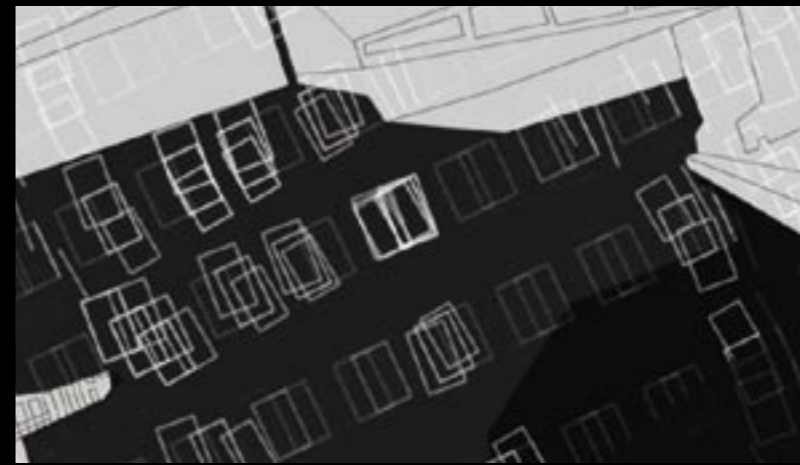




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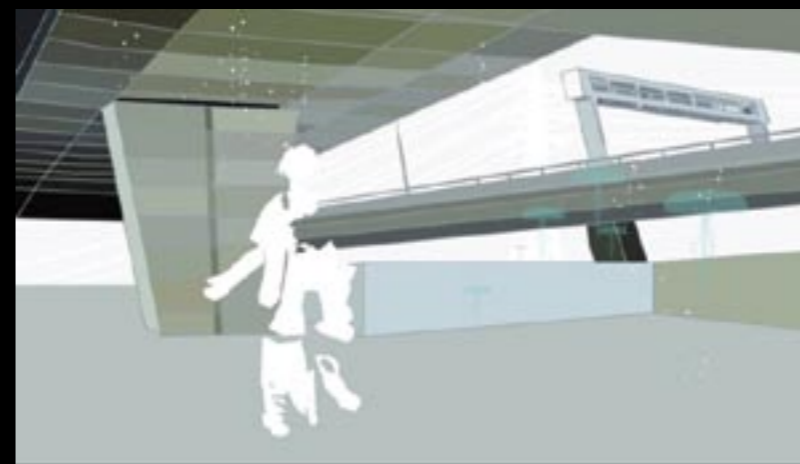
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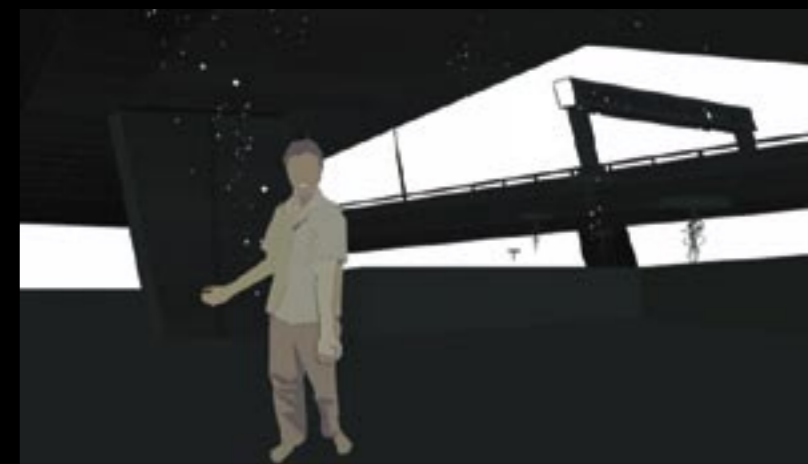
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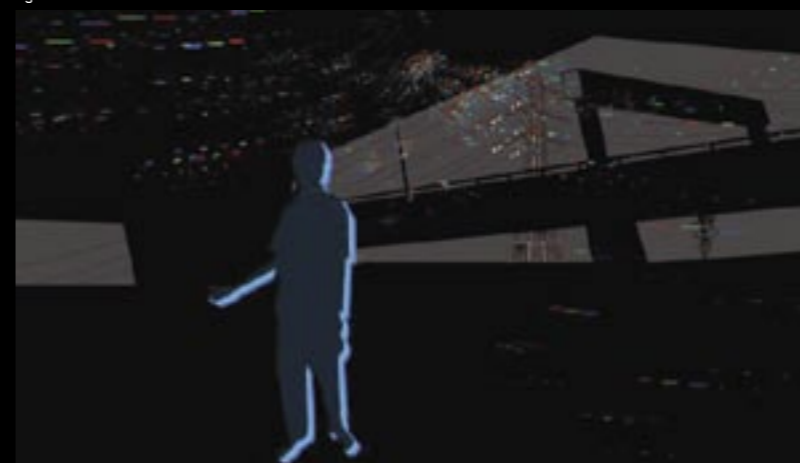
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01-05  
**Seed** Short film. The cycle of an acorn becoming a tree. **Seed** was created for the **onedotzero transvision** event at the V&A Museum, London. A response to the Japan room – particularly the stylized symbols and motifs in Japanese designs – time-lapse photography and animation induce a dreamlike, halcyon illusion. Commissioned by onedotzero, and supported by V&A and Getty Images.

**What was your first commercial break and was it a satisfying experience?**

My first commercial break was directing and animating a 60 second art break animation for the launch of E4 (UK Digital TV channel). I was given complete creative freedom by the agency (Milk Communications) and I found it a great experience, when they saw the finished animation everyone was happy, and I felt like I had learned a lot and progressed a lot in the process.

**You seem influenced and inspired by music – is this true and how integral is sound to the way you work?**

It has always been absolutely central. It is only because I am not musically talented that I have found this path to interpreting music. I find the act of working with light and sound incredibly satisfying.

**Do you have repeating concepts and themes running through your work?**

Yes. I've been thinking about what first drew me into motion graphics/ moving image work and it was really because I was interested in the base way that the human feels about moving light, from fire upwards. Even though I started out on a product design degree in Leeds Metropolitan University, I spent most of my time there trying to prove the link between fire and television. (After I was refused permission to build a cycle powered flying machine) as my major project, I built an analogue moving image machine/ light projector, to that end. I don't think much has changed in my base reasons for doing the work I do. I think it's a universal trait, and one that accompanies artist, musicians, and authors, the subconscious pursuit of a base emotion, feeling, there is a suggestion that we have a small number of these strands that follow us through our lives, perhaps three, and this is echoed by the suggestion that we have three original good ideas in our lives (can't remember where I heard that.). With me one of these strands that is the most important to me is moving patterns of light.

**You seem to work on a number of personal projects – how much of your time is set aside for research and development and how important is self-generated projects to you?**

It may seem that I have done a lot of personal projects, but I normally manage only one a year. However, before I even consciously think of that project the idea will be turning over for a long time.

Sometimes I will spend a few weeks in my spare time researching a project that I think is important, but if I don't get the chance to follow it up it goes on the backburner for a year. I have several projects which have been on the back burner for four or five years. **Seed** for the V&A Late as an example.

**How do you decide on your approach for each project both in terms of concept but also the technological mix?**

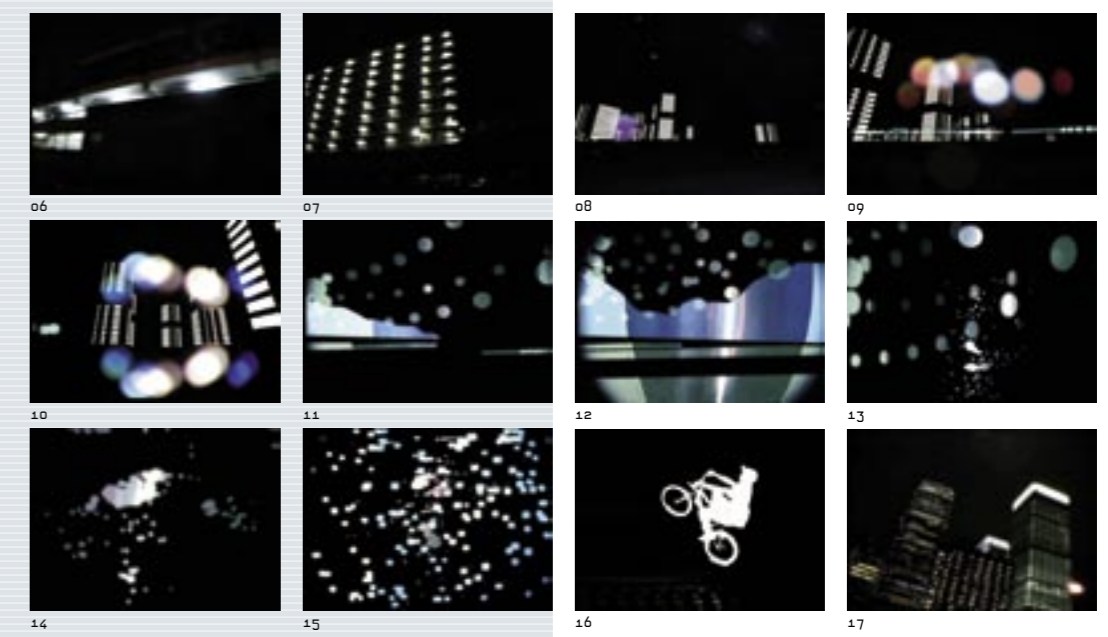
The majority of the work I do now is music based, either video's or tour visuals, so the starting point for the work is in those cases the music and generating a concept based on the music's tone and lyrical content. The work I am developing personally is more long form narrative work, but that's just at the conceptual phase. In terms of technology, I have a good sense of what works, partly because I work as a compositor myself, so from the budget up it's a case of what's available, usually on personal work/ interesting projects or low budget promo's then it will end up being me on my computer and friends I know who can contribute. If I have a budget that allows for post production then I will have a discussion with the post house about what we need to make the job work. I like doing as much as I can for the budget so even when I have used post houses on jobs I usually pitch in, either with editing or in extras effects assistance. The last video for **Placebo** was a really good combination for me of working with highly skilled people in post production in order to achieve a complex but satisfying idea.

**A common accusation of creators working in this area is that they are driven by the tools and fetishise over technology and that the work lacks emotion – what would your response to this be?**

Bunkum. It's a reasonable accusation I guess, but one that can be levelled at the whole field of motion graphics, which is naturally fixated on the next new thing. I think the job of directors in music promos is to develop the angles on those technologies before they become saturated, once they become saturated, yes it's just a technological hand job.

06-17  
**Half of what**, Prefuse 73 music video. In an innovative step, seminal UK electronic label, Warp, teamed up with the UK design magazine **Creative Review** with an open competition offering new Warp music to the winners – resulting in Holdsworth teaming up with Prefuse 73.

01-18 **overleaf**, **High Fives**, Four Tet music video. The hypnotic story of a snowflake's journey to earth to become a fairy-like raindrop, fascinating passers-by. Enhanced and digitally warped live-action was fused into a subtly enchanting short film/music video collaboration, created for the DVD album release of Kieran Hebden's **Everything**, Ecstatic on Domino Records.



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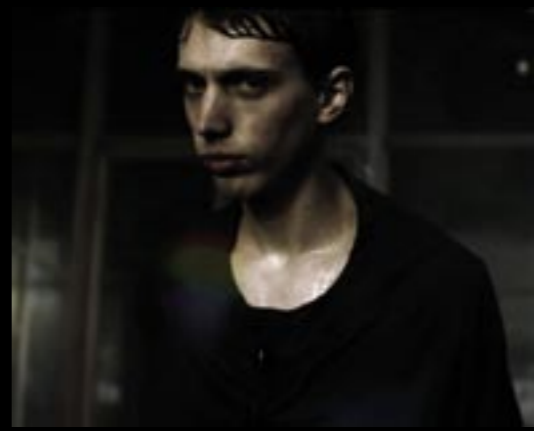
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