



STIM CINEMA

Descriptive Audio Guide Transcript

Introduction

00:00

This recording is a guided description of the exhibition, *STIM CINEMA*, co-created by the Neurocultures Collective and Steven Eastwood, and curated by Christine Shaw at the Blackwood. The exhibition runs from October 1, 2025, to February 28, 2026, and is open to the public Monday through Saturday, from 12pm to 5pm—admission to the Blackwood Gallery is always free of charge. Currently speaking is Liam Mullen, the Blackwood's Research and Outreach Assistant.

STIM CINEMA is presented across the Blackwood's two exhibition spaces at the University of Toronto Mississauga: the Blackwood Gallery in the Kaneff Centre, and e|gallery on the lower level of the CCT Building. Gallery staff are available at both spaces to support your visit.

In this audio recording, I will provide visual description and wayfinding information related to the exhibition *STIM CINEMA*. First, I will describe the installation in the Blackwood Gallery and offer ways to navigate the space and engage with the work. Then, I will describe the e|gallery, which has been transformed into a Co-Creation Studio open to the public during gallery hours and used to host programming for *STIM CINEMA*.

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Blackwood Gallery

01:20

The Blackwood Gallery is located on the ground floor of the Kaneff Centre/Innovation Complex at the University of Toronto Mississauga. The building is on the south side of campus near Inner Circle Road, adjacent to the campus' main public transit stop and Student Centre.

The Blackwood Gallery is accessible to people who use mobility devices, with doorways measuring over 32" wide. All entrances to the ground floor are equipped with power-assisted doors. Additionally, accessible multiuser gendered washrooms are located at ground level.

The Blackwood Gallery's floorplan is a large, square-shaped space with high-ceilings. For the exhibition, *STIM CINEMA*, the gallery is dimly lit, and sectioned off into two, mediated zones of engagement: an anterior space designated for sculpture, and a posterior alcove for viewing audio-visual work.

Within the sculptural space, there are three cyan plinths standing at various heights to accommodate myriad viewing vantages. The plinths are scattered in a rough, triangular formation to create a steady flow of movement between, around, and across the works. On top of each plinth rests a zoetrope: an early animation device that mounts single-frame illustrated images in a sequence, lining the inside of a vented, cylindrical vessel, that, when rotated on a turntable, simulates movement. The zoetropes are made from black-painted, bent steel cylinder with small rectangular vents sliced vertically along the walls of the object. These openings act as the aperture through which we may view the animated loop.

On the lowest plinth, the sequence depicts a person repeatedly pulling a box from a shelf. On the intermediary plinth, a person

repeats a calming gesture, gently tracing the gap between their collarbone with their hand. On the tallest plinth: a swirl of soft serve ice cream endlessly replenishes itself. Each animated loop is gathered from the video installation, *STIM CINEMA*, presented on the other side of the wall.

Adjacent to the zoetropes is a white, leaning-wall, banking from the farthest corner of the gallery towards the plinths. Moving clockwise around the sloped side of the wall, we find three projected images stitched together across the flat, back surface of the wall. Dangling from the ceiling, are three speakers suspended in place by a braid of copper stereo wire and aircraft cable.

In front of the wall-screen are small clusters of cozy, grey loveseats, and black-laminate, plywood stools, for visitors to make themselves comfortable while viewing the film. The film is an excerpt from *The Stimming Pool*, a feature length film by the Collective and Eastwood, adapted and abridged for three-channel viewing in an exhibition setting.

Film Breakdown

04:33

The multi-channel viewing experiences forms a panoramic plane, causing heads to swivel, and eyes to wander as they wipe across the screen. Some moments, the images are isolated to one channel or spread out to form a large continuous picture. In other cases, there will be three different images—and at times duplicated, and triplicated perspectives—panning out on each of the three channels.

The scenes follow a young woman with red hair and large-framed glasses, as she endures a clinical eye-tracking test guided by a masculine voice whose body we never see. These trials are used to arrive at an Autism diagnosis.

Our point-of-view phases between a shared view with the young woman, and that of a clinical bystander. Through the woman's eyes, we view highly textured vignettes of London's busy highstreets, lively pubs, and lush parks, as well as scenes from nature, such as: branches blowing in the wind. The overlay of the eye-tracking technology lays atop the video clips: red, circular nodes tethered to each other, creating an open-ended wireframe. Additional characters and plots populate the film across various sites as schisms in the eye-tracking evaluation, recurring encounters with a woman in a fluffy, Kelly green jacket, and a cat-like mascot in a teal unitard and mask, emblazoned with orange flames, and a cascading green cape.

Continuing to move through the gallery in a clockwise direction, a uniform stack of tabloid-sized pages containing the film's transcript is on the floor for visitors to take with them. The stack of paper stands in the corner at approximately knee height.

e|gallery: Co-Creation Studio

06:24

The e|gallery is located on the ground floor of UTM's CCT Building, a humming centre where students collectively study, find space to relax, and organize pop-up market stalls.

The gallery is encased by frosted glass that reaches from the floor up to the ceiling. Behind the glass, a lime green wall mounts fluorescent lights that, when lit, renders a glowing effect in the architecture.

The gallery's doors are held open like arms inviting embrace. Upon passing the threshold, visitors are immediately greeted by a high-saturation, magenta wall-text which provides context to the setting of the *Co-Creation Studio*. Notably, this is where public programming, and educational encounters will be lead for the duration of the exhibition.

The gallery space is long and narrow with high-ceilings and bright lighting. Moving across the length of the longest wall, a vinyl mural depicting a Mural board—digital interface for charting collaborative thinking, mind-mapping and workflow—figures the co-creation working methods and development process throughout the Neurocultures Collective and Steven Eastwood's five-year collaborative investigation into the relationships between neurodivergent thinking and cinematic creation.

Mural Breakdown

07:48

I will section off the mural into three key zones, moving from left to right across the composition.

On the left-most side, portraits of the Collective and Eastwood are assembled through the tethering of images and cultural reference that speak to each respective member's interests. Each selected piece of media is contained within circular elements connected to titles and relevant themes. Here, the circles are all orbiting a central node that reads: "personal profiles."

Beneath their personal introductions lie a series of spheres denoting preferred conduct and practice championed by the Collective.

The central zone is titled the "third mural," which introduces core themes such as: branches and root systems, creating relationships through wanderings and spirals of interests, as well as calls for the inversion and subversion of normative ways of being and acting in the world. Through the use of text and thumbnail images, the group forms a wide-reaching net of circular, hexagonal, and rectangular nodes patched into each other through thin, connective lines.

Lastly, at the far end of the gallery, is the pairing of the “First Mural” and “Second Mural.” These murals work in concert to establish senses and sensibilities that collectively steer the direction and creation of the film. The lattice of nodes form what look to be an elemental structure, where each node contributes to a larger composite. A few of many terms mixed together include puppets, sci-fi, horror, sensory ethnography, creatureliness, and gestures.

On the adjacent wall, at the far end of the gallery, a wall-text gives shape to the term and practice of stimulating.

Table Breakdown

09:39

At the foot of the composite mural, a series of modular tables stretch across the full length of the slender gallery. The tables consist of trestles, colour-matched to the magenta of the wall texts, that carry 4-foot by 8-foot plywood sheets on top of them. Holding the tables in place are small black, metal woodworking clamps, pinching the seams of the connected tables with magenta-painted blocks.

On the surface of the tables, printed out copies of journal articles, books, and spiral-bound manuscripts are splayed out for publics to engage with. Interspersed throughout the table-setting, are black task lamps, weighted blankets, earmuffs, and stim toys such as plastic, bellowed tubes for scrunching; squishy, knobbed balls for clenching; fidget spinners, with pop-able bubbles; and elastic, resistance bands for expanding.

Plastic-moulded seats with white metal legs are tucked into the tables, offering a place for visitors to sit with the texts and engage with the toys. Strapped around the legs of a few chairs, resistance bands hold tension, allowing sitters’ feet to quickly rebound off of the band as their feet swing.