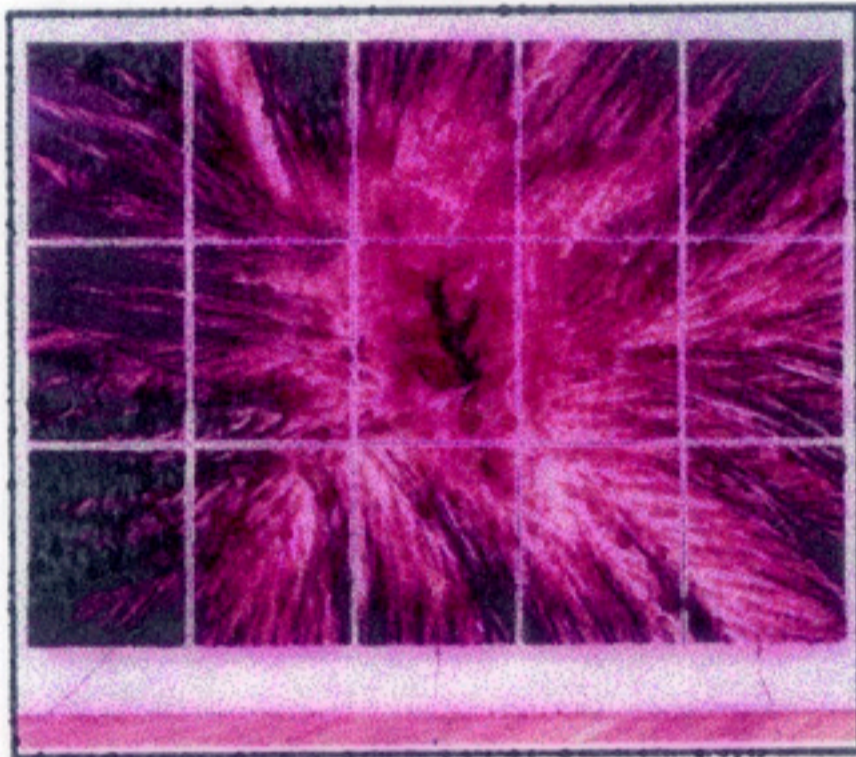


# Mat Collishaw

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Mat Collishaw was born in 1966 in Nottingham, England, and educated at Trent Polytechnic in Nottingham and Goldsmith's College, University of London. Collishaw started off as a painter, but turned to the photographic arts very early in his artistic career. Today he is known for employing technologically complex visual effects in his artworks, which he achieves by using a variety of tools including video, photography, and laserdisc projections.

Much of Collishaw's early work showed a distinct preoccupation with death. His piece *Bullet Hole*, 1988, for example, is a gruesome image of a gunshot wound to the head, displayed as a grid of fifteen lightboxes. This graphic and macabre piece helped Collishaw gain his initial renown as an artist, as it recently toured with the controversial and heavily publicized "Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection" exhibition.



*Bullet Hole*, 1988

Collishaw often explores the forbidden in society and seeks to reveal our voyeuristic tendencies. In his piece *Stripper Morph*, 1998, a small video projector casts an image of a stripper onto a glass surface. The stripper in the video never moves; it is the camera that revolves cinematically around her as she stands frozen in the act of removing a garment. Bright lights shining on her body eliminate any details, further frustrating our desire to grasp her appearance. From time to time spectators appear briefly in the darkness behind her, underscoring the role of the art viewer as voyeur.

Tension between surface and representation is also a recurrent theme in Collishaw's work. As in Plato's Cave analogy, Collishaw's images are often three removes from "reality," appearing as reflections of projections of recorded video narratives. The images in *Shrunken Heads* are such illusions. Like the men chained in Plato's Cave so that they can see only shadows on the wall cast by objects behind them, the viewer can fully understand the narrative only by viewing it from behind the television set, where the reflections appear to move within the diorama. This miniature setting, with its unusual form of tabletop video, keeps the viewer looming outside of the action while the ghost-like figures within it seem to come alive. When viewed from the other side, however, the images appear only on the television screen, and consequently lack a straightforward connection to the structures and objects in the town square.

*Shrunken Heads* addresses as well as questions society's fascination with violence. The idyllic and peaceful setting of the town square contrasts effectively with the violence that occurs: a crowd of hooligans bursts out of a pub, a fight breaks out, a gun is fired, and an SUV blows up. By employing a repetitive narrative of excessive aggression, Collishaw is arguably making an indirect reference to the hypocrisy of our culture today, where social conventions often mask the more primitive and evil aspects of human nature. Furthermore, the timelessness of the village juxtaposed with the present-day SUV underscores the historical continuum of aggression in society.

Mat Collishaw's work has been exhibited internationally at such venues as the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; Museo de Arte Moderna de São Paulo; Tokyo Museum of Contemporary Art; City Gallery, Prague; and PS1, New York. Collishaw currently lives and works in London.