

# World Wide Video Festival

**Nick Stewart**

*face up*

**UK 2000** - Single screen video installation  
DVD, 10:00, black&white, no sound

For several years Nick Stewart has been attending fireworks displays in London, with the primary objective of watching the crowd rather than the spectacle of the fireworks themselves. Stewart has been videoing people's faces, absorbed in themselves as they watch the fireworks, in extreme close-up, tightly framed, shot in low light levels using a mini DV camera set on 'infra-red', light sensitive recording. Each display provided a period of just a few minutes when the peak of explosions created the possibility of recording faces mesmerised by the sight. Only a single sequence of these upward gazing, explosively lit faces was included in the final work. The faces fill the entire frame. Each is marked by a succession of expressions of pleasure, awe, shock and disbelief, reactions to what happens off camera. A woman mouths the words 'oh wow' as she smiles skywards. A man looks heavenward in openmouthed amazement. Similar expressions must have registered on the face of St Paul when overwhelmed by a blinding flash on the road to Damascus. Another man's face is turned upwards in rapture, reminding one of those saints in Baroque paintings. The fact that Nick Stewart's video is projected on to a screen suspended from the ceiling encourages one to assume that his subjects are also seeing visions. The lights reflected in their eyes and flashing across their faces indicate a bright astral glow, but whether this is a sign of God's presence, of approaching space-ships or some other phenomenon remains unknown.

'Face Up' was first installed in The Round Chapel in London.

Nick Stewart ° 1952, Ireland  
Lives and works in London, UK