

STUDIO VOLTAIRE

Hilary Lloyd
Very High Frequency

10 September 2025–11 January 2026



Hilary Lloyd, work in progress, 2025. Image courtesy of the artist.

Hilary Lloyd will present a major new commission that considers the scope and spirit of the trailblazing playwright, television dramatist and writer Dennis Potter (b 1935–d 1994).

Lloyd's layered installation will combine audio-visual elements with archival materials and performative interludes, staging a non-linear encounter with Potter's work for and on television. Engaging with the themes, confrontations and atmospheres that defined Potter's work, the exhibition will navigate his explorations of chronic illness, death, sex, abuse of power and class.

Key to Lloyd's exhibition is a new series of short films featuring actors, producers and collaborators connected to Potter's work and life. A film with broadcaster Melvyn Bragg explores Potter's 'final interview' (conducted by Bragg), which originally aired on Channel 4 just weeks before his death in 1994. Bragg reflects on the extraordinary interview, which examined the 1945 post-war settlement, the impact of media on democracy and Potter's own mortality. More than thirty years later, the interview's analysis of public life and political discontent crackles with prescience. In another, producer Ken Trodd, Potter's most significant collaborator, reflects on their 30-year relationship. These conversations and filmed vignettes form an impressionistic biography of the dramatist, shaped through Lloyd's distinct lens.

Potter has been lauded as Britain's most pioneering playwright, television dramatist and writer. Best known for his TV serials, his Brechtian techniques brokered a

meaningful and daring relationship between experimental theatre and television. Challenging the then-dominant naturalism of terrestrial television dramas, Potter successfully pioneered a multitude of dramatic devices to blur fantasy and reality, including intertwined flashback and fantasy sequences, direct-to-camera address, lip-syncing, musical interludes and the use of adult actors to play children. Although celebrated for his creativity as a screenwriter and journalist, Potter's work and personal life were not without controversy and several of his screenplays were banned by the BBC for decades.

Constructing an environment that reinterprets Potter's impact and influences, Lloyd's exhibition will encompass a broader installation that draws from theatre sets and studios. In an attempt to avoid conventional approaches to dramaturgy and performance, her installation will resist standard notions of narration. Instead, the exhibition will function as a tableau to be encountered, placing the audience within a choreographed experience.

A second installation will explore Potter's life as a public performer and intellectual, including Alan Yentob's 1987 BBC Arena documentary, a 1977 interview with Ludovic Kennedy and Potter's first-ever television appearance in the 1958 documentary *Does Class Matter?*.

The accompanying screening programme includes his earliest dramas for the BBC's *Wednesday Play* and *Play for Today* series and his most celebrated TV serials *The Singing Detective* (1986), *Pennies from Heaven* (1978) and *Lipstick on Your Collar* (1993) alongside the television plays *Blue Remembered Hills* (1979) and *Brimstone and Treacle* (1976).

Lloyd's exhibition and accompanying public programme offer an opportunity to critically reflect on Potter's enduring relevance to contemporary culture. Potter's formidable influence across theatre, media, art and popular culture from *Twin Peaks* (1990) to *Mad Men* (2007) appears indivisible from his belief that television could be a powerful vehicle for artistic expression. As Potter said in his 1993 James MacTaggart Memorial Lecture, "Here was a medium of great power, of potentially wondrous delights that could slice through all the tedious hierarchies of the printed word and help to emancipate us from many of the stifling tyrannies of class and status and gutter-press ignorance."

Joe Scotland, Director of Studio Voltaire, says, "Lloyd is uniquely positioned to unspool Potter's relevance and legacy for contemporary audiences. We share a long fascination with Potter's work and the surreal, genre-blurring qualities and dramatic devices he pioneered, tackling darkly challenging themes on a mass audience platform."

ENDS

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Supporters and Funders

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Supported by Kvadrat

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About Hilary Lloyd

Hilary Lloyd (b. 1964, Halifax) lives and works in London. She has exhibited internationally, with solo exhibitions including: *Ok darling, show's over!*, Roland Ross, Kent, England (2024); *You want it to be art and I want it to be a magazine*, International Centre for Contemporary Culture, San Sebastian (2024); *Dog bEar Scarf*, Josey, Norwich (2022); *Car Park*, Sadie Coles HQ, London (2019); *Chance Encounters V*, Loewe Foundation, Miami (2019); *Bar*, BAR, Turin (2019); *Theatre*, Focal Point Gallery, Southend-on-Sea (2017); *Awful Girls*, Dorich House Museum, Dorich House Fellowship & Dora Volume 1, Kingston (2017); Blaffer Art Museum, Houston (2016); *Robot and Balfour*, Sadie Coles HQ, London (2015); Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel (2012); Artists Space, New York (2011); Raven Row, London (2010); Tramway, Glasgow (2009); Le Consortium, Dijon (2009); Kunstverein München (2006); Waiters, Henry Moore Foundation Contemporary Projects, Venice Biennale (2003); Kino der Dekonstruktion, Frankfurter Kunstverein (2000); and Chisenhale Gallery, London (1999). Lloyd was nominated for the 2011 Turner Prize for her exhibition of 2010 at Raven Row, London.

About Dennis Potter

Dennis Potter (b. 1935–d. 1994) was a journalist, novelist, cultural commentator, broadcaster, producer, director and playwright.

Born in a mining village in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire and graduating from Oxford University, he briefly worked as a journalist and entered politics, unsuccessfully standing as a Labour candidate in the 1964 general election. However his most significant cultural and artistic contributions were made within the realm of British television drama, where he authored more than forty single plays, serials, and adaptations.

His notable contributions include many of the BBC's *Wednesday Plays* and acclaimed series such as *Pennies from Heaven* (1978). The latter, conceived as a 'television novel', marked a pivotal moment in Potter's career, as one of the earliest instances in which his characters engaged in stylised performances of popular songs—lip-synching and dancing to original 1930s recordings.

Although Potter consistently denied that his work was autobiographical, many of his dramas were informed by personal experiences. Perhaps most notably, his lifelong struggle with psoriatic arthritis was reflected in *The Singing Detective*, in which the protagonist's illness closely parallels Potter's own condition.

Prior to his death in 1994, he completed two final scripts, *Karaoke* and *Cold Lazarus*. Remarkably, he successfully proposed that the productions be a joint venture between

rival broadcasters, the BBC and Channel 4 – marking a landmark collaboration in British television history.

About Studio Voltaire

Studio Voltaire is one of the UK's leading not-for-profit arts and education organisations. Championing emerging and under-represented artists, we commission and produce exhibitions, artist development programmes, civic and learning projects, live events and offsite commissions. Studio Voltaire is a registered charity and part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio.

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About Kvadrat

Kvadrat was established in Denmark in 1968 and has deep roots in Scandinavia's world-famous design tradition. Kvadrat continuously works to expand the aesthetic, technological, and artistic boundaries of the use of textiles through a long series of collaborations with some of the world's best designers, architects, and artists, including Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, Patricia Urquiola, Pipilotti Rist, Thomas Demand, Olafur Eliasson, Alfredo Häberli, Doshi Levien, Jonathan Olivares, Danh Vo, Vincent van Duysen and Peter Saville.

Art projects include, amongst others: Haegue Yang at Tate St Ives (2020), Caravaggio-Bernini. Baroque in Rome at Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2020), Daiga Grantina at New Museum, New York (2020), Liu Shiyuan at UCCA, Beijing (2019), Wes Anderson and Juman Malouf at Fondazione Prada, Milan (2019), Philippe Parreno at Tate Modern, London (2017), Pipilotti Rist at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen (2019), Dahn Vo at the National Gallery, Copenhagen (2018), Shilpa Gupta at la Biennale di Venezia, Venice (2015), Günther Vogt and Olafur Eliasson at Kvadrat Headquarters, Ebeltoft (2012), Thomas Demand at Städel Museum, Frankfurt (2011) and at Nationalgalerie, Berlin (2009).