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## Neal White: THE VOID

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This is a documentary film covering an art-event that took place in the context of a workshop at the *Max Planck Institute for the History of Science* in May 2006. The title of this workshop was "Introspective Self-Rapports: Shaping Ethical and Aesthetic Concepts 1850-2006".

Neal White who created THE VOID is one of the founders of the artists-collective "The Office of Experiments" that engages in a fruitful exchange between the scientific and artistic realm, exploring the respective perspectives on and practices in reality. As an artist in residence at the *National Institute for Medical Research*, White became interested in self-experimental practices and the role they play within scientific research. At the same time, he started to study the relation of these practices to techniques of the self in contemporary culture.

In this context, White came across an art-event created by Yves Klein in the 1950s. Klein's main idea was to make people drink a cocktail that would dye their urine methyl-blue for a few days. The aesthetic experience was thus materially induced into the body with lasting effects; the recipient was transformed into a self-experimenter, a bottom-up aesthetic. More than 50 years later, the reenactment of this event/experience turned out to be quite complicated, however.

First, it was extremely difficult to acquire the methylene-blue. Moreover, White was seriously confronted with the concerns of an ethics commission. He thus had negotiate on the threshold between ethics and aesthetics. All this is reflected in THE VOID, a piece that was first shown in *The Barbican Gallery*, London 2005 as part of the "Colour After Klein" Exhibition .

THE VOID consists of an inflatable transparent room in which White sits isolated from the audience at a table. Through a little window he hands out blue pills. The limited edition newspaper, "The Selfexperimenter," informs about possible risks and side effects of the methylene-blue pill that - just like Klein's cocktail - dyes the urine for up to five days. In order to receive one of the pills, and thus to become a self-experimenter, one has to take on the risks by providing a signature and pass it through to White. In Berlin an amount of 50 pills was released. How many of the recipients, however, really dared to swallow one of them remains unknown.

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Neil White: The Self-Experimenter and THE VOID