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Wilson, Michael. "Johan Grimonprez: Blue Orchids," *Time Out New York*, February 20, 2017.



“Johan Grimonprez: Blue Orchids”



As Trump spoils for whatever fight he can find, former New York Times war reporter Chris Hedges’s appalled characterization of “the psychosis of permanent war” strikes a resonant chord in Johan Grimonprez’s unforgettable new video, | blue orchids |. Constructed around two chilling interviews—one with Hedges, the other with former arms dealer Riccardo Privitera—the 48-minute piece examines the sustaining role of commerce in global conflict. Cutting between the twin encounters and a reconstruction of Hamas leader Mahmoud Al-Mabhouh’s 2010 assassination, | *blue orchids* | illustrates with stunning effectiveness that killing is a business—and a perennially lucrative one.

The work is entirely on-brand for Grimonprez, who made his name with 1997’s *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, a brilliant subjective analysis of airplane hijacking as interpreted by television news. It’s also a near impossible act to follow, so a shorter video screening directly after—*Raymond Tallis | on tickling*—is thoroughly upstaged. But while it feels less urgent than its predecessor, the second film is stimulating nonetheless, with the titular philosopher-neurologist framing the phenomenon that people cannot tickle themselves, only each other, as an emblem of the role relationships play in the formation of identity. After the horrors of | *blue orchids* |, Raymond Tallis seems touchy-feely and abstract, but it’s none the worse for that.

TIME OUT SAYS

