

# FlashArt

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## **Cornelia Parker**

Whitechapel Gallery

Cornelia Parker's riveting film documents her dream meeting and interview with Noam Chomsky at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology last year. It was Parker's ambition to engage with Chomsky in a dialogue about impending environmental disaster and its causes. Composed of a series of close-up portrait shots of Chomsky as he answers Parker's questions, which go unheard by the viewer, each of his animated answers is bookended by a prolonged silence and a still image of his face. Characteristically, Chomsky eloquently and unflinching offers us accounts of the xenophobia, paranoia and needless aggression that have been the hallmark of successive United States administrations during the past fifty years. He also dissects the capitalist culture of escalating consumption in terms of its destruction of the environment and depletion of its resources. So far, so predictable. It is his demeanor, however, his facial expressions and the deep-seated conviction of the man that rivets the viewer. Chomsky's anecdotes, and the detailed information that he relays in a wide-sweeping vision of our decadent and deadly culture, hold the viewers in thrall. When questioned about the most important element of the film, Parker cites Chomsky's answer to one of her questions: "Capitalism compels us to work ourselves to death and the planet to death, in order to stuff our houses with things we don't need." This says it all really. Luxuries become necessities and image becomes all, in a burgeoning consumer culture. It is the compassion with which Chomsky delivers his statements and the depth of thought which underpins all his answers that irresistibly engenders a deep admiration for this man.

**Roy Exley**