

The Sensible Stage

Mikko Canini, Lucienne Cole, Sebastian Buerkner, Louisa Fairclough, Clare Gasson, Pil and Galia Kollektiv, Gail Pickering

Curated by Bridget Crone

The Sensible Stage explores the idea of staging. Throughout the programme there is a play between the staging of the self and staging as a theatrical device. *The Sensible Stage* takes its title from Jacques Rancière's 'common sensorium', in order to explore the idea of the 'stage of the sensible'; that is, the staging of a common 'moment'. Using the real and metaphorical frames of the stage and the camera, *The Sensible Stage* treads the ground between the possibility and impossibility of this 'common moment'. Some work uses these frames as a way of restaging, as a way of unearthing unexplored connections – such as in Gail Pickering's use of Peter Weiss's 1963 play *Marat/Sade* in her work, *Hungary! And Other Economies* (2006) filmed on-site at de Sade's Chateau in Luberon now owned by Pierre Cardin. Pil and Galia Kollektiv's *Better Future, Wolf-Shaped* (premiered in this screening) also uses restaging as a means of tracing connections between historical moments by enacting references from a diverse plethora of references from punk, to modernist avant-garde. And for them, staging is a device used to achieve a kind of stop within the constant flow and commodification of knowledge experience in contemporary capitalism.

Other work in *The Sensible Stage* focuses on the act of staging in order to reveal or emphasise the way in which lighting, camera, set and setting contribute to or craft the performance itself. This is evident in Mikko Canini's *The Life and Death of* (2005) in the manner with which he uses the tropes of character, set, lighting, camera angle and camera frame with equal emphasis in order to reflect both their ubiquity and their effect on our particular reading of the performance. Similarly, in her work, *The Ballad of Albatross Way* (2007), Clare Gasson weaves together multiple narratives distinguished by their references to different oral traditions. This results in a continual act of displacement so that our sense of location within the narrative is constantly being displaced by the different tones, accents and historical styles of language used. This awareness and deliberation on the component parts that comprise the act of staging is again addressed in Louisa Fairclough's film, *Bring in Daylight*. Filmed over a year at Taunton Cattle Market, *Bring in Daylight* is neither a social documentary nor rural portrait. Instead, it is as if the small ring of the cattle market becomes a stage not only for the farmers to tell their stories, but in their understanding and willingness to construct and to collude with the camera they become both actors and spectators within their own reminiscences.

Like the amphitheatre of the cattle market, at once collective and solitary, Lucienne Cole's work, *Hi Fidelity Hi* treads this fragile ground between the possibility and impossibility of a 'common moment'. Based on interviews she conducted with record collectors, *Hi Fidelity Hi* is a mix of individuals' anecdotes and memories presented as a continuous stream. In this way, individual identities are lost to the past moment (of telling), while their retelling in the present (as a live performance) opens up the possibility for the audience's collective 're-experience' of this displaced, past moment as a present one of shared experience and common reminiscences. However, the solitary nature of collecting never fails to overshadow the work adding a complex and reflective space in which individual identities are formed and informed. The space of solitary reflection is present in Sebastian Beurkner's work *Realm's Pin*, as an almost tangible and sensory condition. He achieves this effect through a tightly framed viewpoint in which abstracted body parts, objects and actions unfold in such a slow and expansive way that it feels almost as if we are in the frame, watching ourselves from the inside rather than the outside of the lens.

Bridget Crone is director of Media Art Bath. *The Sensible Stage* is an ongoing curatorial and research project exploring questions of experience, participation and spectatorship through the idea of 'staging'.

Lucienne Cole, *Hi Fidelity Hi* (2006)

ca 10-15 minutes, performance with slideshow

A performance based on interviews with record collectors and personal anecdotes and memories associated with the artist's own record collection. Sometimes the idea of collecting is seen as a lonely activity. Playing records can be a private thing, confined to one's bedroom or permanently plugged into a personal stereo or ipod, shut off from what's around you. But playing records is also about sharing, about spreading the word, breaking down barriers and having a good dance.

Sebastian Buerkner, *Realms Pin* (2007)

ca 6-8min, Animation, ratio: 4:3

Being at the same place at different times at once can grant a brisk distance from the emotional agitation in a certain toil of life. Space provides the stage where extremes like loss and gain, companionship and seclusion reign at times. As objects are witnesses or players in the individual spectacle, changes to their instance feel like graffiti poured upon them, revealing the full story.

Gail Pickering, *Hungary! And Other Economies* (2006)

Extract 15 minutes, DVD PAL, Colour / French with sub-titles

In Hungary And Other Economies Pickering takes a group of hired porn actors from Marseille to the Marquis De Sade's Chateau in Luberon France, a pristine ruin now owned by fashion mogul Pierre Cardin, to enact scenes from German playwright Peter Weiss's seminal 1963 play 'Marat/Sade'. Dressed in the counterfeit retro-futuristic designs of Cardin, the actors shift between being themselves and their assigned characters, repeatedly taking turns to stage an encounter between the radical philosophies of the Marquis de Sade and Jean-Paul Marat.

Lucienne Cole, *She La La* (2006)

1 minute, 30 seconds, video

A song made up from typical lines of 60s girl group songs Sha La La exists in three forms; as a sound piece, a performance and a short film, shot in a chip-shop in Islington, London.

Louisa Fairclough, *Bring in Daylight* (2008)

18 minutes, 16mm transferred to DV Cam

Bring in Daylight documents the gesture and voice of the farming community who meet and work at Taunton Livestock Market. Filmed over the course of a year prior to the market's closure, the painterly camerawork cuts between close portraits and a series of pans representing each setting as a tableau, the camera making a slow, steady observation. (Funded by Elephant Trust, Arts Council and South West Screen/UK Film Council)

Mikko Canini, *The Life and Death of* (2005)

1 minute, super 8 transferred to DVD

In what appears to be an archival film fragment of an unknown historical figure in conversation, the formal qualities of myth are examined. Using the rolling of a cigarette as its narrative structure, the film explores the role of the image as receptacle for fantasy. The condensed narrative examines the role of performance, not only that of the protagonist but of the essential performativity of the mis-en-scene, in shaping our knowledge of historical moments. (MK)

Clare Gasson, *The Ballad of Albatross Way* (2007)

6 minutes, video

The Ballad of Albatross Way is a stripping away of excess in work. The camera pans in one circular movement around a working space. The gaze passes from a woman's body on to a plethora of things around the room: books, models and pictures and all sorts of stuff – pinned up, blue tacked, precariously balanced. Sound is equal to the visuals – the ballad is spoken to the accompaniment of an accordion clicking, creaking and wheezing it's faltering way though the melody.

Pil and Galia Kollektiv, *Better Future, Wolf-Shaped* (2008)

14 minutes, 16mm transferred to DVD

Better Future, Wolf-Shaped depicts a futuristic totalitarian society that worships the legacy of Modernism and explores the ways in which groups and individuals negotiate its demands. A peripheral cult of worshipers fashions its own offerings to their Modernist ancestors in the form of architectural models of their great monuments made of cornhusk. These are ritually constructed and burnt against the background of Celtic sites in Cornwall, as the group dons makeshift salad bowl and lampshade helmets, leading up to the choreographed homage to the square. Bringing together pagan ritual, the anti-traditions of modernism and popular film and music interpretations of the cult as a social unit, Better Future, Wolf-Shaped aims to trace connections between historical moments as much as write its own chronology of an alternative future history in the manner of a speculative or science fiction film.

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Mikko Canini

Mikko Canini lives and works in London, UK. He is currently a PhD candidate at Goldsmiths College where his work is concerned with the articulation of the concept of dread. In this body of work he aims to deploy the formal lexicon of horror as it appears in a variety of fields (from the social, to the scientific, to the ideological) in an effort to map the specific terrain of dread. Recent exhibitions include: Les Fleurs du Mal at Gallery Primo Alonso (London); Self-Space at AiRspace (Stoke-on-Trent); Pilot:2, International Art Forum (London).

Lucienne Cole

Lucienne Cole's work takes place in public places, and centres round a core of performance and video, exploring the way in which popular culture forms and informs the slippages between fantasy and reality in everyday life. Previous projects include: *Whole Lotta Love*, a series of radio programmes for Coniston Water Festival (2005); *It'll Never Be Over For Me*, Liverpool Biennial (2006); and *Dances For Mods'/'Ikebukuro A Go – Go*, Grizedale Arts' Seven Samurai, Tokyo (2006).

Sebastian Buerkner

Since 2004 Sebastian Buerkner's art practice has entirely focused on working in animation. The works range from single films to multiple video installations. In their at times rather abstract, non-narrative quality, they are investigations into personal visual hierarchy of memory and association, and host with a tendency to the surreal personal symbolism and visual association chains. Sebastian has a solo show forthcoming at The Showroom, London and previous solo shows include *The Unamable*, LUX at Lounge Gallery, London, 2006; and *Turf Waltz*, Whitechapel Project Space, London, 2006. Other exhibitions include *His life is full of miracles...*, Site Gallery, Sheffield, 2006; *Hunters Moon*, L'est, London, 2007.

Louisa Fairclough

Louisa Fairclough is an artist working with film and video, her work occupying a space between documentary and painting. Whilst landscape is central to her work, her most recent films have been studies of rural occupations. Based near Stroud in Gloucestershire, Louisa Fairclough's recent work includes *Meet* (2006) commissioned by Picture This and shown at ROOM, Bristol

and the Bath Film Festival (2006). Group shows include *Nowhere Else But Here* at Danielle Arnaud, *Freeze Frame* at Stephen Lawrence Gallery, *Picturesque* at Tullie House, *A Square of Ground* at Jerwood.

Clare Gasson

Clare Gasson's practice is text based – the work is like a spatial network – a fluid labyrinth in which anything can happen. Her work has been seen and heard in recent exhibitions and publications including: *Into the Melting* for the Passerby series at Guestroom, London 2007; *Fold'07* launched at Late at Tate, Tate Britain 2007; *A Little Light Music*, solo show at Parker's Box, New York, proposed as part of the sound exchange project by The Showroom, London, 2006; *Eau Sauvage I*, Galerie Lucy Mackintosh, Lausanne, Switzerland, 2006.

Pil and Galia Kollektiv

Pil and Galia Kollektiv are London based artists, writers and curators working in collaboration. Their practice is primarily film and video based. Most recently they have presented *Asparagus: A Horticultural Ballet*, a solo exhibition in London at the Showroom Gallery, involving the recreation of an obscure, mythical art event from the 1970s and comprising a live performance and a video, incorporating dance and appropriating the bio-mechanics of early modernist ballet. "Better Future, Wolf-Shaped" is commissioned by Film London as part of the London Artists Film and Video Award.

Gail Pickering

Gail Pickering works with performance, live installation and video. She has presented several performances and live installations in recent years, most notably her solo exhibitions at Galerie Jousse Entreprise, Paris (2007) and Matt's Gallery, London (2004). She is currently working on a new commission for Media Art Bath and will have a solo exhibition at Gasworks, London in June. She will be presenting a series of performances for *Here We Dance* a group exhibition at Tate Modern from 15 March 2008.