

SEPTEMBER 20 TO NOVEMBER 2, 2008

Rosalind Nashashibi

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Working predominately with 16 mm film, Rosalind Nashashibi creates atmospheric, dreamlike artworks whose ambulatory depictions of communities and places draw on the traditions of narrative documentary, but work resolutely against the dramatic expectations common for the genre. Often made with a static camera, and echoing Andy Warhol's early films, Nashashibi's evocative portraits are painterly in their attention to the detail and minutia of daily life.

Nashashibi came to prominence in 2003 when she was included, and was the first woman to win, the UK's prestigious Beck's Futures Prize for emerging artists. Her entry to the competition, (her first major work), was *The State of Things*, a B&W film depicting a group of Scottish women at a rummage sale, casually foraging through boxes of discarded goods, searching for finds and bargains, and set against a soundtrack of songs by Egyptian singer Oum Kolsoum. The elegiac mood of the film grows from the quiet conflation of two distinct, often polarized social and cultural milieus.

Nashashibi has since developed an increasingly complex practice that extends from her interest in capturing the "tone" of a place rather than narrating a story. In *Hreash House*, (2005) Nashashibi, who is part Palestinian, returned to her father's hometown of Nazareth to document a day in the life of a neighbourhood Palestinian family. Her film follows the daily rituals and idiosyncratic rhythms of this extended clan through a markedly uneventful day, and the film builds toward the family's evening meal, which through Nashashibi's careful and eloquent pacing achieves enormous grandeur.

Nashashibi's exhibition at Presentation House Gallery focuses on three, new interrelated 16 mm film works: *Bachelor Machines: Part 1* (2007), *Bachelor Machines: Part 2* (2007), and *Eyeballing* (2005). Each of these works take as their subject closely observed details of and the domestic or working milieus of three disparate subjects: Sailors aboard an Italian cargo ship, the German artists Thomas and Helke Bayrle, and New York City Police officers. Together the films form a powerful meditation on social structures, recent historical events and global economic realities.

Bachelor Machines: Part 1 (in the East Gallery) comprises vignettes the artist filmed while aboard the

Italian cargo-ship *Gran Bretagna* en route between the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic. The work follows the ship's working crew members, intercutting shots of them at leisure or executing chores and duties, with views into the vessel and of the sea and sky surrounding her. Nashashibi typically spends extended periods of time in close proximity to her subjects before beginning to film, and the mesmerizing effect of *Bachelor Machines Part 1* is encapsulated in the ease and comfort with which the all-male Italian crew act in the presence of her camera. Referencing Marcel Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors*,



Even (1915-23), *Bachelor Machines Part 1* captures the anthropomorphic dynamism of a large machine, and the ritualized domesticity of a group of men habituated to close proximity for a long durations. In Nashashibi's words, she was interested in documenting "the idea of a single sex society, on board a ship, as a society that needs to make up for its missing part, and take care of all roles within itself."

Bachelor Machines: Part 2 (in the West Gallery) is a split screen projection in which two earlier works by Nashashibi, *Eyeballing* (2005) and *Park Ambassador* (2004-5) are shown in softly blurred focus in conjunc-

tion, and to the right of a film documenting influential German artists Thomas and Helke Bayrle as they mimic the actions of a character from Alexander Kluge's film *Artists Under the Big Top: perplexed* (1968). The deliberate blurriness of *Eyeballing* and *Park Ambassador* slowly sharpen into focus as Thomas Bayrle's monologue meanders toward an apocalyptic discussion of the materialization of wishes. Combining her interests in the Bayrle's contribution to contemporary art and Kluge's innovative filmmaking with an obsessive re-visitation of her previous work is, Nashashibi says of



Bachelor Machines Part 2, that it is "a way of mapping my thoughts chronologically."

Eyeballing (in the Centre Gallery) documents uniformed New York City police officers chatting outside their precinct, intercut with close ups on architectural details, window graphics and household objects that form rudimentary, sometimes humorous, faces in the form of archetypal eyes and mouth. At a critical moment in the film, one of the policemen glances into Nashashibi's camera, and the film folds into an astonishingly reflexive loop. We see the mistrust in his eyes and the suspicion and uncertainty about her intention,

which in post-9/11 New York City was and perhaps still is commonplace. In the policeman's gaze we locate Nashashibi's tableaux: the smiley face on the back of toothbrush, or the inscrutable glare of two faucets and a drain are, equally, *watching* her, and while these objects are—at their sternest—funny, Nashashibi shows how the turn from 'looking' to being 'looked at' is often wedded to an unsuspected shift between empowerment and victimization.

Following her appearance in the 2007 Venice Biennale, where she represented Scotland, Nashashibi has

gained considerable international attention, including a recent solo show at the Berkeley Art Museum, and inclusion in this year's prestigious exhibitions Manifesta 7 and the Berlin Biennale. Her work was featured in a cover story on the November, 2007 issue of *Modern Painters*. Rosalind Nashashibi's exhibition at Presentation House Gallery is produced in collaboration with The Ontario College of Art and Design's Professional Gallery, with whom PHG will co-produce of a full colour publication on Nashashibi's practice, to be released in 2009. Nashashibi is represented by Harris Leiberman Gallery, New York City.

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