

Rossella Biscotti
Keren Cytter
Susan MacWilliam
Aida Ruilova
Lisa Steele
**Not Necessarily
In That Order**

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May 1 to June 28, 2010

This exhibition considers the disjunctions of narrative through contemporary media art. The title refers to filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard's dictum that "a story should have a beginning, middle and an end, but not necessarily in that order." As in Godard's experiments, the artists in this exhibition embrace contradiction to involve the viewer in an active process of making sense. Unfolding through elliptical structures of repetition and dissonance, the stories here tend to spin out of control and veer towards the irrational. Referencing narrative conventions and clichés such as film noir, melodrama, documentary, reportage and music video, the artists acknowledge that the act of telling becomes part of the story and that the narrator must be understood as unreliable. Spoken language and sound take on visual qualities in these works. Emphasized by fast-paced editing and montage techniques, the slippage between image and voice form new iterations and open up spaces for ongoing translations. The dissonant narratives in this exhibition are all in a sense 'true lies' that offer reflections on our impulse to communicate.

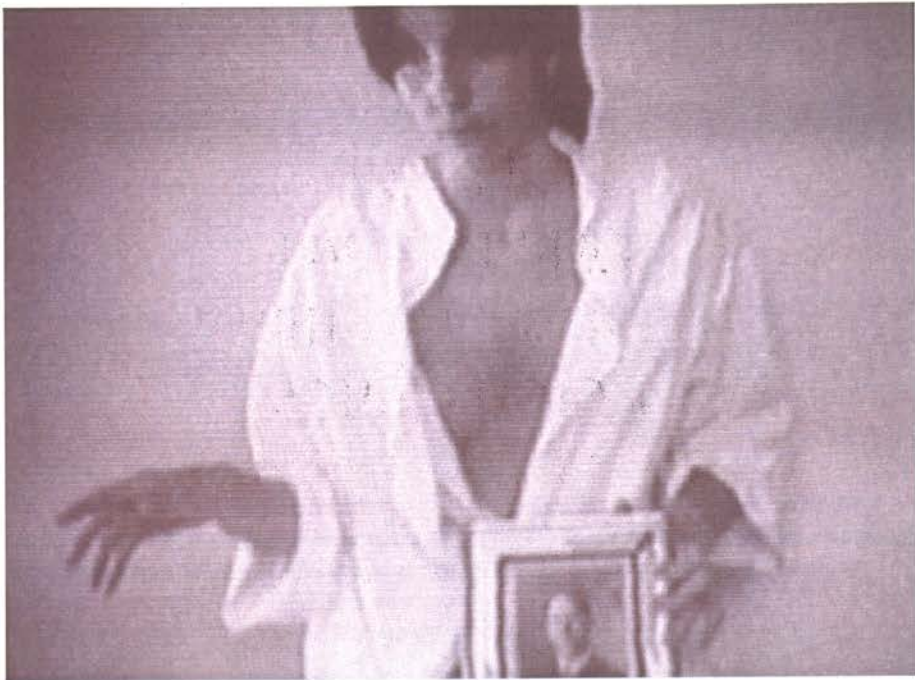
The performative tone of the exhibition is signaled by Lisa Steele's 1976

performance video, *The Ballad of Dan Peoples*. As if in a trance and speaking in tongues, she emphatically recounts

stories from her grandfather. Adapting his patterns of speech, the incoherent and repetitive quality of her babble

emphasizes the traumatic aspect of the memories. The frenetic rhythms and jump-cuts of Aïda Ruilova's low-tech

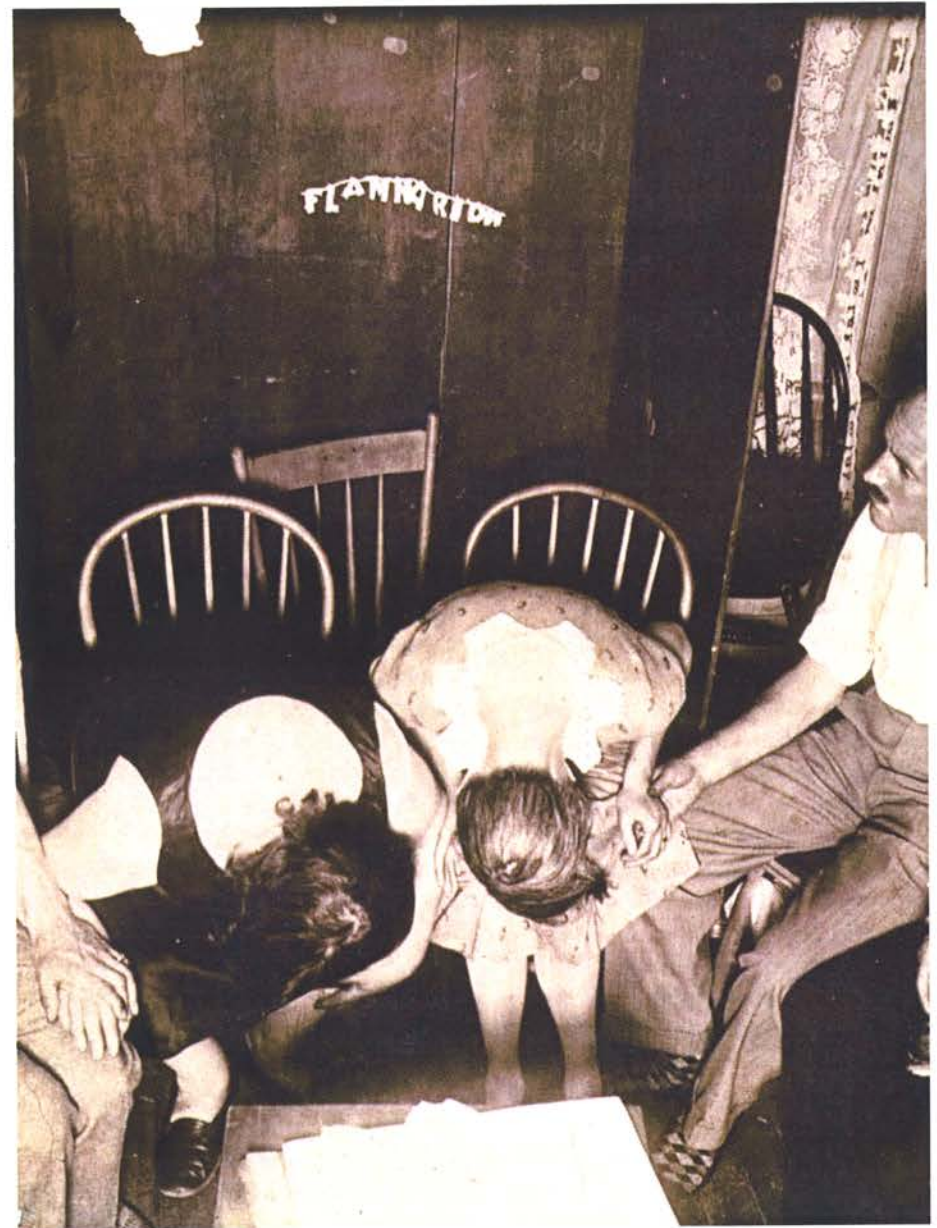




Lisa Steele, *The Ballad of Dan Peoples*



Rossella Biscotti, *Untitled*



Susan MacWilliam, "Flammation Teleplastn" 2009, photograph from Hamilton Family fonds, U of M Archives and Special Collections (PCL2, 79-41)



Aida Ruilova, *Lulu* (detail)

videos generate a sense of anxiety. The impact of her abstract vignettes is heightened by disorienting shifts in perspective and sound. Based on a character from a German expressionist play, *Lulu* is a cryptic montage of gothic cliché and affect. The highly-staged melodramas of Keren Cytter's short films are disturbing psychodramas. Often drawing on cinematic references, *Untitled* (2009) is a loose remake of John Cassavetes film *Opening Night*. In Cytter's condensed version, the conflation of stage and backstage, artifice and authenticity are conflated into storylines that momentarily intersect to generate new iterations of the drama. In *The Coat*, she uses the abstractions of split screen and computer graphics techniques to build psychological density.

Rossella Biscotti and Susan MacWilliam both use the documentary interview format as a form of portraiture to explore the limitations of testimony. Stylistically reminiscent of film noir, Biscotti's film *The Undercover Man* (2008) is based on

research and firsthand testimony of former FBI agent Joseph Pistone who successfully infiltrated the New York City mafia in the guise of a jewel thief named Donnie Brasco. In this reworking of the famous case with material from trial manuscripts, props, facts, FBI surveillance tapes and notated photographs from Pistone's personal archive, a cultural memory of this urban legend is reactivated. Susan MacWilliam also assumes the role of an investigator, working with hearsay in her recreation of a 1931 séance in Winnipeg. Building on ongoing investigations into the paranormal, her projection and stereoscopes draw on extensive research in the spirit photograph archives of T.G. Hamilton, and involved conducting interviews and reconstructing his séance cabinet. A collage of interwoven narratives, *F-L-A-M-M-A-R-I-O-N* (2009) considers the limits of perception, and turns the idea that "seeing is believing" on its head.

—Helga Pakasaar

Works in the Exhibition

Rossella Biscotti

Born: Italy, lives: Amsterdam

The Undercover Man, 2009
HD video, 30 minutes
6 reprinted FBI photographs from the Joseph Pistone archive

Courtesy the artist and Willfried Lentz, Rotterdam

Keren Cytter

Born: Israel, lives: Berlin

Untitled, 2009
DVD, 9 min.

The Coat, 2010
DVD, 5.29 min.

Courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias, Galerie Christian Nagel and SHAU ORT

Susan MacWilliam

Born: Northern Ireland, lives: Belfast

F-L-A-M-M-A-R-I-O-N, 2009
(with Ciaran Carson, poet, Belfast, Dr. William G. Roll, parapsychologist, Atlanta and Arla Marshall, medium's granddaughter, Winnipeg)
HD Blu-ray, 17:14 min.

Can We Explain the Poltergeist?, 2008
(with Dr. William G. Roll)
Stereoscope

N-Z (with Ciaran Carson), 2009
Stereoscope

Courtesy the artist

Aida Ruilova

Born: USA lives: New York

Lulu, 2007
DVD, 4 min.

Let's Go, Uboh, UM, Alright, OK, 2004–5
DVD, loop

Courtesy the artist and Salon 94, New York

Lisa Steele

Born: USA lives: Toronto

The Ballad of Dan Peoples, 1976
B/W video transferred to DVD, 6 min.

Courtesy the artist and Vtape, Toronto

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Wednesday to Sunday 12–5 PM, Thursday 12–8 PM

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