

PRESENTATION
HOUSE
GALLERY



Rossella Biscotti, still from film "The Undercover Man" (2008) installation. Courtesy the artist and Wilfried Lentz Gallery, Rotterdam.

May 1 to July 11, 2010

NOT NECESSARILY IN THAT ORDER

Rossella Biscotti, Keren Cytter, Susan MacWilliam, Aïda Ruilova, Lisa Steele

OPENING RECEPTION Friday, April 30, 8 – 10 pm

7:00 pm Artist lecture: Susan MacWilliam

8:30 pm An Invocation: Music Performance by Carol Sawyer

This exhibition considers the disjunctions and elisions of narrative in 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." Similar to 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 run amok, veer towards the irrational, at times turning into babble. Referencing the conventions and clichés of film noir, melodrama, documentary reportage and music videos, these artists acknowledge that the act of telling becomes part of the story, even if the narrator is understood to be unreliable. Key to their works is sound, especially spoken language, that takes on visual qualities.

In a mesmerizing 1976 video performance, *The Ballad of Dan Peoples* by Canadian Lisa Steele, the artist's emphatic voice - as if speaking in tongues - sets the performative tone of the exhibition. The frenetic rhythms and rapid jump-cuts of American artist Aïda Ruilova's low-tech videos generate a sense of discomfort evident in *Lulu*, a disorienting, four-minute video loosely based on a character from a German expressionist play. The short films of Keren Cytter, an Israeli artist, novelist and dance company director living in Berlin, are evocatively cinematic. Her disturbing psychodramas are condensed versions of complex situations in *Untitled* (2009), a loose remake of John Cassavetes film *Opening Night* shot in a Berlin theatre with a live audience, stage and backstage, artifice and authenticity, are conflated.

Rossella Biscotti (Italian living in Holland) and Susan MacWilliam from Northern Ireland both use documentary interview formats as a form of portraiture to explore the limitations of testimony. Biscotti's film *The Undercover Man* (2008) is stylistically reminiscent of American film noir with its closeups of clues and a male voice over delivering "just the facts." Typical of the artist's research methodologies, this work is based on firsthand testimony of former special FBI agent Joseph Pistone who successfully infiltrated the New York City mafia in the guise of a jewel thief named Donnie Brasco. Susan MacWilliam also assumes the role of an investigator working with hearsay in her re-creation of a 1931 séance in Winnipeg where a teleplasm spelling out the name Flammarion appeared. Interwoven stories from a poltergeist investigator, the medium's granddaughter and poet Ciaran Carson reveal how language, no matter how earnestly delivered, falls short of evoking the inexplicable and irrational aspects of paranormal experience.

On April 30, the exhibition will be launched by "An Invocation," a short improvised music performance as a form of notes in response to the exhibition by Carol Sawyer, a Vancouver interdisciplinary artist and virtuoso singer, accompanied by bassist Dave Chokroun.

Media contact & Group Tour booking please contact:

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Images in left column: Aida Ruilova, "Lulu" (2007). DVD. 4:25 min. Courtesy the artist and Salon 94, NY. Rossella Biscotti, still from film "The Undercover Man" (2008) installation. Courtesy the artist and Wilfried Lentz, Rotterdam

Images in right column, top to bottom:

Lisa Steele, "The Ballad of Dan Peoples" (1976) video, 8 min. Courtesy the artist and V/Tape Toronto. Keren Cytter, stills from "Untitled" (2009) dvd, 9 min. Courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias, Galerie Christian Nagel, SCHAU ORT – Elizabeth Kaufmann + Christiane Buntze. Susan MacWilliam, "Flammarion Teleplasm," photograph from Hamilton Family fonds, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (PC12, 79-41)

