

WORKS | PROJECTS

PRESS RELEASE

SARAH DOBAI

Twenty Second Hold

6 October - 10 November 2012

Sarah Dobai's new film uses a large-scale architectural set depicting a mirrored passageway situated to one side of the main concourse of a shopping arcade. Modelled after a decaying development on the outskirts of Paris, the set is stripped back but its marked surfaces characterise this as heavily used social space. The passageway is the location for an encounter between the film's two young protagonists, becoming a stage for the playing out of scenes of both intimacy and disengagement.

As with the photographic series *Studio/Location Photographs* (2008-11), *Twenty Second Hold* draws parallels between public spaces such as the shopping mall and the film or photography studio. Here, like earlier works, Dobai grounds her use of fiction and narrative in everyday life but also in the self-reflexive conditions of the production of the work. The film pictures everyday scenarios that are commonly represented in the cinema. But these scenarios also refer to instances of enactment that take place in public in which the subject constructs their behaviour with an audience half in mind. The film is transparent about the status of the protagonists as models performing fragments of social scenes to camera and in turn to onlookers in the film studio and to the audience in the gallery.

As its title suggests *Twenty Second Hold* is structured around the preparation and performance of a series of durational stills. These static scenarios are not freeze frames but poses held in real time by the actors for twenty seconds or more. Recalling the discipline required to pose for the long exposures of early photography or the theatrical tradition of tableau vivant, we see the actors sway or shift minutely with the effort of holding their pose.

Interrupting the airless fiction of these enacted stills are short sections of footage shot between enactments, where the models come out of their poses and rest but remain on set. The verité quality of this material recorded 'between takes' is juxtaposed with the choreographed static scenarios, reminding the viewer of the film as the outcome of a studio production.

In the rhythmic interplay between the attenuated frozen time of the performed stills and fluidity of the unrehearsed footage, *Twenty Second Hold* reflects on time as the medium of film and photography. The performed image of a kiss or a look between the two actors appears to grow in affect the longer the pose is held. In the fixity of the still enactments actor and viewer alike are drawn into an interior space where time becomes elastic and the self-conscious nature of public behaviour and the mechanics of image making seem inseparable.

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Credits

The artist would like to thank Emmanuel Akintunde, American Apparel, Elena Balaska & Karla Otto Ltd, Matt Blake & Kieran Angel, Jay Cole, Daisy Day, Peter Emery, Keira Greene, Geoff Holloway, Ioanna Karavela, Emily Pelleymounter, Bash Malik, Stephen Morris, Claire Parsons at Arri Media, Kevin Scully, Jane Steedman, Stein Stei, Daniel Tonkin, Vision Studios & Eyelights and Nick Wilding.

About Sarah Dobai

Sarah Dobai works with photography, film & video and performance. She has exhibited widely in the UK, Europe and America. Recent exhibitions include *The London Open*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London; *On the Nature of Things*, Kamloops Art Gallery, British Columbia, Canada; *Scope: New Photographic Practices*, Beijing University Gallery, Beijing, China; *Theatres of the Real*, FotoMuseum Antwerp, Belgium; *Darkside II*, FotoMuseum Winterthur, Switzerland; Studio/Location Photographs, WORKS|PROJECTS, Bristol, UK and *Sarah Dobai: Photographs & Filmworks*, Kettles Yard, Cambridge, UK.

In 2012 the Whitechapel Gallery commissioned Sarah Dobai to stage a new performance, *Study*, as part of *The London Open*. She is currently developing an illustrated version of Gogol's *The Overcoat* as a Four Corners Books *Artist's Familiars* publication.

Dobai has work in significant public and private collections in the UK, Canada, USA, France and Belgium including Simmons & Simmons, UK, Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada and University of Salamanca, Spain.

Notes to editors

Preview Friday 5 October, 6~8pm

Exhibition open

12-5pm, Thursday – Saturday, 6 October – 10 November 2012
or by appointment. Admission free.

For more information, images or to arrange interviews with the artist please email info@worksprojects.co.uk

About WORKS|PROJECTS

WORKS|PROJECTS works with a small stable of distinctive British artists and is located on Sydney Row in Bristol's historic harbour side, which has steadily developed into the centre for visual arts in the city. The gallery is located on the same block as both Spike Island and Picture This and is only 10 minutes walk from Arnolfini. The gallery is directed by curator Simon Morrissey.

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