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LOOP FESTIVAL 2007

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN FACT AND FICTION: BEN CALLAWAY, JENNY PERLIN, XAVIER RIBAS

May 29 – June 2

Gallery Hours: Tuesday- Saturday, 11:30 to 20:30

(The works presented will be shown in a video program alternately, contact gallery for further information)

In *Somewhere between Fact and Fiction*, ProjecteSD presents a selection of works of three artists that, despite their formally and conceptually different approach, have generated film or video works after researching, manipulating or recording images that ultimately can be read as being in an uncertain space between “fact” and “fiction”. From the almost documentary approach of Xavier Ribas, the sensual and intriguing visual narratives of Callaway, or the subtlety of the details explored in the filmmaking of Perlin, words, images and documents blend to offer a reflection around notions such as cultural memory, historicity or the fragile distinction between real and imagined.

Ben Callaway creates short fictional narratives that are as enigmatic as they are visually fascinating. His works are constructed from anonymous, appropriated footage, taken mainly from amateur videos. In his own words: “the source material becomes like a palimpsest which is linked to erasure, trace, and over-writing. My ‘archive’ reflects aspects of the society and culture it’s drawn from. It’s a strange and illusive biography, one that is written from hobbies, anxieties, diversions, passions, desires, which consequently haunt the final montages, however obliquely”. Through a meticulous combination of collage, alteration and montage, Callaway’s pictorial, almost haptic images, present an illusive, sometimes morbid and disquieting, view of society. Gaps and relationships are created from the parameters of the sources he uses. As the viewer fills them in, a space of exchange occurs.

Down There, 2004-2005 (colour video, sound, 4’ 05”) is to date Ben Callaway’s most linear and ‘painterly’ piece. The video shows a series of slow-motioned shots of a man running through a cacti field, while being followed by a car. Towards the end, the man’s feet drag to a halt, whereupon he falls to his knees and is run down by the car. The video ends with a straight-on shot of the glaring sun.



BEN CALLAWAY
Down There, 2004-2005

Version, 2005-2006 (colour video, sound, 4’ 22”). Sound: Chris Reeves and Mic Shaw), starts with a brief prelude of raw and nervous footage on a night-time roadside, which then moves into a rave with corresponding music. Suddenly the mood shifts entirely: an image of three coiled ropes lightly bathed in a blue crepuscular light slowly pixels in and out of focus. This fades out to a pair of hands enigmatically pulling at a rope. All of these details build up and yield to the elevated imagery of the camera rising along a sort of crane, high above a grey, industrial river scene below. What follows is both as unexpected as it is troubling. Two men address the viewer from some kind of metal platform. One of them is waving a pair of scissors. In a slow motion that occurs throughout most of the video, one of the men turns and waves at the viewer. Here something clicks, and the speed of the footage switches to normal, the viewer being plunged precipitously downward. The image suddenly stops a mere couple of inches from the ground.

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Ben Callaway (Bristol, 1978) studied at Goldsmiths College and the Slade School of Art in London. His video works have been screened in film festivals and shown in exhibitions such as *Double Lunar Dogs: New Work UK*, program developed by Ian White in collaboration with Lux, and curated by Stuart Comer, presented at the Whitechapel Gallery (2005), at Platform Garanti, Istanbul (2006), the International Rotterdam Film Festival (2007) and most recently at Culturgest, Lisbon (2007), in his first solo show curated by Miguel Wandschneider. This is the first presentation of his work in Spain. Ben Callaway lives and works in London and Madrid.

Jenny Perlin locates her practice in an archeological space of sifting and discovery. Perlin's 16mm films, videos, and drawings work with and against the documentary tradition, incorporating innovative stylistic techniques to emphasize issues of truth, misunderstanding, and personal history. Her works aspire to document numerous stories, ranging from the personal to cultural or social issues. These narrative cross paths, contradict, and reinforce one another. Each of her projects investigates these intersections.

The Perlin Papers series is a multi part project based on an archive at Columbia University, The Perlin Papers, that contains documents related to the case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were tried and executed in 1953 for alleged espionage for the Soviet Union. Each piece in the project draws on a specific document from this archive. The work shown at ProjecteSD, **Transcript** (16mm film transferred to DVD, 2006), is a constructed from a script based on a transcript of a dinner party that took place four months after the Rosenbergs' execution. On October 30, 1953, an FBI informant eavesdropped on two couples having a dinner party at an apartment in the West Village, New York. Both of these couples had been friends of the Rosenbergs, and were being called to testify in front of the House of Un-American Activities Committee. The film is a re-creation of the fragmented conversations that the agent could record from the guests at the party. The conversations and added soundtrack are filled with desolate, minimal images of a mysterious corridor in a New York apartment building. The film reveals the fears and surveillance permeating U.S. culture in the 1950s and relates historic documents to pressing contemporary issues of secrecy, paranoia, and surveillance in the United States today.



JENNY PERLIN

Transcript, 2006

Jenny Perlin (Williamstown, Massachusetts 1970) studied at Brown University, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Whitney Independent Study Program, NY. Her films have been shown in festivals and museums worldwide. She has exhibited at P.S. 1/MoMA, NY, KunstWerke, Berlin, the Drawing Center, NY, Shedhalle, Zurich, the Renaissance Society, Chicago, the Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, CT, the Queens Museum, NY, Kunsthalte Exnergasse, Vienna. Jenny Perlin is currently one of the residing artists at Iaspis (Sweden). Her work will be shown in the exhibition *How soon is now*, curated by Pablo Fernández Fanego for the Luis Seoane Foundation in A Coruña, Spain. Jenny Perlin lives and works in New York and Massachusetts.

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Memory, the transformation of a place seen from the symbolic or biographical elements that identify it, the traces of other times that overlap on the surface of a public space are recurring notions found in the work of **Xavier Ribas**.



XAVIER RIBAS
Greenhouse, 2007

Greenhouse (2007, Video HD, sound, 20') is an installation about the changing landscape of Wieringermeer, Holland. Wieringermeer polder was drained in 1930. In 1934 the land became usable and the first settlers arrived. Among them were the Muller family. **Greenhouse** looks at the building site of a massive greenhouse that will be ready for full production in the course of 2007. In front of the greenhouse still stand the three original polder farms on whose land the new structure is being built. The video shows a continuous, travelling shot from one end to the other of the greenhouse under construction. The camera scans foreground and background at a slow steady pace capturing two kinds of buildings, two economies, two mentalities, two kinds of 'work'. On a separate monitor, the Mullers talk about their memories of the place: the landscape when Mr Muller's family arrived in the polder in the 1930s, a wooden house they lived in when the German soldiers flooded the polder in WW2, the strawberries in the garden, a party on a Sunday afternoon... Their voices accompany us in our 'walk' past the greenhouse. They act as an aperture to the past of the place, while we contemplate its future. Past and future compress the present into a very thin layer in the landscape, barely visible. **Greenhouse** focuses on this landscape in transition; it is a journey along the gap between two times.

Xavier Ribas (Barcelona, 1960) studied Social Anthropology at the University of Barcelona and Documentary Photography at the Newport School of Art and Design (Wales). His work has received awards at: FotoPress'95, Photo España'98 and Primavera Fotográfica (2000) and has been shown in The Photographer's Gallery, London (1999 and 2004), Old Museum Arts Centre of Belfast (2000), Biennale d'Art Contemporain de Lyon (2001), CASA, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Salamanca (2002), Foto Colectania, Barcelona (2006) and Photo España (2006). Since 2000 he has been Senior Lecturer at the University of Brighton. Ribas's work will be shown in PhotoEspaña 2007 and the exhibition Ocho Visiones: Distrito C at the Fundación Telefónica. He is currently involved in a photographic project commissioned by the Macba, Barcelona. Xavier Ribas lives and works in Brighton and Barcelona.

Aknowledgements: Paradox, Bas Vroegue, Miguel Wandschneider, Chris Sharp, Stuart Comer, Lisboa 20 Arte Contemporanea and Annet Gelink Gallery.