

PROJECTED

*A*llegories

Douglas Gordon

Rodney Graham

William Kentridge

Leone & Macdonald

Nic Nicosia

Sam Taylor-Wood

Rosemarie Trockel

Gillian Wearing

June 26 – July 12

Douglas Gordon, *Hand & Foot (Left & Right)*, 1995

William Kentridge, *Weighing... and Wanting*, 1997

July 14 – August 2

Leone & Macdonald, *Passing*, 1996

Rosemarie Trockel, *Z.B. Balhasar, 6 Jahre*, 1997

August 4 – August 23

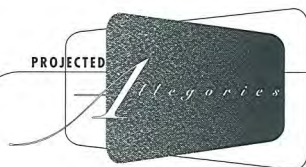
Nic Nicosia, *Middletown*, 1997

Sam Taylor-Wood, *Hysteria*, 1997

August 25 – September 13

Rodney Graham, *Vexation Island*, 1997

Gillian Wearing, *2 into 1*, 1997



An allegory is a narrative story or image in which people, things, and events have a hidden or symbolic meaning; sometimes the message is readily readable, while at other times it is more deeply embedded. The use of allegory could be said to begin with the prehistoric cave painters who, it is believed, scratched out pictures of the hunt and various captured prey as a magical gesture powerful enough to turn image into reality. In Plato's famous allegory *The Republic*, the captive audience who can view only the flickering shadows from the world outside eventually come to believe that the shadows on the cave wall do not reflect, but actually are, reality. One Postmodern theorist has defined allegory as "one text is read *through another* one."¹ And humans have a strong tendency to see what they want to see; psychoanalysts use the term "projection" to describe how we unconsciously put off our own ideas, impulses, or emotions onto other people or things, a kind of delusional wish fulfillment.

The eight artists included in this exhibition ignite the flickering magic of video projection, shaping its light and shadow into tragic, comic, or documentary representations (all are suitable allegorical formats) of the world outside the proverbial cave. While video art has flourished since the 1960s, in the past few years not only has an impressive new generation of artists emerged using video in provocative, highly personal ways, but noted artists with distinguished careers in other media have begun turning to this medium to produce important work. This exhibition series includes artists of several generations who work in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Germany, and South Africa. ◀

These allegories on video come in different formats ranging from the animation of charcoal drawings to the careful staging of events in a studio to a casual (but carefully scripted or edited) interview to dramas enacted in the landscape. Three of the artists, William Kentridge, Nic Nicosia, and Rosemarie Trockel, first build a world and then stage their narrative there. Leone & Macdonald and Gillian Wearing use the documentary's interview format to explore, then explode, personal facades, tapping into deeper issues about who we are. Douglas Gordon, Rodney Graham, and Sam Taylor-Wood isolate, exaggerate, and repeat powerful gestures or expressions to effects that are either profane (in the first two) or profound (in the last).

As a contemporary audience weaned on Hollywood movies, Madison Avenue advertising, and global satellite TV, yet made wary of the dangers of such fantasies by psychoanalytic theory, we know that things are seldom what they seem. But because everybody loves a good story, a good laugh, or a good cry, so we can still take pleasure in—and meaning from—sitting in the darkness as silent witnesses to these magical projected allegories.

Dana Friis-Hansen

¹ Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," *October* (Spring and Summer 1980), reprinted in Brian Wallis, ed., *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation* (Boston and New York: David R. Godine/New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), p. 204.

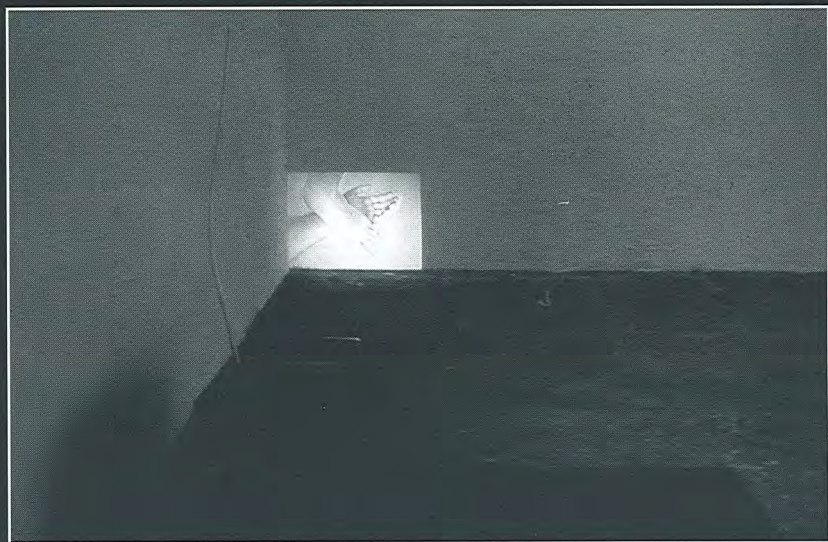
Hand & Foot (Left & Right), 1995**Video projection****30:00 minutes****Collection Noah Garson and Ronald Schwartz, New York**

Douglas Gordon is a Scottish artist currently living in Cologne, Germany, who has worked in a variety of media including painting, performance, and video. Gordon is interested in making us aware of our shifting perceptions of the world, and in recent years his works have focused on the underbelly of society by exploring ideas of voyeurism, sadism, and eroticism.

In 1993 he presented the video projection *24-Hour Psycho* in a Glasgow tramway. In this work he both removed the soundtrack and slowed down Alfred Hitchcock's famous film so that it lasted 24 silent hours. By manipulating such a well-known film, Gordon set up a situation in which viewers could hearken back to what they knew happened, discover new details revealed by the slow motion, and feel the angst that arises at having to wait for the inevitable.

Hand & Foot (Left & Right) also heightens our awareness of our psychological relationship to the moving image. In this work, Gordon projects a greatly enlarged image of a right foot on top of a right hand on one wall, and a life-size image of a left foot on top of a left hand on the opposite wall. The bottoms of both projections are aligned with the floor. There is no sound and the movement of the hands and feet is minimal. Nothing happens and everything happens. Pared down to these two extremities, their every magnified detail assumes a heightened relevance. The result is a surprisingly sensual and erotic ballet.

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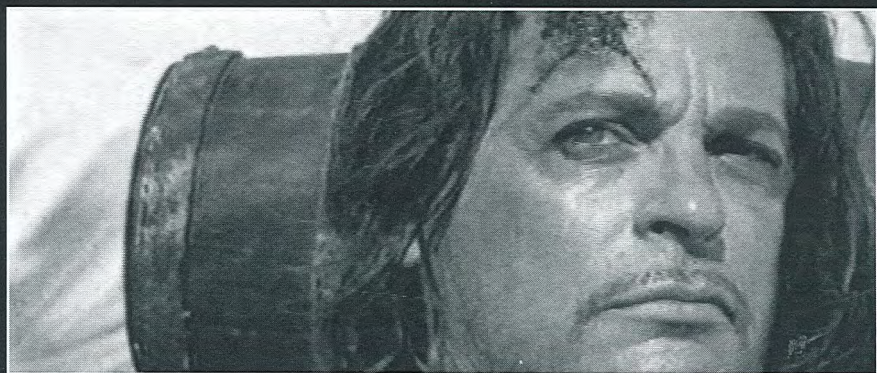
Vexation Island*, 1997*Laserdisc of Cinemascope film****9:30 minutes****Courtesy the artist and 303 Gallery, New York**

For more than 20 years, Canadian Rodney Graham has been producing art that defies easy categorization, ranging from conceptual to modernist influences; crossing disciplines such as science, music, and literature; and encompassing a variety of media including installation, photography, and film. His third, and most recent, film, *Vexation Island*, 1997, was created especially for the 47th Venice Biennale. Here Graham has moved beyond the 16mm, single-camera format used in previous works to incorporate multiple camera shots and 35mm Cinemascope, which gives the screen a wide horizontal composition.

On a small tropical island, amid sweeping vistas of sky, sand, and surf, a body lies prone under a large palm tree. The figure (actually Graham himself) is dressed in seventeenth-century English costume, apparently marooned on the island and accompanied only by a parrot perched atop a nearby barrel. The bird's occasional squawks are the only interruption to the sound of wind and crashing waves. Closer inspection reveals a large gash over the subject's left eye. As the sun continues to blaze down through the palms, he begins to awaken. Looking up, he sees a coconut, then shakes the tree to dislodge it, affected perhaps by dementia due to hunger or prolonged exposure to the elements. In vaudeville fashion, this causes the fruit to fall and collide with his forehead. He is immediately knocked unconscious (again), and as the coconut rolls into the surf, we are left where we began.

Graham's film recalls literary and cinematic classics such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* who spends 24 years marooned on an island following a shipwreck, as well as the technicolor brilliance of Disney's production of *Treasure Island*. In *Vexation Island*, the scenario is relatively simple: the subject remains unconscious for prolonged periods of time, interrupted by brief periods of wakefulness. Through the incessant loop of its Sisyphean performance, Graham's film becomes a comic allegory on the futility often encountered in everyday life.

ALI



Weighing . . . and Wanting*, 1997*Animated film****4:00 minutes****Courtesy the artist and Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York**

William Kentridge grew up and lives in Johannesburg, South Africa. Since 1989, he has worked on an epic series of animated films that chronicle the life of a fictional greedy industrialist, Soho Eckstein. In telling the story of this individual, Kentridge also tells the story of his scarred homeland. "I have never tried to make illustrations of apartheid," he says, "but the drawings and films are certainly spawned by and feed off the brutalized society left in its wake."¹

In these dreamlike films, Kentridge explores the gulf that lies between the powerful and the oppressed. Through Soho and those around him, Kentridge examines longing, guilt, love, responsibility, vulnerability, and loss. *Weighing . . . and Wanting* is the seventh film or chapter in this tale.

The idea for this film came to Kentridge from a dream he'd had in which he found comfort in writing in an image on the wall. In the Bible, Daniel is called to interpret writing on a wall that informs King Balthazar that he has been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Kentridge's *Weighing . . . and Wanting* is, simply put, the story of a man (Eckstein) who, while studying a rock, "sees" a relationship with a woman flourish, fall apart, and come together again. A classical score of somber strings mixed with occasional muffled voices and industrial sounds reinforces the tone set by Kentridge's dark smudgy drawings. Unlike cel animation (which involves thousands of drawings), for a film such as this, Kentridge creates only about 20 charcoal drawings to which he adds and erases, actions that underscore our desire to remember as well as to forget.

LMH

¹ William Kentridge, quoted in Rosetta Brooks, "William Kentridge," *Artforum* (April 1998), p. 110.



Passing, 1996**Video****35:00 minutes****Courtesy the Artists**

Leone & Macdonald is a New York-based collaborative team that works in diverse media to explore issues of identity and social relations. *Passing, 1996*, explores the complicated relationship (or lack thereof) between outward appearance and inner emotional identity, and how a publicly presented persona, or outside judgment, might differ from the underlying genetic or personal realities of the self.

Through classified ads and personal contacts, the artists met with 200 people and interviewed 60 to produce a tape in which 29 individuals talk about "passing" for something they are not. Although the term is most closely connected with racism (light-skinned Blacks "passing" as whites) and homophobia (gays and lesbians "passing" as straight), this tape broadens the borders of the phenomenon considerably. In it, people discuss how their skin color, accent, gender characteristics, dress, hairstyle, or habits of religious worship define the way, through misreading or misrepresentation, they are perceived and treated.

Each subject is viewed in a close-up "head shot" familiar from news and interview programs, but the artists have divided the screen into 12 sections through which the subject progressively passes as their bodies rotate 360 degrees. This format, recalling Eadweard Muybridge's sequential photographs as well as a police line-up, adds a clinical, analytical air, yet the casual, direct tone of the voice-overs by the interviewees suggests alternately a chat with a friend, a confession, or a talk show. Some of their tales are tragic, others comedic, but all make us reconsider our expectations and understanding of the many facets of our own identity—and that of the stranger sitting next to us.

DFH



Middletown, 1997**Video****13:18 minutes****Courtesy the artist**

Nic Nicosia is best known as a photographer whose staged narrative tableaux incorporate actors and props into theatrical settings as if each photo were a one-frame film. Having studied film in college, Nicosia now returns to the moving image, bringing his formerly static statements on middle-class America actively to life in video.

Middletown, 1997, is set in the artist's own quiet suburban Dallas neighborhood, but as in his photographs, Nicosia is quick to show that what on the surface looks like "normal" life is not always so straightforward. As the camera glides slowly down the street, Nicosia allows viewers only quick glimpses of what are certainly peculiar (if not downright subversive) activities. Ostensibly, a typical cast of neighborhood characters is proceeding with its daily routines, paying little, if any, attention to the camera: a woman walks her dog, children play in the street, a man mows his lawn. But, further inspection reveals details that cast these seemingly banal activities into a more bizarre light. For instance, the man mowing the lawn is dressed in a shirt and tie. A kid who whizzes by on a bicycle is dragging a body behind him, perhaps an inflatable sex toy mannequin. Then there are the two ominous-looking guys dressed in business suits and cowboy hats, carrying briefcases as they walk very deliberately toward their (unknown) destination.

These images are accompanied by an unsettling musical score—there's no chance for even a whisper of dialogue to give the viewer a clue as to what is going on. In the course of the film, Nicosia loops through the neighborhood several times, and while the activity of each character seemingly progresses in real time, each vignette remains separate, neither merging with nor affecting the activities of the others. In his film noir debut, Nicosia gives viewers a voyeuristic look at life behind the sleepy, tree-lined avenues of America's suburbs.

ALI



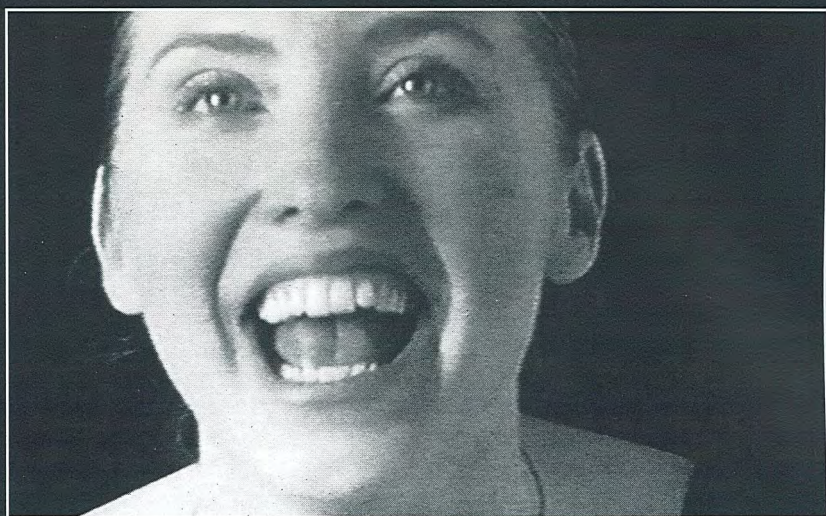
Hysteria*, 1997*Video projection****8:00 minutes****Courtesy Jay Jopling [London]**

In her films, videos, and photographs, British artist Sam Taylor-Wood presents her audiences with an array of individuals deliberately isolated to explore a variety of psychological and emotional states. Be it a woman stood up at a bar or someone sitting idly in front of the camera for the duration of an opera while waiting to lip-sync a particular role, Taylor-Wood's work examines everything from angst and boredom to anger and frustration.

In *Hysteria*, Taylor-Wood comes at heightened emotion in a highly concentrated manner. The film is devoid of background setting, context, or sound. Instead she has zoomed the camera's lens in close on a woman's face, the mouth wide open, her head bobbing up and down, moving from left to right. With little information beyond the woman's face, viewers start to seek clues in the details in an effort to read what is happening before them. The eyes, the lines around the mouth, and the movement of the tongue at first suggest that the woman is laughing uproariously. No sooner has one come to this conclusion than another look convinces the viewer that the woman is overcome with grief. The immediacy and poignancy of this emotional outburst is heightened by the fact that Taylor-Wood shows this woman's hysteria in slow motion. For eight minutes the camera maintains its relentless focus until the woman's head finally falls out of its range.

In *Hysteria*, the body itself becomes the supreme expressive element, and Taylor-Wood shows us how surprisingly close are the outward signs of happiness and despair.

LMH



Z.B. Balthasar, 6 Jahre, 1996**Video****9:14 minutes****Collection Dallas Museum of Art, anonymous donor**

Although Rosemarie Trockel is better known in the United States for her knitted "paintings," conceptual sculptures, and installations with live animals, the Cologne-based artist has worked in film and video since the start of her career in the late 1970s. Since the late 1980s, she has devoted increasingly more creative time to video, often using it to explore the interconnections between nature and culture.

Though it lasts less than ten minutes, *Z.B. Balthasar, 6 Jahre*, 1996, recalls a classic *bildungsroman*, or "coming of age" novel. This simple narrative is imbued with a romantic timelessness by the untethered, slow-motion hand held camera shots, the sepia color, and the styleless simplicity of the clothing and settings. We meet young Balthasar, then follow him and his friend on a short journey home from school, then through a field to the church. The video unfolds loosely as a string of stirring moments which include close-ups of Balthasar's innocent, joyous grin, shots of his arrival on a pastoral scene, and images of a hawk floating across the screen while fiercely gripping its prey, majestically oblivious to its own ominous symbolism. After this image, the children, somehow now appearing vulnerable, continue on together to the church, enter alone, and swing playfully on the rope to the bell tower, which turns into the school gymnasium's rope, then a carnival ride, thus merging sacred and secular.

One cannot help but read this work as a delicate poem, layered with symbols of life's journey, the violent natural forces that keep the world in balance, and the social controls represented by school and church. Translating the German title, *Z.B. Balthasar, 6 Jahre*, "Z.B." is an abbreviation for *Zum Beispiel*, meaning "for example," and "6 Jahre" means six years of age, making Balthasar a young Everyman—an Everychild. In that context, the short walk we experience in this video is both an afternoon's playtime excursion and much more.

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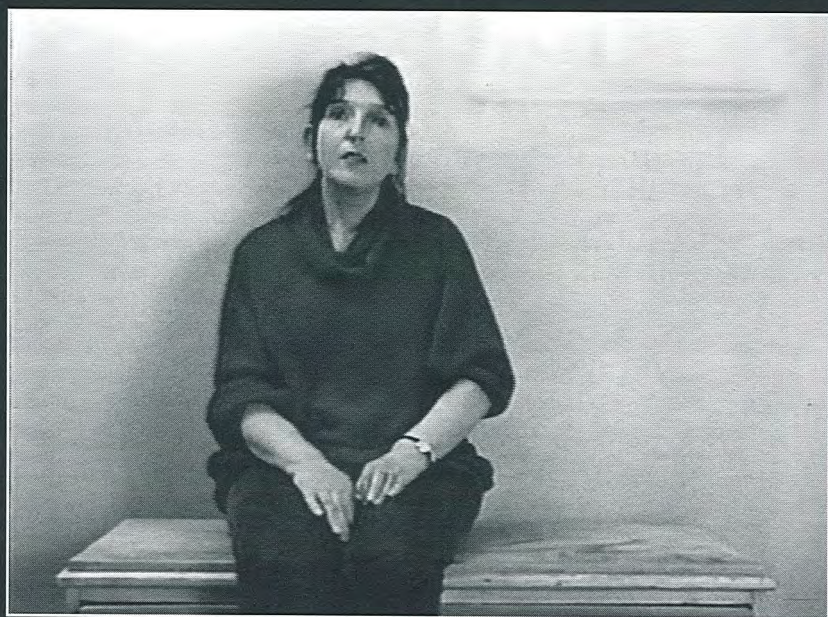
2 Into 1, 1997**Video****4:30 minutes****Collection Eileen and Peter Norton, Santa Monica**

London-based Gillian Wearing creates provocative works in video and photography that explore the tension between silence and expression, truth and fiction, self and surrogate. 1970s cinema vérité documentaries, which closely chronicled the creation of identity and interpersonal relationships, were a great influence on this artist,¹ who uses visual elements (masks, handwritten signs) and audio devices (lip-syncing, silence) to deepen the psychological complexity of the human interest stories she pursues.

In *2 into 1*, 1997, a mother lip-syncs the commentaries on her made by her adolescent twin sons, while they, in turn, appear to be speaking in her voice about their behavior. This format follows the uncanny displacement of Wearing's earlier work, *10-16*, 1997, in which children ages 10-16 recorded on audiotape their own diarylike texts, later lip-synced on video by adult actors. The mother-son relationship embedded in *2 into 1* makes for richer, more poignant metaphors (i.e. the sons re-inhabit their mother's body or, as the title states *2 into 1*) but it also provides a chilling reflection on the state of family relations, parenting, and socialization today. Dressing the sons in suits does little to civilize them; their frank expressions are so lacking in respect, maturity or empathy one is left cringing by the end. The gender and generation gap (a woman "speaking" in a boy's voice and vice-versa) is disconcerting enough, but the viscious criticism—especially when the boys speak about the mother's body shape and forgetfulness—that appears to come out of her own mouth is even more confrontational. Wearing's *2 into 1* produces a family triangle that puts a frightening spin on the intention of both cinema vérité and today's "confess and confront" television talk shows to distill the "reality" of our human relationships.

DFH

¹ In an interview she acknowledges the impact of "fly on the wall" documentaries such as Paul Watson's *The Family*, 1974, which followed the life of a working-class family. See Gregor Muir, "Sign Language," in *Dazed and Confused*, Issue 25.



Selected Biographies and Bibliographies

DOUGLAS GORDON

Born 1966, Glasgow, Scotland. Studied at Glasgow School of Art, Scotland, 1984 to 1988; Slade School of Art, London, 1988 to 1990. Lives and works in Cologne.

Exhibitions:

Hugo Boss Prize,* Guggenheim Museum Soho, New York (1998); *Animal*, Center for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow (1997); Munster Skulptur Projekt,* Munster (1997); *Gothic*,* The Institute for Contemporary Art, Boston (1997) (traveled to Portland Art Museum, Oregon); *Pictura Britannia*,* Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia (1997); Museum für Gegenwartskunst Zürich†* (1996-97); *24 Hour Psycho*,† Akademie der bildende Künste, Vienna (1996); *The Turner Prize 1996*,* Tate Gallery, London (1996).

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Volkart, Yvonne. "Douglas Gordon, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Galerie Walcheturm." *Flash Art* (Summer 1997): 145-46.

RODNEY GRAHAM

Born 1949, Vancouver, Canada. Studied at University of British Columbia, 1968 to 1971. Lives and works in Vancouver.

Exhibitions:

Wexner Center for the Arts,† Columbus, Ohio (1998); 303 Gallery,† New York (1997, 1995); Lisson Gallery,† London (1997); Angles Gallery,† Santa Monica, California (1997; 1993); *Wood Work*, Fisher Landau Center, Long Island (1997); *Sites of the Visual*,* Art Gallery of Windsor, Ontario (1997); Canadian Pavillion,†* XLVII Venice Biennale (1997); The Renaissance Society,† Chicago (1996); *Lesen!*,*

Kunsthalle St. Gallen, Switzerland (1996); *Topographies*, Vancouver Art Gallery (1996); *About the Place: Recent Art in the Americas*,* Art Institute of Chicago (1995).

Publications:

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WILLIAM KENTRIDGE

Born 1955, Johannesburg, South Africa. Lives and works in Johannesburg.

Exhibitions:

Palais des Beaux-Arts,†* Brussels (1998) (traveled to Kunstverein München, Munich; and Neue Galerie Graz am Landesmuseum Joanneum); The Drawing Center,† New York (1998); *Vertical Time*, Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York (1998); *Weighing... and Wanting*,† The Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego (1998); *Documenta X*,* Kassel, Germany (1997); *Truce: Echoes of Art in an Age of Endless Conclusions*,* SITE Santa Fe (1997); Musée d'art Moderne,† Paris (1997); *Eidophusikon*,† Annandale Gallery, Sydney, Australia (1996); *Tenth Sydney Biennial*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia (1996).

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Brooks, Rosetta. "William Kentridge, The Drawing Center/Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego." *Artforum* (April 1998): 110.
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Smith, Roberta. "William Kentridge 'Drawings for Projection'." *The New York Times* (February 6, 1998): 36.

LEONE & MACDONALD

Hillary Leone, born 1962, Miami, Florida. BA, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, 1984; BFA, California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, 1986; Whitney Independent Study Program, New York, 1989.

Jennifer Macdonald, born 1958, New York. Studied at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, 1977; BFA, School of Visual Arts, New York, 1980; The Studio and Forum of Stage Design, New York, 1983.

Both artists live and work in New York.

Exhibitions:

Stung by Splendor: Working Drawings and the Creative Moment,* The Cooper Union, New York (1997); *Passing*,†* Centre Gallery, Miami-Dade Community College, (1996-1997) (traveled to Plug In Gallery, Winnipeg, Canada; Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, Cork, Ireland; Arthouse Multimedia Centre for the Arts, Ireland; and Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney); *Double Foolscape*,†* Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, New York (1994); *Power, Pleasure, Pain: Contemporary Women Artists and the Female Body*, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (1994).

Publications:

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NIC NICOSIA

Born 1951, Dallas. BA, University of North Texas, Denton, 1974. Lives and works in Dallas.

Exhibitions:

Gerald Peters Gallery,† Dallas (1997, 1993); *Acts and Sex Acts*,† Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Chicago (1997); *Acts and Sex Acts*,† P.P.O.W., New York (1997); *Telling Stories*, The Jacksonville Museum of Contemporary Art, Florida (1996); *Visions of Hope and Despair*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1995); *Family Lives: Photographs by Tina Barney, Nic Nicosia, and Catherine Wagner*, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (1994-95); Texas Gallery,† Houston (1993, 1992).

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SAM TAYLOR-WOOD

Born 1967, London. BA, Goldsmiths College, University of London, 1990. Lives and works in London.

Exhibitions:

Donald Young Gallery,† Seattle (1998); *New British Video Programme*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1998); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art,† Humlebaek (1997-98); *Truce: Echoes of Art in an Age of Endless Conclusions*,* SITE Santa Fe (1997); *Sustaining the Crisis*,† Regen Projects, Los Angeles (1997); *Stills: Emerging Photography in the 1990s*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (1997); *ICA Biennial of Film and Video*, Insitute of Contemporary Art, London (1997); *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi*

Collection,* Royal Academy of Arts, London (1997); *Travesty of a Mockery*,† White Cube/Jay Jopling,† London (1995-96); *Brilliant! New Art from London*,* Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (1995) (traveled to Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston).

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Williams, Gilda. "Sam Taylor-Wood." *Art + Text* (February/April): 80-81.

ROSEMARIE TROCKEL

Born 1952, Schwerte, West Germany. Lives and works in Cologne.

Exhibitions:

Donald Young Gallery,† Seattle (1998, 1997); Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York (1997, 1995, 1994); *Documenta X*,* Kassel, Germany (1997); *Painting Machines*,* Boston University Art Gallery (1997); *Thinking Print: Books to Billboards 1980-1985*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1996); Centre for Contemporary Art,†* Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw (1996); Museum für Moderne Kunst,† Frankfurt, Germany (1996).

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GILLIAN WEARING

Born 1963, Birmingham, United Kingdom. Btech, Art and Design, Chelsea School of Art, 1987; BA, Goldsmiths College, University of London, 1990; Live and works in London.

Exhibitions:

Centre d'Art Contemporain,† Geneva, Switzerland (1998); *White Noise*, Kunsthalle Berne, Switzerland (1998); *The Turner Prize: 1997*,* Tate Gallery, London (1997); Jay Gorney Modern Art,† New York (1997); *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection*,* Royal Academy of Arts, London (1997); *Kunstler Wiener Secession*,† Vienna, Austria (1997); Maureen Paley Interim Art,† London (1997, 1996, 1994); *Projects*, The Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (1997).

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*denotes exhibitions accompanied by a publication

†denotes solo exhibitions

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