

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
December 1997

NEW WORKS ON VIDEO BY YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS TO OPEN AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

New Video from Great Britain
December 16, 1997 – February 1, 1998

New Video from Great Britain, a survey of the remarkable new wave of work that has emerged from London and Glasgow in recent years, opens at The Museum of Modern Art on December 16, 1997. The program presents notable work by already established figures, such as Sam Taylor-Wood and Douglas Gordon, as well as emerging artists, some of whom are showing in New York for the first time. The two-hour program will be shown continuously in the Garden Hall Video Gallery on the Museum's third floor through February 1, 1998.

The exhibition highlights the continuing penchant for conceptual- and performance-based works among young British video artists. Addressing themes of the body, personal identity, and subjectivity in ways that are provocative and playful, ironic and insightful, these works reveal an easygoing familiarity with popular culture that characterizes much of contemporary British life.

"Simply and spontaneously shot (often on little more than a domestic camcorder), these 20 or so pieces have a visual impact, flair and invention that belies their low-tech origins and reverberates long after each tape has played," writes Steven Bode, Director of the Film and Video Umbrella, London, who organized the exhibition in conjunction with Barbara London, Associate Curator, and Sally Berger, Assistant Curator, Department of Film and Video, The Museum of Modern Art.

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“At first glance the young artists in this show appear to use the video camera to capture ordinary gestures, such as simply putting on clothes. But with true British wit, the most mundane of actions become seductively eccentric and even horrifically strange,” says Ms. London.

Works in this exhibition include Sam Taylor-Wood’s acclaimed *Brontosaurus* (1995) in which a club kid’s gyrations are set to an evocative piece of classical music. The classic and the cutting-edge are also juxtaposed in Yael Feldman’s *Je reviens bientôt* (1995) and Michael Curran’s *Amami se voui* (1994), which Mr. Bode describes as “two arresting works in which romantic, nostalgic soundtracks provide an ironic backdrop for graphic depictions of the thin line between desire and abuse.”

In her short piece, *Sine* (1996), Gillian Dyson draws a sensuous painterly line by pressing her tongue against a white wall until her tongue bleeds. A similarly visceral quality characterizes Phillip Lai’s *Test* (1994), an eerie five-minute sequence of a hand clenching and unclenching in an attempt to shake off a hardening layer of mysterious white foam.

John Wood and Paul Harrison’s contributions bring a droll and infectious British humor to the mix. Their carefully choreographed cameos, *Life Size Box* (1997) and *Boat* (1995) employ simple props to make engaging and inventive work from rudimentary materials. Douglas Gordon grotesquely distorts his facial features with cellophane tape in *Monster Sketch* (1996).

The dynamic collaborative work of Stephanie Smith and Edward Stewart, the featured artists in the Museum’s January 26, 1998, *Video Viewpoints* exhibition, is both confrontational and sympathetic, exploring the connections and collisions between sex

and violence, beauty and revulsion, public and private. In *Tape* (1996), their contribution to the gallery exhibition, the artists painfully disentangle their taped-together naked bodies.

Gillian Wearing, recently awarded Britain's prestigious 1997 Turner Prize, contributes to the program *I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing* (1996), composed of shots of women of all ages and ethnicities who elicit tones from empty Coke bottles.

Also featured are selections by Jane and Louise Wilson, Georgina Starr, Mark Dickenson, Janie Nicoll, Alan Currall, and Mark Wallinger.

The Museum's film and video programs are made possible by grants from the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art.