

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
May 1990

ICON

May 10 - July 31, 1990

In Icon, a site-specific video installation incorporating photography and video, Montreal-based artist Barbara Steinman questions the dynamic between language, representation, and power structures. Opening at The Museum of Modern Art on May 10, 1990, Icon also defines the video gallery as an intimate, private space within the exterior, more public one of the Museum. The exhibition remains on view through July 31.

On Monday, May 14, at 6:30 p.m., in conjunction with the exhibition, Barbara Steinman discusses other recent installation projects. Her talk is part of the Museum's Video Viewpoints series in which independent videomakers present their work. Tickets are included with Museum admission; available tickets are free after 6:00 p.m.

The installation features a six-foot-square framed photograph of a marble Madonna, taken as a conservation study; a second photograph, a distorted and grainy close-up of the first, is displayed in a six-foot-square light box. Placed in a corner of the gallery, behind oval panes of frosted glass, are two video monitors. Each projects an image of a test tube; one slowly fills with blood, while the second remains empty.

In using the image of a Madonna, the artist questions the meaning of an icon both as a religious and as an art object, especially when presented in the context of a museum devoted to twentieth-century art. The different framing devices, as well as the layering of projected images behind glass, invite the viewer to consider what lies beneath the surface of an image.

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Barbara London, assistant curator, Video, Department of Film, who organized the exhibition, writes, "In using tools that come from mass media, which generally are used to make viewers forget or to deaden their senses, Steinman instead creates work that has to do with memory and social responsibility. Often site-specific, her work is about absences, the passing of time, and particular location, its boundaries, history, and purpose. Very subtly she raises profound questions for the viewer."

Steinman has produced videotapes and has exhibited multimedia installations since 1975. Her work has been exhibited in The Canadian Biennial of Contemporary Art, Canada, the Venice Biennale, Italy, and the nineteenth Bienal de Sao Paulo, Brazil, among others.

The exhibition is made possible with the support of the New York State Council on the Arts; the Canadian Consulate General, New York; the Government of Canada; Quebec Government House, New York; the Sony Corporation of America; the Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art; and Galerie René Blouin.

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For further information or photographs, please contact Sarah Eaton, film press representative, Department of Public Information, 212/708-9750.