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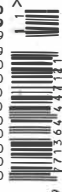
Pei-Ru Keh, "Freeze Frame: American video artist Rachel Rose on liberating commission,"
Wallpaper, November, 2018

Wallpaper*

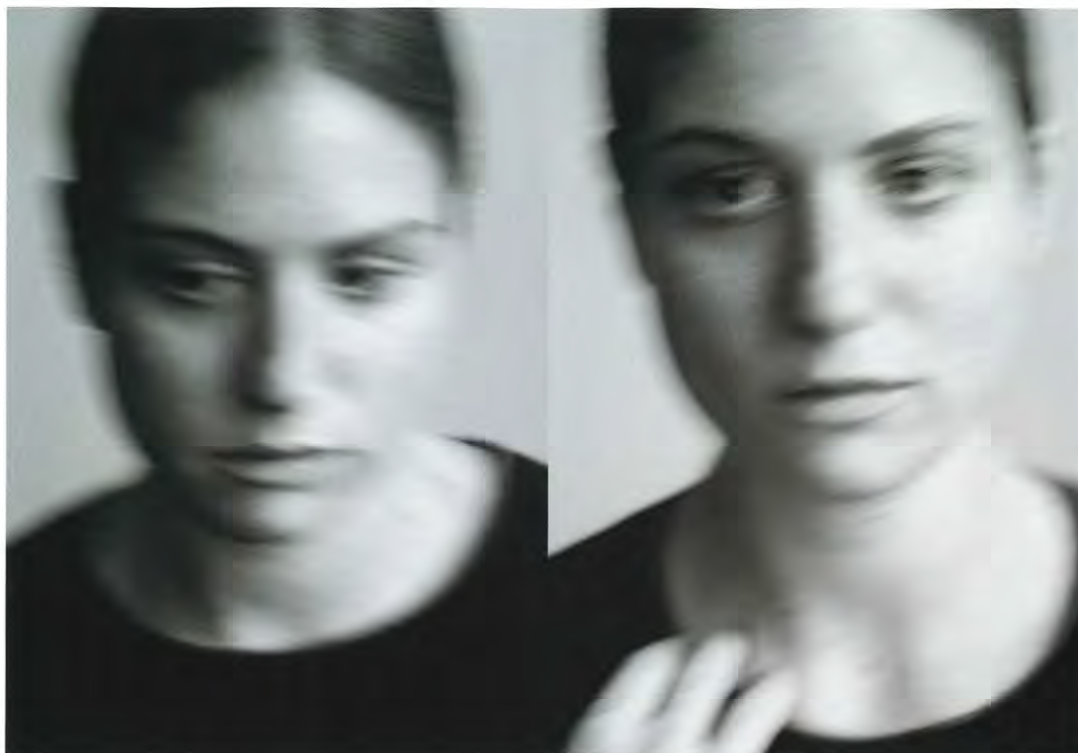
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LIMITED EDITION COVER
BY STUDIO SWINE



Freeze frame

American video artist Rachel Rose on a liberating commission

Taking in video, performance and sound, often all at once, time-based media can be thrillingly engaging or beyond testing. The young New York-based artist Rachel Rose – who layers animation, sound, original footage and found material in her video compositions – thrills and engages. At 32, her achievements already include solo exhibitions at the Whitney in New York and the Serpentine Sackler Gallery in London, as well as memorable appearances at Frieze Art Fair (she won the Frieze Artist Award in 2015) and the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017.

It's a stratospheric ascent for Rose, who abandoned painting, her original medium of choice, while studying for an MFA at Columbia University. She found new inspiration in documentary filmmaking and moved at pace from there. 'I felt that painting didn't really offer me the tools to think about the questions that felt pertinent to me,' Rose

says. 'In fact, I thought I didn't want to be an artist, because I didn't know how to think about what I wanted to think about through art. The process of learning how to shoot [video] and edit, and about sound, led me back to art. I wanted to touch the real world and touch different moments in time.'

Rose captures a variety of emotional and subliminal states in each of her video pieces. Perception becomes distorted, reality twists and your awareness and understanding of what is observed shifts. In *Lake Valley*, 2016, an animated work that was first shown at the Central Pavilion of the 2017 Venice Biennale, Rose uses the figure of a pet to explore the shift from childhood to adulthood. Set in a

Rose, whose new film *Wit-o-Wisp* was inspired by beliefs and life in 16th century agrarian England

familiar suburban landscape, the piece is made up of thousands of images extracted from different children's storybooks that Rose then cut up and collaged into layers on a cel animation plate.

A Minute Ago, 2014, mixed Pink Floyd, Steve Reich and Philip Johnson's Glass House to look at how the interior and exterior can collapse in on themselves. 'I made the work after Hurricane Sandy hit New York. There was this permeating sense of unease in the months that followed. One day I was in a coffee shop and a gust of wind and hail came in past the glass window. Everyone in the shop went silent and stopped what they were doing – obviously scared. I started thinking about the barriers we create between ourselves and the outside. In a modernist trajectory, that's been glass, and the construction of glass buildings. I looked at the history of glass in architecture. The >>

Smart Art

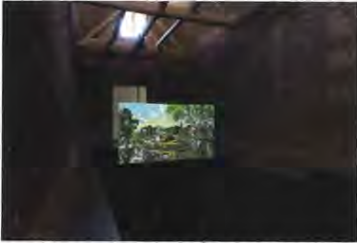
SCREEN TEST

Three of Rose's key works, which have seen her exhibit internationally



01—WIL-O-WISP, 2018

Commissioned by the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo and set to show in Turin, Rose's live-action film is a story of folkloric practices and persecution



02—A MINUTE AGO, 2014

Installation view, Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London, 2015. The work was shot at Philip Johnson's Glass House and earned Rose the Illy Present Future Prize



03—LAKE VALLEY, 2016

Installation view, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, 2017. Using cel animation, Rose explored childhood and children's literature for a film also shown at the Venice Biennale in 2017

International Style was the central moment for steel and glass. Its symbol, the Glass House, [is seen in] the skyscrapers that define the landscape around us. So I wanted to go there and really look at what that was.'

In *Everything and More*, 2015, the film she presented in her solo exhibition at the Whitney in 2016, a slew of moving images is set to astronaut David Wolf's narration of what it feels like to be in space. 'That work was about the feeling of this sublime state that just happens in an everyday sense,' recalls Rose. 'And that something as simple as light and sound wavelengths produces all that.'

Rose is now the inaugural recipient of the Future Fields Commission – an award dedicated to supporting the creation and production of time-based media art. Established in 2016 by the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Turin's Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, the commission is awarded every two years. 'The Future Fields Commission's vision is focused on the idea of new, uncharted territories,' says the foundation's Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, who has been on the Philadelphia Museum of Art's contemporary art advisory committee since 2008. 'We want to support artists who are at a turning point in their career to realise ambitious projects. Rachel epitomises this.'

Almost two years of development, Rose's new work – a ten-minute video piece entitled *Wil-o-Wisp* – is being shown in November at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, following a successful debut in Philadelphia over the summer. Set in 16th-century agrarian England, the live-action video piece (Rose's first) centres on Elkspeith, persecuted for dabbling in folkloric healing practices and magic. Her story is set against vignettes of rural life at a time when enclosure, the privatisation of shared farmland, was stirring up tumult and protest. 'When I was offered this commission, I thought it was such an exciting way for me to actually go to a place and film it with actors,' explains Rose. 'I had been researching this time period and thinking a lot about animism and magic and women, and the destruction of the landscape, and the end of one world and the beginning of another. I felt like the most succinct way to [address that] would be to write a story and film it.' Working with a 24-strong crew and a key cast of 13 actors, Rose filmed the piece over the course of a week at Plimoth Plantation, a living history museum in Massachusetts based on detailed research into the 1600s.

'I've long been interested in how we have access to sublime states through everyday experience; how the everyday can morph into something beyond. I was interested in a time and a place where there was more fluidity and transference between everyday reality and this otherworldly state,' she says. 'Sixteenth century agrarian England was one of those places, where people felt that forests were

'I'm interested in how we have access to sublime states through the everyday'

alive, ghosts were real and the cosmic order and the human order were connected.'

It was almost six months before Rose was ready to present her ideas. 'There was [then] a period of writing the story, which came from the amalgamation of different real stories, and then a period of casting the project, working with a costume designer [and] production designer to flush it out, and then shooting it and editing it.'

Editing is a Rose signature. In all her works, she twists viewers' perception with disorienting visuals and historical references. In *Wil-o-Wisp*, she pushes the envelope further by adding temporal shifts and carefully selected visual effects to the live action footage, along with a discordant score.

'In this case, the editing included writing a voiceover in iambic pentameter [a kind of verse], which became a song with music written by composer Isaac Jones,' says Rose, who worked with her studio manager and two producers to pull everything together. 'The post-production took a year.'

Consideration was also given to how the work is installed and shown – *Wil-o-Wisp* is projected on a transparent screen, which echoes a scene in the film that features a rear projection screen. 'This state that people were in at this time and place was so disorienting, almost close to psychedelic, so in the gallery I wanted to create a feeling of that, with light,' Rose says. 'We also doubled scrim, hanging floor to ceiling, to create a moiré effect, so that when you're in the gallery watching, the room is illuminated with this shimmering and shifting light, which felt like an extension of *Wil-o-Wisp*.' The film itself also features layers of moiré visual effects, so that at times, the work and the edges of the room almost blend into one.

Rose now has another major work in production, again crafting a complex narrative and utilising actors, set during the same time period. 'The ideas in *Wil-o-Wisp* crystallised what I've been thinking about for a long time. Working so closely with an institution to create something [has also] allowed me to feel open and ready to move in a different direction,' she adds. 'It really made me feel much more expansive in where I can go. It wasn't just about the funding, but also the support around it. It's definitely been life-changing for me.' ✨

'Rachel Rose: Wil-o-Wisp' is at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, from 2 November 2018-3 February 2019, fsrr.org

Images: © Rachel Rose. Courtesy of Philadelphia Museum of Art, photo by Tim Tiebout. Courtesy of the artist, Pilar Corrias Gallery, and Gavin Brown's Enterprise