

SOPHIE WHETTNALL

Excess of Yang

Opening: Saturday 2 April, Via Arco dei Becci 1, 5–8pm

Until 1 May 2011, Tuesday-Saturday, 2–7pm

Galleria Continua is pleased to present a new solo exhibition by Belgian artist Sophie Whettnall in its Arco dei Becci gallery space in San Gimignano.

For the occasion, Whettnall is showing, for the first time in Italy, her most recent self-portrait, entitled *Excess of Yang*, a sound and video installation produced in 2010 for the Joan Miro Foundation in Barcelona and exhibited as part of the *Explicit Silence* series of projects.

According to one branch of oriental philosophy, the equilibrium regulating the relations between everything in the universe is based on a dualistic relationship between yin and yang. Tradition attributes to female nature everything that is yin and to male nature everything that is yang. Yin is also linked with what is cold, dark, wet and inert; and yang with action, movement, light and heat. Starting from her Chinese doctor's diagnosis of an excess of yang, the artist created a passionate metaphor of her experience as a woman in society, using symbols of power and seduction associated with the male gender. To do so, she explores the boundaries of silence, embarking on a project that represents a further step in her introspective probing and her own distinctive analysis of the mechanisms and contradictions implicit in artistic practice.

Through this work, as in other videos such as *Shadow Boxing* (2004) and *Conversation Piece* (2005), Whettnall reflects on the latent violence of what is unknown, concealed, dissimulated, reserved and withheld. In *Excess of Yang*, the artist describes herself as polarized between the energy and power conferred by the ostentation of sound, speed and beauty, and the containment imposed on her by her own limits. In the video we see her climbing into a powerful racing car; the roar of the engine is almost deafening, the wind blows through her hair and the landscape rushes by. Suddenly silence falls and the frame slowly widens to show us the artist sitting immobile inside the car, which is suspended several centimetres off the ground. Whettnall has given us the illusion she was driving a racing car on a real race track, thereby giving voice to the burning issue of the exchange of male-female roles, also commenting ironically on her own role as performer. And the silence, represented as paralyzing violence, becomes an expression of the lack of definition of one's limits and likewise of the disarming breadth of one's possibilities.

Sophie Whettnall was born in Brussels in 1973, where she lives and works today. Since the end of the 90s, her work has developed along two main thematic lines. The first is the self-portrait and performance, the second is landscape. She uses the video camera to document her travels, to recount herself and to film landscapes that she then transforms into emotional landscapes. Her works –

videos, photographs, video installations – adopt a perspective of “autobiographism”, remaining constantly suspended between realism and abstraction, representation of the real and creation, movement and staticity. Whettnall has showed her work in a number of major international events. Group exhibition include: *A viaxe. Novas peregrinacións*, CGAC, Santiago de Compostela, Spain (2007); *Think with the Senses – Feel with the Mind. Art in the Present Tense*, 52nd Venice Biennale, curated by a Robert Storr, Venice (2007); *L’emprise du lieu*, curated by Daniel Buren, Expérience Pommery #4, Pommery, France (2008); *Resilience*, GALLERIA CONTINUA/Le Moulin, Boissy-le-Châtel, France (2008); *Here and Now*, curated by Julia Draganovic - Bologna Art First, ARTFERIA 2010, Galleria Continua, Bologna (2010); *Shadow Boxing*, The World Expo of Shanghai 2010, Art Corner of the Belgian Pavilion, Shanghai, China (2010); *Les (in)contrôlés*, Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles, Paris, France (2011). Whettnall has had solo exhibitions at various galleries and museum spaces: *DOT. Project*, London, UK and *Tschumipavillion*, DeSchool, Groningen, Holland in 2001; *RED SNOW*, Casa de Velazquez, Madrid, Spain and *A Chocolataria*, Espazo de experimentacion e creacion contemporanea, Santiago de Compostela in 2006; *RED SNOW*, Galleria Continua, San Gimignano in 2007; *Explicit Silence*, Joan Miro Foundation, Barcelona, Spain and *Salt 2: Sophie Whettnall*, UMFA Utah Museum of Fine Art, Utah, USA in 2010.

For further information about the exhibition and for photographs:

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