

Fondazione Nicola Trussardi presents
STILL LIFE
the first major solo exhibition in Italy by
TACITA DEAN
Palazzo Dugnani
Via Daniele Manin 2, Milan
May 12 – June 21, 2009

FONDAZIONE
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From May 12 to June 21, 2009, Fondazione Nicola Trussardi presents *Still Life*, Tacita Dean's first major solo exhibition in Italy, on the first floor (piano nobile) of Palazzo Dugnani, a historic building in the centre of Milan opened in collaboration with the Municipality of Milan-Culture Department. The exhibition—one of the artist's most ambitious projects—presents a selection of fourteen works, including the world premiere of two films commissioned and produced by Fondazione Nicola Trussardi.

Tacita Dean is one of the most important artists at work today: she has been nominated for the Turner Prize, awarded the prestigious Hugo Boss Prize by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, and has previously exhibited at some of the world's greatest museums, including New York's MoMA and London's Tate Gallery.

Tacita Dean's films, photographs, and installations construct entire universes out of endless pauses, by exploring distant, unattainable horizons. With her slow, reflective gaze, the artist opens a window onto a vanished world, transforming every landscape, object or character into an exquisite still life in motion. Her films are small revelations and unforgettable epiphanies shot and reproduced solely on film: Tacita Dean's works are monuments to the country of last things, *vanitas* describing a world that has been and is no more.

For *Still Life*, Tacita Dean has chosen to show only films, leading viewers on a circular journey through the halls of Palazzo Dugnani. Presenting a selection of works related to immobility, *Still Life* is a series of slow, almost hypnotic portraits, landscapes and still lifes. For her exhibition with Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, with the assistance of the Museo D'Arte Moderna di Bologna, Tacita Dean obtained access to the Bolognese studio of painter Giorgio Morandi, where the artist lived and worked for over 50 years. *Still Life* (2009), a film in black and white, focuses on the meticulous markings and measurements found on the paper Morandi placed underneath his objects. A cartographer in search of lost time, Tacita Dean rediscovers Morandi's work through marginal, forgotten signs. *Day for Night* (2009) looks at Morandi's objects themselves. Unable to touch or move the bottles and vases, Dean filmed them singly, making random groupings that stand in contrast to Morandi's studied and mathematically rigorous compositions. Exercises in contemplation, *Still Life* and *Day for Night* are extraordinary documents of the obstinate simplicity of art.

Tacita Dean has often paused to analyze great figures in art history: in 2002, Tacita Dean made what became the first in a series of portrait films, *Mario Merz* (2002)—an intimate moment with the master of Arte Povera. Shown here for the first time in Milan, the city of his birth, the film was shot in San Gimignano, Tuscany, one year before the artist passed away. The exhibition also features the European premiere of Dean's recent six-part film installation *Merce Cunningham Performs STILLNESS...* (2008), in which this great American dancer and choreographer poses to the silence of John Cage's radical composition *4'33"*. Solemn portraits and private examinations of two great masters of contemporary culture, *Mario Merz* and *Merce Cunningham* plunge the viewers into a rarefied atmosphere where time expands beyond all limits.

To Tacita Dean, nature is an inexhaustible repository of forgotten stories and unexpected coincidences: with her slow contemplative films, the British artist transforms atmospheric phenomena, pastoral landscapes and abandoned places into sublime panoramas and cinematic frescoes. Her pieces are romantic vistas that harbour unexpected surprises: from the solar eclipse in *Banewl* (1999)—shot almost in real time on a farm

in Cornwall—to the disquieting shadows in *Diamond Ring* (2002); from the last ray of sun as it passes over the horizon in *The Green Ray* (2001), to the difficult crossing of a hostile sea in *Amadeus* (2008), Tacita Dean travels to far-flung reaches to capture impossible images. With the same attentiveness, the British artist films seemingly insignificant objects, like the pieces of fruit cultivated inside bottles for schnapps: a praise of slowness, *Prisoner Pair* (2008) is a microscopic analysis of the signs of time.

For the mesmerizing, monumental setting of Palazzo Dugnani—built as an aristocratic residence, later the home of Milan's natural history museum, then of the first school in Italy where art history was taught and currently owned by the Municipality of Milan-Culture Department—the British artist has conceived an exhibition that reveals the building's majestic architecture and private rooms. Reopened by the Municipality of Milan-Culture Department in collaboration and with the support of Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, the first floor of Palazzo Dugnani is used for the first time as a venue for a contemporary art exhibition – an event that celebrates a new synergy between the Municipality of Milan-Culture Department and Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, both committed to make historical buildings available to wider audiences.

Looking out onto the gardens of Via Palestro, Palazzo Dugnani was built as a patrician house in the 17th century and was then remodelled in the 18th century. The Baroque edifice contains a magnificent fresco by Tiepolo, as well as work by Ferdinando Porta and the Venetian School of the 1700s. Palazzo Dugnani remained in private hands for centuries until it was bought by the City of Milan to house the Alessandro Manzoni secondary school for girls. The layering of personal stories and images in motion makes Palazzo Dugnani an ideal setting for the work of Tacita Dean. *Still Life* is a unique opportunity to discover this artist's melancholy narratives.

With *Still Life*, Fondazione Nicola Trussardi continues to produce works by today's most interesting artists for the forgotten monuments of the City of Milan. Since 2003 the Fondazione Nicola Trussardi has organized exhibitions with, among others: Michael Elmgreen & Ingar Dragset, Darren Almond, Maurizio Cattelan, John Bock, Urs Fischer, Anri Sala, Paola Pivi, Martin Creed, Pawel Althamer, Peter Fischli & David Weiss, and Tino Sehgal.

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HARD FACTS

Artist:	TACITA DEAN
Title:	STILL LIFE
Location:	Palazzo Dugnani Via Daniele Manin 2, Milan
Period:	May 12 – June 21, 2009 Open daily, 10 AM – 8 PM, Free admission
Press Preview:	May 12, 2009, 11:00 AM to 1:30 PM Palazzo Dugnani
Press Conference:	May 12, 2009, 12:30 PM Palazzo Dugnani
Curated by:	Massimiliano Gioni, Artistic Director Fondazione Nicola Trussardi

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MAMbo – Museo d'Arte
Moderna di Bologna

TACITA DEAN, *STILL LIFE*
OPERE IN MOSTRA / CHECK LIST

Merce Cunningham performs STILLNESS (in three movements) to John Cage's composition 4'33" with Trevor Carlson, New York City, 28 April 2007 (six performances; six films), 2008

6 film a colori in 16mm con suono ottico, circa 5 minuti ciascuno / 6 x 16 mm colour films, optical sound, ca. 5 minutes each

Con / With Merce Cunningham e / and Trevor Carlson

Direttore della fotografia / Director of Photography: John Adderley

Operatore / Camera Operator: Jamie Cairney

Fonico / Sound Recordist: Steve Felton

Aiuto operatore / Clapper Loader: Sara Deane

Responsabile di produzione / Production Manager: Noorhayati Said

Assistenti di produzione / Production Assistants: Tim Tobin, Giovanni Betancourt

Fotografo di scena / Stills Photographer: Michael Vahrenwald

Assistente al fotografo di scena / Stills Photography Assistant: Ted Parton

Montatori del suono / Sound Editors: James Harrison, Steve Felton

Post-produzione digitale del suono / Digital Sound Post Production: The Sound Design Company, grazie a / with thanks to Steve Felton

Titoli / Titles: TrickWILK, grazie a / with thanks to Thomas Wilk

Telecine: Arion

Taglio del negativo / Neg Cut: Reelskill

Trascrizione della colonna ottica / Optical Sound Transfer: Martin Sawyer Sound Services

Stampato da / Printed by: Duart Film Laboratories & Soho Images, grazie a / with thanks to Len Thornton

Pellicola / Originated on: Kodak Motion Picture Film

Realizzato nel piccolo studio della / Filmed on location in the small dance studio of Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Bethune St, New York, Stati Uniti / USA

Realizzato con il consenso di / Made with permission from C. F. Peters e del / and John Cage Trust, grazie a / with thanks to Laura Kuhn; Kevin Taylor, Hannah Brittain e i ballerini della / and the dancers of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company; Ellen Cornfield e la sua compagnia / and her company; Mathew Hale; Emma Astner; Rose Lord; Kenneth Graham; Simeon Corless; Ruud & Roos Molleman; Lynne Cooke, Kristin Poor e lo staff del / and the staff at Dia:Beacon

Realizzato con il supporto di / Made with financial support from Marian Goodman Gallery, New York-Parigi / Paris; Frith Street Gallery, Londra / London e / and Manchester International Festival 2007

The Green Ray, 2001

Film a colori in 16mm, muto, 2 minuti e 30 secondi / 16mm colour film, mute, 2 minutes and 30 seconds

Operatore / Camera: Tacita Dean

Assistente operatore / Camera Assistant: Richard Torchia

Grazie a / With thanks to: Timothée Lacroix, Agnès Fierobe, Elisa Azayou, Lolo, William Kentridge, Anne Stanwix

Taglio del negativo / Neg Cut: Triad

Assistente alla post-produzione / Post Production Assistant: Genista Dunham

Stampato da / Printed by: Soho Images, grazie a Len Thornton

Realizzato a / Filmed on location in Morombe, Madagascar Occidentale / Western Madagascar

Diamond Ring, 2002

Film a colori in 16mm, 6 minuti (ciclo di 12 film di 27 secondi ciascuno) / 16 mm colour film, mute, 6 minutes (cycle of 12 films each 27 seconds)

Operatore / Camera: Tacita Dean

Assistente operatore / Camera Assistant: Richard Torchia

Grazie a / With thanks to: Timothée Lacroix, Agnès Fierobe, Elisa Azayou, Lolo, William Kentridge, Anne Stanwix
Taglio del negativo / Neg Cut: Triad
Assistente alla post-produzione / Post Production Assistant: Genista Dunham
Stampato da / Printed by: Soho Images, grazie a / with thanks to Len Thornton

Realizzato a / Filmed on location in Morombe, Madagascar Occidentale / Western Madagascar

Banewl, 1999

Film anamorfico a colori in 16mm con suono ottico, 63 minuti / 16mm colour anamorphic film, optical sound, 63 minutes

Assistente alla regia / Assistant Director: Mathew Hale
Direttore della fotografia / Director of Photography: John Adderley
Operatori / Camera Operators: Jamie Cairney, Nick MacRae, Tom Wright
Aiuto operatore / Clapper Loaders: Chris Connatty, Sam McCourt
Controllo della posizione del sole / Sun Tracking Motion Control: Michael Geissler, Lucien Kennedy-Lamb, Mark Seaton della / from Tronbrook Ltd
Lenti anamorfiche fornite da / Anamorphic Lenses loaned by: Joe Duntan, grazie a / thanks to Mason Cardiff
Arriflex concessa fornita da / Arriflex loaned by: Arri GB Ltd, grazie a / with thanks to Alan Fyfe
Macchine da presa e magazzini ACL forniti da / ACL Camera and Magazines loaned by: Graeme Stubbings e / and Simon Surtees
Registrazione del suono / Sound Recordists: Camden Logan, Sara Sender
Post-produzione del suono digitale / Digital Sound Post Production: Sound Design Company
Montatore del suono / Sound Editor: James Harrison
Montato da / Edited at: Four Corners
Runners: Katy English, Rose Lord, Emily Whittle
Riprese stenoscopiche e fotografia di scena / Pinhole Research and Stills Photography: Richard Torchia
Consulente per la fotografia dell'eclissi / Eclipse Photography Consultant: Francisco Diego
Catering: Katy English
Barbecue: Blaise Vasseur, Lewis Horsman

Grazie a / With thanks to: Emma Tod e Guy Waddell, Angela Adderley, Steve Felton, Anya Gallaccio, Martyn Ridgewell

Un ringraziamento speciale a / With special thanks to: Norman Truscott, l'allevatore / the cowman; Andrew Marment e / and Roger Eddy per i galli / for the loan of the cockerels; Ian Stuart per i suoi consigli sul meteo locale / for his advice on local weather; Blue, David e / and Helen Hosking per averci aiutato a filmare la / for helping us film Fattoria Burnewhall Farm e / and Pengwarnon Herd of Pedigree Holstein Friesians

Taglio del negativo / Neg Cut: TKT Film Services
Trascrizione della colonna ottica / Optical Transfer by: Martin Sawyer Sound Services
Stampato da / Printed by: Metrocolour
Pellicola / Originated on: Kodak Motion Picture Film

Realizzato durante l'eclissi totale di sole dell'11 agosto 1999 presso la Burnewhall Farm, St Buryan, Cornovaglia, Inghilterra / Filmed during the Total Eclipse of the Sun on Burnewhall Farm, St Buryan, Cornwall, August 11th, 1999

Con il supporto di / Supported by: The National Lottery attraverso / through The Arts Council of England; South West Arts; South West Media Development Agency; Elephant Trust; Henry Moore Foundation; Frith Street Gallery, Londra / London; Marian Goodman Gallery, New York-Parigi / Paris

Amadeus (Swell Consopio), 2008

Film anamorfico a colori 16mm, muto, 50 minuti / 16mm colour anamorphic film, mute, 50 minutes

Direttore della fotografia / Director of Photography: John Adderley
Operatori / Camera Operators: Jamie Cairney; Sara Deane
Aiuto operatore / Clapper Loader: Sara Deane
Assistente di produzione / Production Assistant: Peter Fillingham
Skipper e equipaggio della *Amadeus* / Skipper and Crew of *Amadeus*: Luke Hodges, Mick Varnish, Ted Marsh, Steve Magna
Autisti / Drivers: Angela Adderley; Rachael Daniels
Taglio del negativo / Neg Cut: Reelskill
Stampato da / Printed by: Soho Images, grazie a / with thanks to Len Thornton
Pellicola / Originated on: Kodak Motion Picture Film

Un ringraziamento speciale a / With special thanks to: Steve Felton, Keith Collins, Andrea Schlieker, Kim Dhillon, Emma Astner, Mathew Hale, Brian Oxley, Joseph e / and Jenefer Dean, Kenneth Graham, Simeon Corless, Dale McFarland, Frith Street Gallery, Londra / London e / and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York-Parigi/ Paris

Commissionato da / Commissioned by the Creative Foundation per la / for the Folkestone Sculpture Triennial 2008

Realizzato nel Canale della Manica / Filmed on location in The English Channel

Day for Night, 2009

Film a colori in 16mm, muto, 10 minuti / 16mm colour film, mute, 10 minutes

Direttore della fotografia / Director of Photography: John Adderley

Taglio del negativo / Neg Cut: Reelskill
Stampato da / Printed by: Soho Images, grazie a / with thanks to Len Thornton
Pellicola / Originated on: Kodak Motion Picture Film

Un ringraziamento speciale a / With special thanks to: Gianfranco Maraniello e il / and Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna per aver concesso di girare nello studio / for their kind permission to film in the studio, Carlo Zucchini per le sue indicazioni su / for his advice on Giorgio Morandi, Massimiliano Gioni e la / and the Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Milano / Milan

Grazie a / With thanks to: Giancarlo Chetta, Simeon Corless, Flavio Del Monte, Ken Graham, Mathew Hale, Alessia Masi, Roos & Ruud Molleman, Franz Pagot, Giulia Pezzoli, Barbara Roncari, Roberta Tenconi, Frith Street Gallery, Londra / London e / and Marian Goodman Gallery New York-Parigi / Paris

Realizzato nello studio di / Filmed on location in the studio of Giorgio Morandi, Via Fondazza 36, Bologna, Italia / Italy

Prodotto da / Produced by Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Milano / Milan

Still Life, 2009

Film in bianco e nero in 16mm, muto, 5 minuti e 30 secondi, loop continuo / 16mm black & white film, mute, 5 minutes and 30 seconds, continuous loop

Direttore della fotografia / Director of Photography: John Adderley
Taglio del negativo / Neg Cut: Reelskill
Stampato da / Printed by: Soho Images, grazie a / with thanks to Len Thornton
Pellicola / Originated on: Kodak Motion Picture Film

Un ringraziamento speciale a / With special thanks to: Gianfranco Maraniello e il / and Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna per aver concesso di girare nello studio / for their kind permission to film in the studio, Carlo Zucchini per le sue indicazioni su / for his advice on Giorgio Morandi, Massimiliano Gioni e la / and the Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Milano / Milan

Grazie a / With thanks to: Giancarlo Chetta, Simeon Corless, Flavio Del Monte, Ken Graham, Mathew Hale, Alessia Masi, Roos & Ruud Molleman, Franz Pagot, Giulia Pezzoli, Barbara Roncari, Roberta Tenconi, Frith Street Gallery, Londra / London e / and Marian Goodman Gallery New York-Parigi / Paris

Realizzato nello studio di / Filmed on location in the studio of Giorgio Morandi, Via Fondazza 36, Bologna, Italia / Italy

Prodotto da / Produced by Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Milano / Milan

Prisoner Pair, 2008

Film a colori in 16mm, muto, 11 minuti / 16mm colour film, mute, 11 minutes

Direttore della fotografia / Director of Photography: John Adderley
Taglio del negativo / Neg Cut: Reelskill
Stampato da / Printed by: Soho Images, grazie a / with thanks to Len Thornton
Pellicola / Originated on: Kodak Motion Picture Film

Un ringraziamento speciale a / With special thanks to: Angela Adderley, Emma Astner, Mathew Hale, Johanna Wistrom

Realizzato a / Filmed on location in South Wimbledon, Londra / London

Con il supporto di / Made with financial support from Frith Street Gallery, Londra / London e / and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York-Parigi / Paris

Mario Merz, 2002

Film a colori in 16 mm, suono ottico, 8 minuti e 30 secondi / 16 mm film, colour, optical sound, 8 minutes and 30 seconds

Operatore / Camera: Tacita Dean
Assistente operatore / Camera Assistant Peter Fillingham
Traduttore per l'italiano / Italian translation: Birgit Kulmer

Grazie a / With thanks to: Mario Merz, Marisa Merz, Carolina Taddei, Charlotte Moth, Arte Continua

Fonico / Sound Editor: James Harrison, Martin Cantwell
Post-produzione digitale del suono / Digital Sound Post Production: The Sound Design Company, grazie a / with thanks to Steve Felton
Trascrizione della colonna ottica / Optical sound transfer: Martin Sawyer Sound Services
Taglio del negativo / Neg Cut: TKT Film Services
Assistente alla post-produzione / Post Production Assistant: Genista Dunham
Stampato da / Printed by: Soho Images, grazie a / with thanks to Len Thornton

Realizzato a / Filmed on location in: San Gimignano, Italia / Italy

Realizzato per / Made for *Arte all'Arte*, San Gimignano, Italia / Italy, 2002

TACITA DEAN SELECTED BIOGRAPHY

Tacita Dean was born in Canterbury, England in 1965. She lives and works in Berlin.

PRIZES

- 2009 *The Kurt Schwitters-Preis Award* (winner), Hannover
- 2006 *Hugo Boss Prize* (winner), Guggenheim Museum, New York
- 2005 *The Sixth Bennesse Prize* (winner), 51st Venice Biennale, Venice
- 2002 *Preis der nationalgalerie fur junge Kunst* (nomination), Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin
- 1998 *The Turner Prize* (nomination), Tate Gallery, London
- 1992 *New Contemporaries award* (winner), London

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2009 *Still Life*, Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Milan
ACCA, Melbourne
Sprengel Museum, Hannover
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid
- 2008 *Tacita Dean, Merce Cunningham performs STILLNESS (in three movements) to John Cage's composition 4'33"*, Dia:Beacon, Beacon (New York)
- 2007 *Tacita Dean*, Hugo Boss Prize Exhibition, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Tacita Dean: Film Works, Miami Art Central, Miami
- 2006 *Tacita Dean, Analogue: Films, Photographs, Drawings 1991-2006*, Schaulager, Munchenstein/Basel
National Gallery of Contemporary Art, Oslo
Tacita Dean, Human Treasure, Center for Contemporary Art, Kitakyushu
- 2005 *Tacita Dean: The Russian Ending*, Landesmuseum für Moderne Kunst, Fotografie und Architektur, Berlin
Tacita Dean, Berlin Works, Tate St Ives, St Ives
- 2004 Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin
Tacita Dean, Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana
- 2003 *Tacita Dean*, ARC Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris
Kunstpreis 2002: Tacita Dean, Ludwig Forum, Aachen
- 2001 *Tacita Dean*, Fundação de Serralves, Porto
Tacita Dean, Recent films and other works, Tate Britain, London
Tacita Dean, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Barcelona
Directions: Tacita Dean, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington
Tacita Dean, DAAD Gallery, Berlin
Under/Above, Melbourne International Biennial, Melbourne
- 2000 *Tacita Dean*, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel
Wandering Images, Fundacio La Caixa, Barcelona
- 1999 *Millenium Sculpture Project*, Millenium Dome, London
- 1998 *Turner Prize Group Show*, Tate Britain, London
Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia
- 1997 *Missing Narratives*, Witte de With, Rotterdam
The Roaring Forties: Seven Boards in Seven Days, The Drawing Center, New York
- 1996 *Foley Artist*, Tate Gallery, London

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SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2009 *The Quick and the Dead*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
- 2008 *Todas as historias*, Museu Serralves, Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto
Order. Desire. Light. An exhibition of contemporary drawings, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin
Folkstone Triennial - Tales of time and space, Folkestone Triennial, Folkestone
Peripheral vision and collective body, Museion, Bolzano
Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art, Barbican Art Center, London
The Cinema Effect: Illusion, Reality, and the Moving Image (Part I: Dreams), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington
- 2007 *Il Tempo del Postino*, Manchester International Festival, Manchester
Lights, Camera, Action: Artists' Films for the Cinema, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
- 2006 *Grey Flags*, Sculpture Center, Long Island City (New York)
4th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art, Berlin
Sydney Biennale, Sydney
- 2005 *Universal Experience: Art, Life, and the Tourist's Eye*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago
The Experience of Art, 51st Venice Biennale, Venice
Bidibidibidiboo, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin
Elements of Nature, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
Berlin Works, Tate St Ives, St Ives
- 2004 *Premiers*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York
TIME CLASH, Fundação de Serralves, Porto
- 2003 *The Moderns*, Castello di Rivoli, Turin
Ritardi e Rivoluzioni and *Utopia Station*, 50th Venice Biennale, Venice
Utopia Station Poster Project, Haus der Kunst, Munich
Fast Forward: Media Art from the Goetz Collection, ZKM, Karlsruhe
Remind, Kunsthau Bregenz, Bregenz
- 2002 *Tacita Dean, Ingar Dragset, Michael Elmgreen, Maria Eichhorn, Daniel Richter*, Preis der nationalgalerie für junge Kunst, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin
- 2001 Yokohama International Triennial of Contemporary Art, Yokohama
At Sea, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool
- 2000 *Media City Seoul 2000*, Contemporary Art and Technology Biennial, Seoul
Vision and Reality, Louisiana Museum, Humlebaek
New British Art 2000: Intelligence, Tate Triennial, Tate Britain, London
Artifice, Deste Foundation, Athens
- 1999 *Robert Smithson, Tacita Dean and the Spiral Jetty: A program of audio and film at the rooftop Urban Park Project*, Dia Center for the Arts, New York
Un monde réel, Fondation Cartier, Paris
- 1998 *Wounds: Between Democracy and Redemption in Contemporary Art*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm
- 1997 *Flexible*, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich
Challenge of Materials, Science Museum, London
- 1996 *CCATV*, Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow
- 1995 *British Art Show 4*, various venues in Manchester, Edinburgh, Cardiff
- 1994 *Watt*, Witte de With, Rotterdam
Mise en Scène, Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London
- 1992 *BT New Contemporaries*, Newlyn Orion, Penzance

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MERCE CUNNINGHAM PERFORMS STILLNESS...

Presented for the first time in Europe, *Merce Cunningham Performs STILLNESS...* (2008), is a series of six films in which the avant-garde choreographer - portrayed in life size - dances to *4'33"*, the radical composition by John Cage that consists of four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence.

I did not know what to expect when I asked Merce Cunningham if he would perform something to John Cage's composition, *4'33"*. I knew it was an audacious request; Merce was in a wheelchair and turning 88, and was less willing to appear in front of a camera than he had been. But he was a still dancer, and when a dancer gets the call he can respond to, he will nearly always come back on stage, and he did.

We set up in the smaller of his dance studios on the 11th floor of Bethune St, where his company has been for many years. It was shabby and well loved, and the room had the energy of working dancers who had left their traces as handprints on the mirror wall. The urban hum of New York was like white noise beneath us, and there was a piano accompanying the dancers next door.

There was no rehearsal, no trial run. I was like any other member of an audience on the first night. Merce sat on a chair in front of the mirror. John Cage wrote *4'33"* in three movements and for each movement, Merce held his pose. Using a stopwatch, Trevor Carlson, the company director, signalled the last five seconds by putting up his hand for Merce to see. Like a bird of prey, Merce perceived this without gesture, broke his pose and then resettled for the next movement. Throughout that New York afternoon, Merce performed for us. Our six takes were in fact six performances, and we alone were their public. Merce then named the new choreography, *STILLNESS*.

Each performance appears to hold a myriad of differences, even in its repetition. In one, he sits like Whistler's Mother, tableau in the film frame. In another, he stares out at us through the smudges and the fingerprints on the mirror, with the head of a Grecian god, framed with wild curls. But it is always Merce, finding form again as a performer, poised, and resolved, and taking wry pleasure in how he could still hold his body or hold his body still, in the companionship of an old partnership.

Text by Tacita Dean

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THE GREEN RAY

From the Madagascar coast, Tacita Dean filmed the 'green ray', a legendary natural phenomenon that takes place when, in specific atmospheric circumstances, the last ray of sun passes over the horizon and becomes green.

When the sun sets into a clear crisp horizon, and when there is no land in front of you for a few hundred miles, and no distant moisture that could become, at the final moment, a back lit cloud that obscures the opportunity, you stand a very good chance of seeing the green ray.

The last ray of the dying sun to refract and bend beneath the horizon is the green ray, which is just slower than the red or the yellow ray. Sailors see them more than the rest of us, and they have come to signify for some the harbinger of great change or fortune in their lives. For years I have sought out the green ray, peering at horizons for that last fractional second of greenness, not knowing or daring to imagine how extravagant a green splash it might be, but never have I seen it.

And then in the summer of last year, as I set off to a small, near inaccessible village on the west coast of Madagascar to see the total eclipse of the sun, I was as much lured there by a fleeting remark on an eclipse watcher's website saying that those of us who made it as far as Morombe might also stand a chance of seeing the green ray. I learnt the night before I left, that Eric Rohmer had faked his, and that his cameraman had waited for two months in the Canary Islands for every setting sun before giving up and going home. His post-produced extravaganza was no gauge by which to measure the green ray. I had a quest to try to see, if not film, something that I could not imagine.

The point about my film of the green ray is that it did so nearly elude me too. As I took vigil, evening after evening, on that Morombe beach looking out across the Mozambique Channel, timing the total disappearance of the sun in a single roll of film, I believed, but was never sure that I saw it.

The evening I filmed the green ray, I was not alone. On the beach beside me were two others with a video camera pointed at the sun, infected by my enthusiasm for this elusive phenomenon. They didn't see it that night, and their video documentation was watched as evidence to prove that I hadn't seen it either. But when my film fragment was later processed in England, there, unmistakably, defying solid representation on a single frame of celluloid, but existent in the fleeting movement of film frames, was the green ray, having proved itself too elusive for the pixellation of the digital world. So looking for the green ray became about the act of looking itself, about faith and belief in what you see. This film is a document; it has become about the very fabric, material and manufacture of film itself.

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DIAMOND RING

Tacita Dean films the climax of a total solar eclipse.

I have a philosophy now, borne out of much necessity, that sometimes things go wrong in order for them to go right. So when it was overcast on eclipse day in Cornwall in 1999, it enabled me to make the film that everyone agreed was much more *me*. Or when I trusted the light meter in a camera from another epoch, my near vanished film turned out more authentic to my project than anything I could have manufactured. But at the time, of course, these uninvited situations are unbearably painful and disappointing. To be persuaded by circumstance to take another route is never easy, and to trudge along that road to Damascus before the merest hint of conversion always takes some endurance, if not faith.

And so it was in the summer of 2001, when I made copious plans with my friend Dick to travel to Western Madagascar to try once more to see a total eclipse of the sun. We survived the cancellation of our plane; we survived the guide and the journey, we survived everything and on the morning of June 21st, we even got the weather. But then during totality-during those highly anticipated two and a half minutes, the camera tipped forward and fell down. Dick and I jointly contributed to cause this accident. I only write this because I think he might want to be acknowledged for his role in the making of *Diamond Ring*. Suffice to say I was paralysed by the familiar disappointment. It took me nearly the whole of totality to react, and at that point I did something I rarely do, and would never have done: I zoomed in. And at the very moment I stopped zooming, with the sun in the middle of my viewfinder, the moon passed into the next phase releasing a needle of light, which overexposed my film and bleached my frame.

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BANEWL

Shot in a farm in Cornwall, *Banewl* captures the famous total solar eclipse of 1999 almost in real time.

It is raining as I sit in the bottom field, waiting. The weather looks set in. There is a permanent roar from the BBC's Hercules plane as it films high above the clouds: the eye of the nation seeing above the gloom what we cannot see from below. As the time ticks away to totality, the light still feels remarkably unchanged. The swallows perceive the darkness coming long before us. Suddenly they go crazy, swooping and darting in all directions, and then they disappear. The cows start to lie down one by one across the field. The temperature drops.

When totality comes, it is rapid: a night darkness. The sun gone. There is a mustard yellow horizon, the light from beyond the furthest edge of this shadow moving above us. And this is what is changing, turning from strange translucent colours to mother of pearl and then imperceptibly back to grey: the grey that is normality; the grey that is today's weather. There is a cheer from Logan's Rock. Still in a reverie, seeing the world again, but now in the context of the extraordinary, the silence is eventually broken by the crowing of the cockerel: its blood red throat signalling relief, and the passage from one phase of this phenomenon to the next. Twenty minutes later, and we are well into the 'anti-climax' of this event. The sun starts to show through the clouds for the first time. People on Porthcurno Beach are packing up their things and going home. Through filtered glasses the sun has become like a crescent moon. The eclipse is again about waiting and watching until the sun becomes whole again.

I cannot quite explain the madness that took hold of me later that night. I wasn't on my own: Dick, my American friend sat in his armchair, exhausted, giggling hysterically with both delight and disappointment. We began to see the sun in everything: in a brass plate on the wall; in some frieze decoration in the farm's sitting room; in the bare electric light bulb. Watching the footage from the Hercules on the late night news and reports of the eclipse from around the world, I felt jealous. I couldn't even tolerate seeing the sun in the sky in some incidental and unconnected report from Australia. It is beyond rational explanation, but for some short time after that day, I really felt like I would never recognise the sun again.

But the clouds had given the day a strange intensity. We hadn't seen the sun's corona nor the diamond ring effect, and Dick hadn't found any crescent suns pinholed beneath the trees. What we had was the place: the ground and the sky; the animals and the birds, and Banewl, the farm itself. The eclipse was about waiting for darkness to happen and then equally for the return of a normal sun. The clouds allowed us to experience this coincidence of cosmic time and scale on our terms and in our own human time, measuring it against the movements of animals and the fine detailing of our natural world.

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AMADEUS

Made for the Folkestone Triennial, *Amadeus* is a film that captures a difficult crossing of The English Channel, from Boulogne to Folkestone.

I learnt to swim in Folkestone, not in the sea but in the public swimming pool. Apart from this, I have only a few memories of going there, except to leave it by ferry on daytrips to Boulogne. I have only known one family home, which is ten miles or so from Folkestone as the crow flies. To have been invited to make a work of art for the first Triennial held there meant an uncomfortable collision of two otherwise distinctly separate parts of my life, delineated quite clearly in my head by my departure from Kent.

At first, I was bemused by the prospect of a Triennial in Folkestone, because it seemed so improbable, but I agreed to take part, seeing it as a chance to bring the second part of my life to meet the first, or invest some of the first into the second. I travelled the Romney Marshes and the towns and landscape surrounding Folkestone, the pebbled coastline and the decaying hinterland in search of a subject that could, in its essence, sum up the complexities of everything I felt about this place. I met and discussed with people I'd known for years, perused old books and postcards in search of anything that could trigger an idea. Although I recognised everything, it was always disproportionately emotional, because I recalled it all in a childhood way. This familiarity, like the wily beast it is, led me down one nostalgic cul de sac after another. My recidivist failure to find an idea reached its apotheosis when I received a postcard from my mother, which read just this: "Idea. Go back to square one: Google – Folkestone. Don't try to be too clever or subtle."

So I did what many have done when they have troubles on land: I took to the sea. Folkestone is all about its relationship to France and the water in between the Martello towers, The Royal Military Canal, the acoustic mirrors, the deserted ferry terminal and Channel Tunnel rail link. For centuries, we have been barricading ourselves in or trying to reach across. The Channel is our local history: we have fished it, reclaimed land from it, smuggled across it, tried to keep it out or traversed it to lands beyond. We are an island people who have become too content with looking in and have let our seaport citadels rot. I have left England and to return is to return by sea. I might have set myself up badly as a prodigal, choosing a choppy inhospitable sea to cross, which incapacitated my nauseas crew into a Gustav Doré tableau, but I did as all Kentish people should do, I suffered the sea to get home.

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STILL LIFE / DAY FOR NIGHT

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Commissioned and produced by Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, *Still Life* and *Day for Night* were made in Giorgio Morandi's studio on Via Fondazza in Bologna, where he lived and worked for 50 years.

At a certain point, standing in the tiny studio of Giorgio Morandi, re-installed recently in the old apartment in Bologna where he lived with his sisters for fifty years, I knew I had to make a decision. His objects were everywhere, grouped on the tables and under the chairs and gathered together on the floor. They were as recognisable to me as if they had belonged in the outhouses of my own family, and aged with us into comfortable familiarity: face powder boxes, conical flasks, vases of cotton flowers, gas lamps and oil cans, pots, jars and bottles, and containers whose function we no longer recognise. Were they of his time or had he scoured the flea markets himself looking for them? We have only ever known them with dust. Giorgio Morandi was the painter who could paint dust.

And then there were his interventions, like the cartons rewrapped in brown paper and the reflections whitewashed out on the bottles and the Erlenmeyer flasks, the artificial flower arrangements and the odd flourish to remake a dull vessel. It seems Morandi liked to paint what he saw. He did not choose, as I had always imagined, simply not to paint anything about an object that he did not deem necessary, but instead transformed them beforehand, making them the objects he wanted to see. It was not about denying detail because the detail he liked, he kept. The miraculous opacity of his painted objects is already there in the objects themselves. His was a double artifice. There, amongst the copper pans and the enameled jugs, I understood clearly what the Fluxus artist, Robert Rauschenberg meant when he said, "Art is what makes life more interesting than art."

Giorgio Morandi's compositions were far from arbitrary. The space between his objects was rigorously and mathematically worked out. Set squares, rulers and a knotted string hang on the studio wall. The table surface and the lining paper are covered with intricate markings and measurements, often initialed or marked with a letter when, you assume, a decision was finalised. They are like found drawings, unintentional but remarkable.

Only when the light was identical to how it had been the day he set up a composition, did Morandi allow himself to continue painting. On other days, he would sit on the corner of his monastic bed, where there is a pronounced dip, and etch. He would draw at night by electric light. His brushes, that lie tied up in bundles, have been worked down to tufts, and in one instance, to a single hair. Was it parsimony or did he require them bald? Was it because his stroke was a non-frontal gesture, which approached from the side? His room was set-up for a left-handed man but no one particularly remarked this about the painter.

Amidst his objects, which still held the aura of their depiction, I came at last to a decision as to how I could treat them. I filmed them singly, one by one, centred in my frame, and did as Morandi would never have done: made their composition random.

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PRISONER PAIR

In *Prisoner Pair*, Tacita Dean looks with maniacal attentiveness at the details and imperfections of a piece of fruit grown inside a bottle for schnapps.

For a long time, I have had a lingering desire to film pears growing inside bottles and then watch them be picked from the trees - bottles as fruit and fruit as bottles. It is perhaps a strange fancy, come from the childhood thrill of getting something big into a space that's too small and defying the impossible. I learnt about the pears when I hinged my first boat's rigging and squeezed it down a bottleneck. But as with the ship in a bottle, growing the pears inside is a dying art and most people don't bother with it anymore. Interestingly enough, for both the pear and the boat, the manner in which you cheat is the same.

It is the French and the Germans who favour doing this in the production of their eau de vie or schnapps. And it is a particular speciality of the contested land of Alsace. So when in August, it transpired that I had missed the harvest, I went instead and found two imprisoned pears, already picked and preserved in alcohol: one was from France and the other Alsatian. Then I placed them side by side, as doppelgänger, in dialogue, intimacy and confrontation.

Chance, chaos and contingency are my working allies and I have learnt to welcome the uninvited and to allow the unimaginable. Cheek by cheek, and rump to croup, the prisoners transformed. They became their inner world, a landscape of microscopic detail and activity. And as the sun sunk low, the Alsatian inverted its backdrop into a Caspar David synthesis of interior beauty, like a bid for nationhood, before darkness came and turned them ordinary.

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MARIO MERZ

Tacita Dean portrays Arte Povera artist Mario Merz in San Gimignano, Tuscany, one year before he died.

I had already met Mario three times before we met that summer in San Gimignano. The first time was in Bologna. I saw him, watched him, and eventually, after dinner, went up to him and told him he looked exactly like my father. He kissed my hand and walked off. After that, I hounded the official museum photographer for a photograph of him, which she said she would send me, but never did. I wanted to put images of the two men side by side to document the likeness as proof of my objectivity.

I met him again in Paris, and chanced across him and Marisa having breakfast in Place des Vosges. Then, once again at the Venice Biennale, where I shamelessly tried to take the photograph on a borrowed camera, before the battery ran out and the camera was taken off me. So when I walked into that garden in San Gimignano, and saw Mario at the head of the table under the trees having lunch, I was immediately compelled to re-establish my vigil.

On my next visit, I brought my film camera with me. For a week, I was driven around in search of a subject for my project there, but could find nothing. And every evening, we would have dinner together around the table under the trees and I would quietly observe my true but apparently impossible object of desire. On my last day, I had no choice but to ask. After chocolate and frutti di bosco ice cream, I said, "Mario, can I film you?" "Yes", he answered, "But no speaking."

So that afternoon in the garden with the table under the trees, we made a film. Mario picked up a large pinecone and cupped it in his lap. The sun went in and out with the impromptu speed of an ungainly fade. Funeral bells began tolling in the main square; cicada stopped and started under their own command, and crows flew to and from the roof, while Mario chatted away. He sat on various chairs in different places in the garden, and I took four reels of film before the sun gave into the rain clouds and a thunderstorm began.

Something else happened. Suddenly, I could no longer see my father's features in Mario's face, nor in the movement of his hands, or the small steps he took when he walked. It seemed as if the genesis of my desire had burnt itself out, and the making of the film had purged me of my subjectivity. Mario Merz had at last become Mario Merz to me. It was as if their beguiling similarity had been but the means to beget myself a film of Mario in the garden that afternoon in San Gimignano. And as for the striking, destabilising likeness to my father, I could barely see it anymore.

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