

FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS

Mon April 25 | 8:30 pm |

Jack H. Skirball Series

Textures of Life: Film and the Art of Tacita Dean

Los Angeles premieres

British artist Tacita Dean's extraordinary body of art embraces many mediums; she works with paint, found objects, photography, prints and writing, but it is her films that make the most indelible contribution. For Dean, film emulsion is a living tissue that can engender unsurpassed, vibrant experiences of light and rhythm, and she has been a passionate champion of the endangered medium. Working with a deeply contemplative aesthetic, her portrayals of artists and phenomena extend the literal into poetic dimensions. The youngest artist ever to be given a solo show at Tate Britain in 2001, Dean has exhibited at museums throughout the world, including the Hammer Museum two years ago, and she has produced over 50 films. For tonight's program, Dean presents a rare selection of 16mm films that are not normally presented theatrically and that have not shown in Los Angeles before.

In person: Tacita Dean

"A rejoinder to the digital noise of the modern world... cool and passionate, lovely and weirdly old-fashioned." – *The Guardian*

"Brilliant analog magic." – *Art in America*

"[Dean's] nostalgia is not for film itself, but film's way to relate the experience of time." – *The Paris Review*

"Much of what is encountered in Tacita Dean's art is stirringly elusive. Like Werner Herzog chasing mirages in his esoteric documentary *Fata Morgana*, or like Bas Jan Ader forever lost "in search of the miraculous," Dean is consumed by mystery. She demonstrates lasting delight in traces, apparitions, transcendent possibilities, yet there is an

inexorable drift towards distraction and disappointment; the prevailing tone is elegiac. Often, we are brought to the brink of revelation - we may even catch a glimpse of ardently sought-after marvels - only for the epiphanic moment and any sure grasp of its significance to instantly pass, to flicker into nothingness." – Declan Long, *Circa*

Program

Michael Hamburger

2007, 16mm anamorphic projection, 26 min. 55 sec., Color, Optical Sound

Continuing her recent collection of film portraits, Tacita Dean's *Michael Hamburger* is a moving portrayal of the poet and translator, a resident of Middleton in Suffolk and great friend of W.G. Sebald. It represented Dean's first commission in Britain since 1999.

For its 28 minutes, the film quietly observes the poet in his study and among the apple trees in his garden. Sunlight dissolves the frames of the windows, the most insubstantial of thresholds between this home, only one-room-deep, and what lies outdoors; a rainbow marks its watery geometry in the sky; and the apples age upon the ground, shrunken, and yet somehow becoming more intensely themselves.

Although Hamburger is said to have despaired of these reviews of his poetry that declared that he is 'better known as a translator', we might detect a similar deprecation of his self, by himself, in the film that shares his name. Unwilling, perhaps unable, to talk of his past and his migrations, most especially fleeing Nazism in 1933, he talks poignantly, instead, of his apple trees, of where they have come from, and of their careful cross-breeding. Purity is dismissed, and one senses with an awkward pathos that the poet is translating himself. (Film and Video Umbrella, London)

Presentation Sisters

2005, 16mm anamorphic projection, 60 min., Color, Optical Sound

Presentation Sisters shows the daily routines and rituals of the last remaining members of a small ecclesiastical community as they contemplate their journey in the spiritual after-life. Great cinematography, lush film colors, use of shadow and space – but it is the everyday duties of the sisters, a small order of nuns in Cork, Ireland that gets you in. It is the mundanity of washing, ironing, folding, cooking and the procedures of human beings, their duties if you like – to self and each other – that become valuable. Almost like a

religious ritual these acts are recognized by Dean as unique and far from the everyday. We are blessed in this life that we live.
(Marcus Bunyan, *Art Blart* blog)

Invited to make a work in Cork (the European City of Culture) in 2005, Tacita Dean discovered a convent inhabited five nuns, belonging to the Order of the Presentation Sisters. Using film, she documented their daily rituals of prayer, making tea and scones, cleaning, chatting and watching television. She decided that the film had to be an hour long because the nuns read hourly from *The Book of Hours* (a Christian book of prayers, dating from the Middle Ages, to be recited at the canonical hours of the day).

“My relationship to film begins at that moment of shooting, and ends in the moment of projection. Along the way, there are several stages of magical transformation that imbue the work with varying layers of intensity. This is why the film image is different from the digital image: it is not only emulsion versus pixels, or light versus electronics, but something deeper—something to do with poetry.” (Tacita Dean, *The New Yorker*, Oct. 31, 2012)

Tacita Dean (b. 1965, Canterbury, England; lives and works in Berlin) studied art at the Falmouth School of Art in England, the Supreme School of Fine Art in Athens, and the Slade School of Fine Art in London. In 1998, she was nominated for a Turner Prize and was awarded a DAAD scholarship for Berlin, Germany, in 2000. She has received the following prizes: Aachen Art Prize (2002); the Primo Regione Piemonte Art Prize from the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy (2004); the Sixth Bennesse Prize at the 51st Venice Biennale (2005); the Hugo Boss Prize Nomination at the Guggenheim Museum, New York (2006); and the Kurt Schwitters Preis Award, Germany (2009). Dean also participated in the Venice Biennale in 2003 and 2005. She had a solo exhibition at the Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane in 2007 and forthcoming solo exhibitions include *Five Americans* at New Museum, New York (2012) and *Tacita Dean* at Norton Museum of Art, Florida (2012).

*Curated by Film/Video faculty Steve Anker and B er enice Reynaud.
Presented as part of the Jack H. Skirball Series.*