



## ALEX MARTINIS ROE DUBLIN, IRELAND

Scratching that replicates the sound of someone rapidly writing on a hard surface issues from a Fender amplifier. Two chairs stand next to a table. A single sheet of paper—an invitation for people to contact the artist to arrange a rendezvous with Dublin-based authors, theorists or artists who have influenced their work—rests on its otherwise empty surface. Several completed worksheets proposing meetings with Chantal Mouffe, Virginia Woolf, and Jo Spence adorn the wall next to the table. On a second wall, a wooden bracket supports a file card that makes reference to an encounter between graduate student Razia Parveen and Wendy Webster, author of *Imagining Home: Gender, "Race" and National Identity, 1945-64*. Videotaped excerpts of Parveen and Webster's meeting play in the adjoining room along with the artist's communication with Parveen and Webster by Skype.

Gathered under the rubric *Genealogies; Frameworks for Exchange*, this initially austere, but highly illuminating, compilation of sound, image, and text brings viewers into the vast and irregular network through which information and influence are transmitted [Pallas Projects; May 6—June 4, 2011]. Roe, whose approach owes much to the writings of feminist theorist Luce Irigaray, constitutes this network by offering multiple perspectives and extending the exhibition beyond the immediacy of the gallery setting. The extensions include a workshop described as a series of concurrent conversations and experiments in non-linear transcription, which predated the exhibition, and a publication. A box file holding copies of supplementary correspondence in addition to audio and video recordings of a Skype communication between professors Terri Bird of Melbourne and Tamsin Lorraine of Philadelphia has also been entered into the library of Dublin's Goethe Institute.

Sifting through the contents of the exhibition, publication, and box file proves revelatory. The encounter offers alternative points of view and raises the issue of giving voice to individuals who may otherwise never be heard. It also makes us aware of ethical issues related to interviewing, the influence of context on content, and the

virtual jungle of ideas and experiences that contributes to the emergence of art works. In *Telling Stories*, 2011, Parveen and Webster's conversation touches upon the question of who actually speaks when oral history compiled from interviews with immigrant women takes written form and appears in an academic journal. They also talk about the interviewer's potentially exploitative role and the difficulty of maintaining informality. Then, on the second monitor, we see Roe facing these two challenges. Here, she directs Parveen and Webster—she tells them where to sit, to be relaxed, to talk as long as they want, and not to think about the audience. The audio compilation *Future Actions*, 2011, provides comments from several visual artists who speak about the influence of texts, peers, and people in general on work and their research of multiple voices approaches. One individual relates the production of art works to essay writing and the inclusion of references.

The correspondence adds an intriguing dimension that reflects and expands viewers' experiences of Internet video conversations. One person, for example, notes the contradictory sense of immediacy and distance conveyed by the use of Skype; another tells of the author's literary voice being replaced by her spoken one, a consequence that was "odd, beautiful, worrying at the same time." And a third individual had no desire to meet any of the authors who inspired her.

There is something very fascinating in the way Roe's project forges links between visual art, writing, art galleries, libraries, communication technologies, methods of documentation and social research. It places us in the gap between writers and readers, speakers and listeners, and artwork and viewer to alter our relationship to and comprehension of these various realms. It changes the notion of authorship and the role of the viewer. The endless sound of writing in the background not only implies that the process is ongoing, but it is also holds loads of potential for sparking experiments in writing, research, and art making.

—John Gayer

## NARCISSUS REFLECTED EDINBURGH, UK

Curated by art historians David Lomas and Dawn Ades, *Narcissus Reflected* continues the Fruitmarket Gallery's well-received series of research-led group exhibitions [April 22—June 26, 2011]. It explores conflicting twentieth-century interpretations of the ancient Narcissus myth, in which a beautiful boy is punished for self-absorption, dying transfixed by his reflection. Major works by Yayoi Kusama, Jess, and Pipilotti Rist are juxtaposed here with surrealist painting, photography, and film.

Salvador Dalí's oil painting and corresponding poem, *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, 1937, and San Francisco-based artist Jess' graphite drawing *Narkissos*, 1976-1991, are strategically positioned as twin nexuses as the exhibition unravels the myth and its implications along divergent lines. Dalí's canonical surrealist work is subjected to psychoanalysis, one of the myth's more recent theoretical readings. In a cabinet opposite the painting, a 1937 pamphlet announces *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* as "the first poem and the first painting obtained entirely through... the paranoiac-critical method." Jacques Lacan, Dalí's 1930s interlocutor, expanded Freud's notes on narcissism by reinforcing its negative connection to homosexuality, which Lacan linked to paranoia and unreal desire.

As Lomas writes, the Narcissus myth is "double-edged" as a theoretical tool or a means to assert sexual identity. While Dalí safely locates homosexual desire in the imaginary realm, the American surrealist magazine *View* celebrated Narcissus in queer photographic practice in 1943. Significantly, Jess' work is sited in a gallery that serves as the tense anteroom—with opposing exits—for both Dalí's and *View*'s displays.

In Jess' *Narkissos*, images pertaining to the myth—ancient statues of Eros and Narcissus; a diver above rippling water; a drooping flower—repeat and overlap in a composition structured around the doubling of motifs. Here, doubling produces meaning and form equally. Hung opposite the drawing, a preparatory pinboard collage presents its source materials: cutout photo-

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Alex Martinis Roe, *Telling Stories*, 2011, two-channel installation of online video conferencing recordings between the artist, Razia Parveen, and Wendy Webster (courtesy the artist and Pallas Projects, Dublin); Alex Martinis Roe, installation view of *Genealogies: Frameworks for Exchange*, 2011 (courtesy the artist and Pallas Projects, Dublin)