

November 16, 2006

(updated 1/18/07)

**Contact:**

Amber Whiteside, 415.357.4170, [awhiteside@sfmoma.org](mailto:awhiteside@sfmoma.org)

Libby Garrison, 415.357.4177, [lgarrison@sfmoma.org](mailto:lgarrison@sfmoma.org)

Robyn Wise, 415.357.4172, [rwise@sfmoma.org](mailto:rwise@sfmoma.org)

**SFMOMA PRESENTS NEW WORK BY  
FRENCH MEDIA ARTIST SYLVIE BLOCHER**

From February 23 to May 13, 2007, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) will present *New Work: Sylvie Blocher*, the latest exhibition in the Museum's ongoing *New Work* series. The exhibition features two video installations by French media artist Sylvie Blocher, including a San Francisco Bay Area-based work commissioned by the Museum and premiered on the occasion of the exhibition.

"Sylvie Blocher's investigation into the concerns of local communities creates a space for personal statements and human voices," says SFMOMA media arts curator Rudolf Frieling, who

commissioned the new work and organized the exhibition. "Her work is driven by a profound desire to hear and listen to the anxieties, thoughts, wishes, or dreams of individuals that she encounters all over the world."

One of France's most notable artists working today, Blocher creates video pieces that reflect issues central to contemporary art practice, exploring the concepts of otherness, authority, representation, memory, and art's political responsibility. In her own words, she feels the need to "renegotiate the status of artists."

For more than a decade Blocher has created works for the ongoing video series *Living Pictures*, initiated in 1992. Each site-specific project involves the artist soliciting volunteers from a group of people who do not necessarily know each other but have something in common—a "*faux groupe*," or phony group, in Blocher's words. She often films the participants one at a time in a single take in front of a minimal backdrop; she then edits the footage into a larger compilation, creating a group portrait out of individual encounters. The artist suggests to the participants that they address someone they imagine behind



Sylvie Blocher, *Living Pictures/Men in Gold* (still), 2007; Commissioned by SFMOMA, courtesy the artist and Art & Public, Geneva; © 2007 Sylvie Blocher/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

the camera. In creating the tightly framed portraits, Blocher concentrates on her subjects' dignity as carriers of their own voice.

*New Work: Sylvie Blocher* includes a Bay Area-based installment of *Living Pictures* filmed during her residency in the community and commissioned by SFMOMA. Titled *Living Pictures/Men in Gold*, the locally based production focuses on individuals such as entrepreneurs, CEOs, venture capitalists, and designers who have accumulated wealth in Silicon Valley's high-tech industries. The portraits reflect a group of people with different cultural backgrounds, nationalities, and work experiences who share the ambition to make money and take risks. Blocher is interested in the motives, desires, fantasies, obsessions, and anxieties related to fulfilling the American dream—vividly embodied in the region's pioneering technology industry—and the complexity of our relationship to money. The commission signals the Museum's commitment to fostering a continuous dialogue with contemporary artistic practice as well as its link to the San Francisco community.

In previous segments of *Living Pictures* Blocher has recorded, among other groups, preeminent physicists at the CERN in Geneva (*The Meditation Room*, 2001), Princeton University's football team (*Are You a Masterpiece?*, 1999), as well as people from neighborhoods in Buenos Aires (*Dignidad*, 2002) and New Orleans (*What Belongs To Them*, 2004), making statements about beauty, the sublime, death, physics, sports, politics, sex, and gender.

*New Work: Sylvie Blocher* also features *Living Pictures/Je et Nous* (I and Us) (2003), a piece for which Blocher filmed 100 inhabitants of the Sevran district of Beaudottes (a northern suburb of Paris), an area reeling from industrial restructuring and rife with issues of poverty and ethnic tension. The video was first shown at the *Zone of Urgency* 2003 Venice Biennale as part of the larger *Je & Nous* (I & Us) social practice project by the interdisciplinary collective Campement Urbain (which includes Blocher, urban planner François Daune, and philosopher Josette Faidit). In this work, Blocher's subjects stand in front of a monochrome screen wearing black T-shirts inscribed with their personal statements in basic white lettering. Statements such as "I dream of having identity papers," "I'm ashamed of you," and "I can't afford to speak of beauty because I have no money" invariably corroborate, complete, or counter each other, piecing together a community portrait from portrayals of unique individuals.

In conjunction with the opening of the exhibition, SFMOMA will present an artist talk featuring Blocher on Thursday, February 22, at 6:30 p.m. in the Phyllis Wattis Theater. This program is free and open to the public. A free illustrated brochure, with an essay by Frieling, will be available in the galleries.

The *New Work* series is organized by SFMOMA and is generously supported by Collectors Forum, an SFMOMA auxiliary and the founding patron of the series. Major funding also is provided by Mimi L. Haas, Nancy and Steven H. Oliver, Robin Wright, and the Betlach Family Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Bay Area Video Coalition and Cultural Services, Consulate General of France in San Francisco. Hotel sponsor: W Hotel San Francisco.

\* \* \*

**Museum hours:** Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:45 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day): Open at 10 a.m. Closed Wednesdays and the following

public holidays: New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas. The Museum is open the Wednesday between Christmas and New Year's Day.

**Koret Visitor Education Center:** Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:30 p.m. Summer hours: Open at 10 a.m.

**Admission prices:** Adults \$12.50; seniors \$8; students \$7. SFMOMA members and children 12 and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings after 6 p.m. admission is half-price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by Muni, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, and Caltrain. Hourly, daily, and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415.348.0971.

**Visit our Web site at [www.sfmoma.org](http://www.sfmoma.org) or call 415.357.4000 for more information.**

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is supported by a broad array of contributors who are committed to helping advance its mission as a dynamic center for modern and contemporary art. Major annual support is provided by the Koret Foundation Funds, Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, and Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. KidstART free admission for children 12 and under is made possible by Charles Schwab & Co. Inc. Thursday evening half-price admission is sponsored by Banana Republic.

# # #