

Murray Guy

453 West 17 Street New York NY 10011 T: 212 463 7372 F: 212 463 7319 info@murrayguy.com

Two Serious Ladies: Peggy Ahwesh and Jennifer Montgomery September 12 – October 24, 2015

Over the years Peggy Ahwesh and Jennifer Montgomery's individual practices have concerned similar inquiries into feminism, experimental filmmaking, genre, and cultural identity. Analogous to the two protagonists in Jane Bowles' 1943 novel *Two Serious Ladies*, who each go off on personal odysseys and come back to philosophize about their experiences, Ahwesh and Montgomery inspire and reflect one another. This exhibition presents films that span a relationship of nearly 30 years in which the artists continue to return to each other in order to witness, contribute to, and perform in each other's work.

The daily gallery program will include a continuous play of the following six films. A weekly evening screening will take place with additional films by Peggy Ahwesh, Jennifer Montgomery, Tara & Gordon Nelson, and Moyra Davey.

Screen A: Jennifer Montgomery, *Transitional Objects*, 2000, 19 minutes

"Begun as a consideration of the upgrading from manual to digital film editing techniques, *Transitional Objects* explores the anxiety and loss inevitable in such a transition while also suggesting the consequences of other life transitions. The video takes its title from D.W. Winnicott's theory of children's use of transitional objects to negotiate the gaps between internal reality and the shared reality of people and things. Remarkably layered, *Transitional Objects* weaves together considerations of splicing, Winnicott, sewing, motherhood, new technology and loss of mastery." —Carl Bogner, Union Theater, Milwaukee, WI

Screen B: Peggy Ahwesh, *The Ape of Nature*, 2010, 24 minutes

Ape of Nature investigates memory and the uncanny through the experience of hypnotized subjects who communicate via a glacial and slow storytelling informed by suggestion and the working of the unconscious. Art is the ape of nature—the imitation, the mirror, the follies of human invention that strive for the divine. In the *Ape of Nature*, inspired by Herzog's *Heart of Glass*, the performers evoke a murky past and foreshadow a dystopic future.

Screen A: Peggy Ahwesh, *Collections*, 2012, 6 minutes

A video about the spiritual currency of objects, the desire to hang on to the inexplicable... "something profoundly related to subjectivity: for while the object is a resistant material body, it is also, simultaneously, a mental realm over which I hold sway, a thing whose meaning is governed by myself alone." A rapid tour through the magic system of the collection, momentarily diverting attention from our throwaway society.

Screen B: Peggy Ahwesh, *Bethlehem*, 2009, 8 minutes

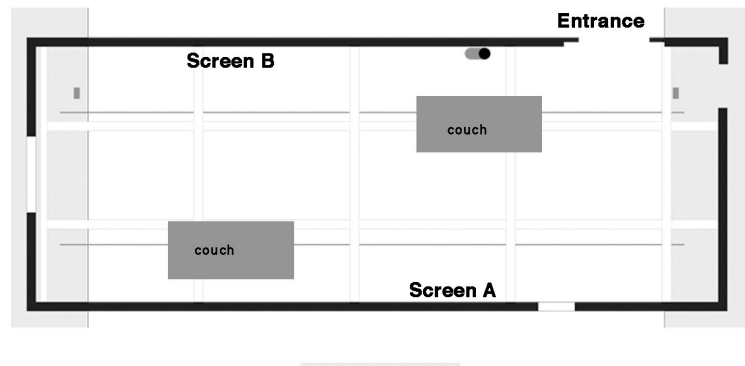
"Working through my archive of accumulated video footage, I pretended it was found footage from anonymous sources, editing memories like a string of pearls. What began as a tribute to Bruce Conner of the period of *Valse Triste* and *Take the 5:10 to Dreamland*, with their deliberate pace and bittersweet memory of home, ended as a dedication to my father as I wound my way through personal miscellany with distance and a broader aim." —Peggy Ahwesh

Screen B: Jennifer Montgomery, *One Species Removed*, 2013, 38 minutes

This video is about animal empathy (anthropomorphism) and our struggles with mortality. The title reflects a pun, with two supporting sources. The first, that we often transfer our most profound emotions onto other animals, i.e., "one species removed." The second, the crackpot but very moving theories of Rudolf Steiner. He believed that animals have a group soul, used interchangeably with the term "species." When one animal dies, the group replaces that part of itself. By contrast, each human being is an individual species/soul, so that when we die, a whole species is rendered extinct.

Screen A: Peggy Ahwesh, *Martina's Playhouse*, 1989, 20 minutes

“In Martina’s Playhouse everything is up for grabs. The little girl of the title oscillates from narrator to reader to performer and from the role of baby to that of mother. While the roles she adopts may be learned, they are not set, and she moves easily between them. Similarly, in filmmaker Peggy Ahwesh’s playhouse of encounters with friends, objects aren’t merely objects but shift between layers of meaning. Men are conspicuously absent, a ‘lack’ reversing the Lacanian/Freudian constructions of women, as Ahwesh plays with other possibilities.” — Kathy Geritz, program notes (Berkeley: Pacific Film Archive, 1990)



Peggy Ahwesh is a media artist based in New York who has been active since the 1970s in a variety of technologies and methodologies of film, video and sound. Recent solo exhibitions and screenings include: *Kissing Point*, Microscope Gallery (2014); *City Thermogram*, site specific video project sponsored by Midnight Moment, Times Square Arts (2015); and *the third body*, day-long conference dedicated to Ahwesh’s films at the British Film Institute, London (2013.) Other significant screenings include: *The Private Glance*, Tate Modern (2010); *Laugh My Darling*, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao (2009); *Peggy Ahwesh*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia; Madrid (2007); *The Image in Question: War-Media-Art*, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University (2010) and the Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art (1993, 1995 and 2002.) Ahwesh has received grants from the Jerome Foundation, Creative Capital, Guggenheim Fellowship and NYSCA. In 2000 she received the Alpert Award in the Arts. Ahwesh’s work is in distribution at Electronic Arts Intermix, New York and Lightcone, Paris. Find her on the web at Senses of Cinema/Great Directors Critical Database, World Picture Film Theory Journal, Electronic Arts Intermix and the Brooklyn Museum, Elizabeth Sackler Center for Feminist Art. Ahwesh is Professor of Film & Electronic Arts at Bard College and has taught film history at Al Quds-Bard Partnership, Palestine and the Bard Prison Initiative.

Jennifer Montgomery’s film titles include *One Species Removed* (2013), *The Agonal Phase* (2010), *Deliver* (2008), *Notes on the Death of Kodachrome* (2006), *Threads of Belonging* (2003), *Transitional Objects* (2000), *Troika* (1998), *Art For Teachers of Children* (1995), *I, a Lamb* (1992), *Age 12: Love With a Little L* (1990), and *Home Avenue* (1989). These films range from experimental essays to experimental features. Her work has shown at international festivals, as well as the 2008 Whitney Biennial (NYC), MoMA (NYC), the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Gene Siskel Film Center (Chicago), the ICA (London), and the Walker Arts Center (Minneapolis). She has been the recipient of many grants, including a Guggenheim Fellowship. Montgomery has taught filmmaking and film theory for over two decades, at a variety of institutions, such as Bard College, The University of Illinois-Chicago, Northwestern University, Barnard College, and the Cooper Union. She currently lives in Hyde Park, MA.

For more information or images, please contact the gallery at +1-212-463-7372 or info@murrayguy.com.