

## Martine Syms *Ugly Plymouths*

24 Cork Street residency  
October – November 2020

Sadie Coles HQ begins an offsite residency at 24 Cork Street with a month long solo presentation by Martine Syms, the first UK showing of her recent project *Ugly Plymouths*, 2020. First presented in Los Angeles earlier this year, the immersive video installation comprises a one-act play shown across three screens – starring Hot Dog, Doobie, and Le Que Sabe. As the narrative progresses, the three characters talk and sing alongside and over each other, one receding as another moves into the foreground. On occasion their dialogue falls into a robotic unison, a kind of emotionless chorus – the voices define the distance between them more than the relation. They have trouble relating, despite their efforts at romance, and this troubled connection is the subject of their dialogue.



In footage the characters are not visualized; only their surroundings, and surrounding thoughts, are. Videos pan across beach vacations, domestic scenes, music concerts and everyday life in motion. The video takes as its establishing environment the Los Angeles described in Bob Kaufman's poem "Hollywood": in this Los Angeles, the city is sick without leave. Actors, artists, pimps, salesclerks and poets are selling delusions whole-heartedly, where there is always a catch and never a foundation.

Martine Syms work has been exhibited and screened extensively, including presentations at the Museum of Modern Art, Hammer Museum, ICA London, New Museum, Whitney Museum of Art, Secession, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, and The Studio Museum in Harlem, among other institutions. She has lectured at Yale University, SXSW, California Institute of the Arts, University of Chicago, Johns Hopkins University, and MoMA PS1, among other venues. Recent solo exhibitions include *BOON*, Secession (2019); *Shame Space*, ICA Virginia Commonwealth University (2019); *Grand Calme*, SCHQ (2018); *Big Surprise*, Bridget Donahue Gallery (2018); *Contemporary Projects: Martine Syms*, Serralves Museum (2018); *Projects 106: Martine Syms*, Museum of Modern Art (2017); *Fact and Trouble*, ICA London (2016). From 2007-2011 she was the co- director of the Chicago artist run project space Golden Age, and she currently runs Dominica Publishing, an imprint dedicated to exploring blackness in visual culture. She is the author of *Implications and Distinctions: Format, Content and Context in Contemporary Race Film* (2011). In 2018 Syms was awarded a fellowship by the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and in 2019 she was awarded the Future Fields Commission in Time-Based Media by the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo. Earlier this year, she was named as a recipient of one of the prestigious fellowships granted by the Chicago-based organization United States Artists (USA).

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