

Cecilia Stenbom

Homeland Security

20th November - 23rd December 2010
Tuesday - Saturday, 11am - 5pm
(or by appointment)

Preview: Friday 19th November, 6 - 9pm



Workplace Gallery is pleased to present *Homeland Security* the first UK solo exhibition by Swedish artist Cecilia Stenbom.

Bringing together works from across media including: performance to video, painting, sculpture, installation, and drawing, *Homeland Security* explores Stenbom's investigation into her conviction that in the consumer driven culture of a 21st century over saturated with information, fear has become a more powerful motivating factor than sex.

Appropriation and re-enactment are central to Stenbom's methodology. Taking her source material from public distribution media such as television, movies, advertising, government information broadcast, 24-hour news, and the Internet, Stenbom frequently casts herself as the protagonist of a pastiche that examines our anxieties and desires, reinterpreting scenarios within mass media, retail, and domestic life.

"...I have become specifically interested in what triggers fear in contemporary life and how that fear is used to capture our attention and imagination, making us 'happy customers' and ultimately controlling us."

State of Emergency is a 6 channel video installation based on interviews extracted from *Rescue 911*, the hugely popular US docu-drama from the 1990's hosted by William Shatner about real life rescue situations and amazing stories of survival. In *State of Emergency* Stenbom performs 6 characters from the Emergency services; the 911 Dispatcher, the Police officer, the Paramedic, the Fireman, the Doctor and the Nurse, all talking simultaneously of their experience, delivering a constant barrage of almost indecipherable narrative.

You've Had Me Again is an installation of paintings made on the underside of clear acrylic Perspex. The images are a mix of symbols and detail taken from Stenbom's ongoing collection of material associated with real life drama including: 'The Swine Flu Suit' sold to provide the public with protection from the virus, Gas Masks sold for domestic use, a list of resuscitation drugs, and emergency service equipment and patterns. They are presented alongside patterns and objects that are taken from everyday life, this is echoed in *Play Dead*, a diptych of giant self portrait ink drawings depicting the artist entirely in monochrome save for a pair of marigold gloves and a red and white gingham apron.

Happy Endings Stenbom's series of highly glossed paintings also derive from the overly sentimental concluding scenes of *Rescue 911* that brings together everyone involved in the accident to react to it's outcome. A counterpoint to the sensationalism of Stenbom's interpretations of mass media, *The Scene* is a silent, looped video animation based on emergency vehicle lights. Projected into the darkened domestic interiors of Workplace Gallery's upper floors *The Scene* recalls the effect of an event outside, spilling in through the window and trailing around the room prompting a more poignant moment of reflection.

Much of Stenbom's new work plays on her own susceptibility to be manipulated by mass media and popular culture and her real anxiety around how best to navigate fact and fiction. The sculptures *Bio-Terrorism vs. Natural Defenses* bring together the container of one of the worlds most popular pro-biotic drinks with the Latin names of bacteria and viruses used in biological warfare. *DEFCON* is an installation comprised of 2 line drawings covering 2 walls of the gallery. The first image is a fictitious depiction of NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command) taken from the 80's film *War Games*; the second image is a flowchart diagram of Stenbom's own personal list of threats to her daily existence.

Alive - An Essential Guide to Survival is the latest in an ongoing series of video works in which Stenbom performs an unsettling monologue to camera. Past works have included a guide to her collection of gadgets and a sideways look at US fat fighting drugs. In this case she provides us with a contemporary survival guide made up of official and unofficial advice on how to stay alive such as how to avoid being killed by an accident, by an infectious disease, or how to survive a terrorist attack. In *Homeland Security* Stenbom presents a humorous and self defeating world of narcissism and neurosis where everything from washing up to watching TV is fraught with danger and the potential to discover another way to die.

Cecilia Stenbom was born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1976. She completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki, Finland in 2003 and a Master of Fine Art at Glasgow School of Art in 2005. From 2009 to 2010 she was artist in residence at ISIS Arts in Newcastle. Past exhibitions include: *13th Media Art Biennale*, *WRO 09 Expanded City*, Wroclaw, Poland, *Trickle-down Theory*, Korjaamo, Helsinki, Finland, *The Public Realm Project*, Curated by /sLab, Sunderland, *TOMORROW THE FUTURE*, Fishmarket Gallery, Northampton, *All my favourite singers couldn't sing*, Workplace Gallery, *Connecting Principles*, Culture Lab, Newcastle, *Breslau CV Rydek*, Wroclaw, Poland, *King Fisher's Tales*, Union Gallery, London, *False Witness*, Workplace Gallery, Gateshead, *Daily Escapes*, MUU Gallery Helsinki, *Helsinki International*, Korjaamo, Helsinki, *Formal Dining*, Hales Gallery, London, *Blue Star Red Wedge*, Glasgow International, Glasgow, *Glasgow/Beijing*, Museum of Central Academy of Fine Art, Beijing, China, *Exit Strategy*, Tramway, Glasgow, UK, *The Games We Play*, Magyar Képzőművészeti Egyetem, Budapest, Hungary, *When Subjectivity Meets Reality*, Gallery 3:14, Bergen, Norway, *One Day Stands*, ID:I Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden, *Crowd Pleasers*, The San Francisco Art Institute and Academy of Fine Arts, San Francisco U.S.A. and Helsinki, Finland.

Cecilia Stenbom lives and works in Gateshead, UK

Workplace Gallery was founded by artists Paul Moss and Miles Thurlow; based in Gateshead UK, Workplace Gallery represents a portfolio of emerging and established artists through the gallery programme, curatorial projects and international art fairs. Workplace Gallery opened in 2005 at 34 Ellison Street, Gateshead - part of Trinity Square Shopping Centre particularly noted for its iconic Brutalist car park designed by architect Rodney Gordon for the Owen Luder Partnership, which featured as a key location in Mike Hodges 1971 cult British gangster film *Get Carter* starring Michael Caine. Since the original gallery was demolished in 2008 as part of the planned regeneration of Gateshead Town Centre, Workplace Gallery has relocated to The Old Post Office in Gateshead; a listed 19th Century red brick building built upon the site where the important British artist, engraver and naturalist Thomas Bewick (1753-1828) lived and died.

The next exhibition at Workplace Gallery will be a solo exhibition of new work by Mike Pratt opening on 14th January 2011. To celebrate the opening of *Homeland Security* please join us afterwards at Central Bar in Gateshead.

Kindly supported by:



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