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# MCA PRESENTS FRENCH ARTIST SYLVIE BLOCHER'S POIGNANT AND PROVOCATIVE 'LIVING PICTURES'.

17 FEBRUARY TO 26 APRIL 2010



Sydney, Australia: The Museum of Contemporary Art will present the first in-depth solo exhibition of works by prominent French video artist Sylvie Blocher in Sydney this autumn. *Sylvie Blocher: What is Missing?* is a survey of the artist's video installations from 2003 to the present and will be on display from 17 February until 26 April 2010.

Sylvie Blocher is best known for creating portrait studies of individuals or groups within society. Through these works, which she titles 'Living Pictures', Blocher explores communal issues as well as personal concerns, asking questions to which her subjects respond with often surprising candour. Presented across single or multiple screens, Blocher's works envelop viewers spatially as they address the complexities of modern urban life.

For her survey at the MCA, Blocher presents seven of her *Living Pictures* works, as well as an eighth work in which the camera is 'turned back' upon the artist herself, making her its subject. It is the only such work she has made to date.

Engaging and frequently provocative, Blocher's video works explore diverse themes from cultural identity and migration to masculinity and self-expression. Underlying all of her works is a consistent exploration of authority, as the artist and her camera mediate between the extremes of controlled social presentation and liberated individual expression.

Although they are not on public view, Blocher's questions play a critical role in her works. Wide-ranging, politicised, deeply personal, idiosyncratic, sometimes perplexing or even invasive, they aim to draw the



Image previous page: Sylvie Blocher *Living Pictures / What is Missing?* (still) 2010 single-channel video installation English version Commissioned by Museum of Contemporary Art for C3West Image courtesy and © the artist

Image top left: Sylvie Blocher *Living Pictures / Je et Nous (I and Us)* 2003 video installation colour, PAL, format 4:3 55 minutes floating screen, 300 x 400 cm edition 1 French and English text Courtesy the artist and Collection départementale d'art contemporain de la Seine-Saint-Denis, France © the artist for Campement Urbain

Image top right: Sylvie Blocher *Living Pictures / Men in Gold* (still) 2007 2 screen video installation 35:40 minutes, edition 1 + AP English version Commissioned by San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: Accessions Committee Fund purchase Image courtesy the artist and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art © the artist

speaker out from themselves, to shed their carefully constructed 'sociality' and reveal a more intimate, less controlled (or less authoritative) version of themselves and their world views.

Blocher has described her questions as "tools that touch the people" who come before her camera. She explains that her subjects, "can be rich or poor, but they want to look their best before the camera. I ask impossible questions – for example, to ask a physicist to describe death – which can be almost childlike in their simplicity, but they provoke something in the person in front of the camera, perhaps a kind of catharsis or release". The interview process can take up to five or more hours of undivided focus and attention in the quiet of Blocher's makeshift studio, alone with the artist and her camera.

Among the highlights of the exhibition are the video works *Men in Gold*, which focuses on the privileged lives of Silicon Valley's millionaires, and *Je et Nous (I and Us)*, a quiet counterpoint made in collaboration with the large multi-ethnic community of Sevrans, France.

The MCA has a long-standing relationship with Sylvie Blocher and first presented her work in the exhibition *Sporting Life* in 2000. In the last four years the MCA and Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest have worked closely with Blocher on C3West: an innovative collaboration between artists, cultural institutions and businesses in Western Sydney. *What is Missing?* (2008-10), the title work of the exhibition, was commissioned by the MCA in response to Blocher's C3West residency, where she worked with members of the Penrith community and the Penrith Panthers.

*Sylvie Blocher: What Is Missing?* is presented concurrently at Penrith Regional Gallery & Lewers Bequest, where it features work by Campement Urbaine, a visionary Paris-based collective headed by Blocher and architect/urban planner François Daune, for the city of Penrith. The exhibition at Penrith Regional Gallery runs from 13 February to 4 April 2010.

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