Sam Taylor-Wood

1995–2007

Cover Image

Self Portrait Suspended IV, 2004
C-print
53 3/16 x 63 13/16 inches
(135.6 x 162.8 centimeters) including frame

Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland

Sam Taylor-Wood

1995–2007

Margo A. Crutchfield

With contributing essays by
Barbara London
Linda Nochlin

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MOCA

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Foreword

Jill Snyder, Executive Director, Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland

MOCA Cleveland is proud to present the first major museum exhibition in the United States of the work of Sam Taylor-Wood, a British artist of international stature who has not yet received significant critical attention in the United States. A leading artist of her generation, Sam Taylor-Wood came to prominence in the mid-1990s and has since become acclaimed for her exploration through photography, film, and video of the contemporary psyche, and in so doing for her reinvigoration of portraiture through these contemporary media.

The exhibition brings together a selection of Taylor-Wood's photographic and film/video works from the mid-1990s to the present. We are most grateful to the lenders to the exhibition, Donald and Doris Fisher, Barbara Bluhm and Don Kaul, Ninah and Michael Lynne, Heather and Tony Podesta, the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, whose generosity ensured a stellar representation of the artist's work. This exhibition is underwritten by National City Bank, with additional exhibition sponsorship support from Donley's, John P. Murphy Foundation, Forest City Enterprises, Matt Garson M%, and ideastream. Generous funding toward the catalogue is provided by White Cube, London. We are delighted the exhibition will travel beyond its Cleveland venue to the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

I wish to acknowledge MOCA's Senior Curator, Margo Crutchfield, for her keen eye and foresight in recognizing the importance of mounting a major survey of Sam Taylor-Wood's work and for her passion and skill in conceiving a stunning exhibition. The handsome catalogue is the creative work of Arlene Watson and her team at Möbius Grey, LLC design. The staff at MOCA has worked as a team to realize this ambitious exhibition, navigating continents and oceans along the way. I also recognize the dedication and unwavering support of MOCA's Board of Directors, whose devotion and leadership help MOCA to realize its artistic goals. Finally, we are extraordinarily fortunate to have the opportunity to work with Sam Taylor-Wood. Her unflinching embrace of emotion, from the raw to the sublime, and her astonishing portrayal of states of being contribute much to our perception, attitudes, and understanding toward what it is to be human.

Work Illustrated on previous pages.

Five Revolutionary Seconds XIII, 1998
Color photograph with sound
44 x 304 inches (113.7 x 775 centimeters)
Collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta, Falls Church, VA
and Gift of the Collectors Committee

Unbound

Margo A. Crutchfield, Senior Curator, MOCA Cleveland

A beautiful nude woman reclines gracefully. Immobile. A dead swan lies on top of her, its body pressed between her thighs, its neck braced on her torso. This is the opening image of *That White Rush* (2007), a short film by British artist Sam Taylor-Wood. Beguiling and provocative, the images of the woman unfold at an almost painstakingly slow pace. Simultaneously, however, the passage of time represented in this piece is accelerated. In a somewhat shocking counterpoint to the woman's youth and beauty, Taylor-Wood depicts the swan decomposing. But this process, one that normally takes weeks, is accelerated and compressed into a few minutes. Here the artist juxtaposes movement and stillness, life and death, together in a seemingly endless moment.

The suspended moment, that exquisite paradox between stillness and movement, between time stopped and its inexorable progression, is at the core of much of Taylor-Wood's art. Employing the signature media of our age—photography, film, and video—Taylor-Wood explores a fascination with suspended states, and a desire, as she states, "to convey the sense of being caught between two worlds... of existing in moments without end."[1] In addressing this theme, Taylor-Wood masterfully draws from everyday life, popular culture, and the history of art, traversing fluidly back and forth from sources ranging from Renaissance, Baroque, and 17th-century Dutch painting to Hollywood culture of the present. In this age of mesmerizing complexity, Taylor-Wood's art stands apart for the way she explores—with a direct, incisive sensibility that can be trenchant or poetic— liminal states and core issues of the human condition within the contemporary context of the secular, urban landscape in which we live.

Taylor–Wood came to prominence in the mid 1990s, as part of the YBAs (Young British Artists), the movement that propelled such artists as Damien Hirst, Jake and Dinos Chapman, and Tracey Emin to almost pop star status for their provocative and "sensational" works. By the end of the decade Taylor-Wood had gained recognition as a leading artist of her generation for compelling psychological portraits that tapped into and exposed the ethos of the times. Her work includes photographs, photographic installations, and short 16 mm or 35 mm films (transferred to video or DVD, then projected as installations or presented on LCD screens). Informed by opera, theater, film, the history of art, and popular culture, her photographs and single- or multi-projection film installations examine the inner self, dysfunctional relationships, and the uneasy sense of disconnection in contemporary life. Photographic works of the mid 1990s such as the "Five Revolutionary Seconds" series (1995–2000) or film installations such as *Atlantic* (1997) or *Third Party* (1999) take the form of psychosocial dramas, ambiguous tableaux that portray alienated individuals in awkward or perplexing social situations.

Beginning in 2001, the theme of suspension—of time, of consciousness, of the self—became a focus of exploration in Taylor-Wood's art. Self-evident in more recent works such as the "Self Portrait Suspended" series of 2004, traces of this interest in liminal states can be seen developing in work from earlier stages of the artist's career. As a subject, this notion of suspension emerged in the "Five Revolutionary Seconds" series of 1995–2000. Though subtle, the artist's interest in suspended moments and the complexities of time appear in these large-scale audio/photographic works. Spanning up to 25 feet in length, these psychologically charged panoramas of self-absorbed individuals in ambiguous social situations, present fragments of multiple experiences simultaneously within a unified picture plane. In these works, Taylor-Wood suspends, then re-presents multiple scenarios at once, accompanying them with an audio track of ambient sounds and conversational fragments recorded during the photo shoot. In what becomes more prevalent in later works, Taylor-Wood's representation of time here introduces the paradox so central to much of her work: a dichotomy of time arrested and time moving forward, of movement and stasis. In these works Taylor-Wood conflates tableaux vivants or "frozen moments in time" with an almost cinematic sense of movement.

In the mid to late 1990s, an interest in suspended states of being surfaces in a number of Taylor-Wood's film works that focus on the interior psyches of conflicted individuals in extreme emotional states. The single-channel projections *Method in Madness* (1995), *Brontosaurus* (1995), and *Hysteria* (1997), followed by the five-screen installation *Pent Up* (1996) explore states of being, often pushing mental and physical thresholds to the limit. *Method in Madness* portrays an individual in the throes of a mental breakdown. *Brontosaurus* conveys ecstasy, as a naked man dances in a state of complete abandon. Rendered in slow motion, he seems strangely out of sync, as if suspended somewhere between conscious and subconscious states. *Pent Up* simultaneously features five individuals, on separate but adjoining screens, in the grips of anxiety. *Hysteria* portrays a woman's tumultuous descent from exhilaration to psychic disintegration. Projected in silence and, at times, in slow motion, this 8-minute sequence of images depicts a woman's face in the throes of emotional turmoil. This riveting examination of the human psyche subjected to extreme stress reveals an altered state of consciousness, one disconnected or suspended from everyday realities.

A more overt representation of Taylor-Wood's interest in suspended states can be found in the "Soliloquy" suite of photographs that the artist began creating in 1998. Reminiscent of early Renaissance altarpieces, these large-scale photographs are structured with a large upper image featuring the main subject suspended above a photographic frieze made up of a sequence of smaller images. Like Renaissance altarpieces in which the scenes in the predellas below elaborate, continue, or reflect on the main scene above, Taylor-Wood's "Soliloquies" typically present a subject in the large image above suspended over a series of subconscious fantasies. In speaking about these works, Taylor-Wood states:

> My iconic inspiration comes from old-master paintings, from Simone Martini to Fra Angelico, from Paolo Uccello to Andrea Mantegna, in whose work the panels form triptychs or unified wholes, constructed as a large architectural space where figures are placed as a separation between heaven and earth. Above, in the empyrean, are the Divinities and Saints, below their terrestrial events. In the *Soliloquies* I wanted to depict the same separation, between the sublime and the physical, immaterial and material, and I sought to bring them into line in a whole that would produce a sort of focus on the territory that lies between the conscious and the unconscious.[2]

In the years following 2000, the evocation of suspended states—with allusions to states poised between the divine and the profane, the conscious and the unconscious—becomes more pronounced in Taylor-Wood's work. The large-scale film projection *Pietà* (2001), like many of her works, draws upon the history of Western art, particularly the composition and symbolism of religious iconography. Reminiscent of Michelangelo's famed sculpture (1498–1499), Taylor-Wood's contemporary version portrays the artist, posed as the Madonna, struggling to hold actor Robert Downey Jr.—the dying Christ—on her lap. Rendered in excruciatingly slow motion, this beautiful and tender rendition of this classic theme portrays a heartrending liminal state—the last moments between life and death—while poignantly embodying human vulnerability, compassion, and helplessness.

In 2001 Taylor-Wood created *Leap*, a large-scale photograph in which she represents, for the first time, an actual figure suspended in mid air. With eyes closed and right hand raised, this man suspended in air also alludes to Christian iconography, and, as Curator Kieko Toyoda observes, recalls Christ giving a blessing or being resurrected from the dead.[3]

This direct allusion to suspension, of both body and soul, continues most notably in the film *Ascension* (2003), with its strange, almost surreal depiction of a man lying prone on the floor, seemingly asleep, unconscious, or dead, with another man tap dancing nonchalantly on his chest. A white dove, perched precariously on the dancer's head, struggles to keep balance, but eventually flies away. With the title's literal reference, as well as the work's biblical connotations of the Holy Trinity, the allusion to suspended states is unmistakable. The suggestion is reinforced by the implied departure of the soul from the body, as symbolized by the white dove's ascension. Following in this vein is a suite of photographs titled *Falling* (2003), in which individuals are portrayed plunging through the air toward the ground, and the film *Strings* (2003), in which Taylor-Wood films a dancer performing, suspended angel-like, above musicians playing the andante movement from Tchaikovsky's Second String Quartet. All four works demonstrate a marked shift in sensibility in representing not only improbable or surreal scenarios, but metaphysical states of being—states that transcend everyday realities and approach visionary or mystical dimensions.

More down to earth is Taylor-Wood's *David* (2004), a work commissioned by the National Portrait Gallery in London. Often noted for its intimacy and sensual beauty, this 1-hour 7-minute filmic portrait features the soccer star David Beckham asleep in bed. Here, Taylor-Wood pays homage to Michelangelo's sculpture *Night* (1526–1533) as well as Andy Warhol's film *Sleep* (1963) to represent this international sports icon, immersed in the netherworld of dreams, suspended somewhere in between the realm of the conscious and the elusive reaches of the subconscious. In this elegant and serene portrait, Taylor-Wood angled the camera in such a way as to simulate an intimate experience with Beckham, as if the viewer were lying next to him, very close. In affording such unprecedented access to this slumbering Adonis, Taylor-Wood brings adoration, hero worship, reverie, and voyeurism into play while representing a gorgeous but vulnerable man, with all defenses down.

In a trajectory that becomes increasingly reflective, a number of Taylor-Wood's works probe the physical boundaries of existence, the ravages of time, and our impending mortality. Two of the artist's works, *Self Portrait as a Tree* (2000) and *Self Portrait in a Single Breasted Suit with Hare* (2001), are intensely personal examinations of the fragility of human life. Though metaphoric, these two photographs dramatically convey the artist's confrontation with cancer, mortality, and her struggle to survive.

Uncharacteristic for Taylor-Wood, *Self Portrait as a Tree* is a landscape photograph, taken as the artist emerged from an intense period in her life during which she participated in the Venice Biennale, gave birth to her first daughter, and struggled with cancer. The photograph, portraying a momentary beam of light hitting a lone tree in a bleak landscape, serves as a quiet but potent symbol of resilience and hope.

Countering this solemn image is the more upbeat *Self-Portrait in a Single Breasted Suit with Hare*, an ironic image in which Taylor-Wood portrays herself dressed in a suit, holding a hare in one hand. Here the artist assumes a feisty, almost defiant yet humorous stance in commenting on her recent battle with breast cancer. The title references (as a pun) the cancer she overcame; the hare is a symbol of lust. Taken together, they convey a renewed vigor and lust for life.[4]

Referencing the grand traditions of painting, such as 17th-century Dutch painting, are *A Little Death* (2002) and the excruciatingly beautiful yet disconcerting film *Still Life* (2001), which traces the trajectory from sensual beauty to visceral repulsion by documenting a plate of fruit decomposing over time. Taylor-Wood's contemporary memento mori conveys the adage that both beauty and life are fleeting and that all material abundance ends in death and decay. But an arresting aspect of this work, and of *A Little Death*, is not only the simultaneous attraction of beauty and repulsion or witnessing decay before our very eyes, but how the artist suspends time, compressing, then speeding up a 12-week process of decay into 3 minutes 44 seconds. In death, time is suspended, stopped. But here stillness and movement–time stopped and its onward march—co-exist. Likewise, in the film *A Little Death,* which portrays the decomposition of a hare, nothing is still in the face of death. After a quiet beginning the hare becomes infested with maggots, and "a life force takes charge," Taylor-Wood remarks. "Then you start seeing the stomach of the hare bubbling under the surface, and then it erupts like life repossessing itself…eating away…until there is nothing left. It's…violent…I wasn't prepared for the horror of it."[5]

The "Self-Portrait Suspended" (2004) series is the most literal, and poetic expression of Taylor-Wood's fascination with suspended states. Taken in the artist's studio in a single day from dawn to dusk, this sequence of self-portraits conveys the precariousness of life and yet resonates with grace, energy, and exhilaration. In these works, Taylor-Wood appears weightless, suspended in midair, detached both from her surroundings and from the world. In what seems surreal, Taylor-Wood appears gracefully levitating, falling, or floating effortlessly between the studio floor and ceiling or, by extension, between the earth and the sky. All the while, the passage of time is ever present in the quality of light captured through the window in each photograph as the day traverses from morning into night.

"Making 'Self Portrait Suspended' allowed me," states Taylor-Wood, "to look at many of the issues I had previously explored in my work, especially breaking points."[6] In her continuing exploration of physical and emotional limits, Taylor-Wood seems in these works to be pushing up against both physical and spiritual boundaries. In the "Self Portrait Suspended" series, she presents the seemingly impossible scenario of defying gravity, with imagery that translates into an intense aspiration to transcend human limits. Besides a calm but unbridled energy, these works convey a sense of freedom, joy, and a desire for physical release and/or spiritual transcendence.

Another body of Taylor-Wood's work, "Bram Stoker's Chair" (2004), also deals with suspended states. These photographs portray the artist in mid-action, hovering, tumbling, ascending, and falling as she precariously balances on a tipped chair. The artist's body casts a long shadow on the wall but the chair has no shadow, a reference—along with the series' title—to Bram Stoker's Count Dracula and his eternal state of being "un-dead," hovering forever between life and death. Thus alluding to the macabre, these athletic yet graceful images also convey a sense of risk and danger. "I have a sense that being balanced on that chair," remarks Taylor-Wood, "is like leaping into the unknown. The idea is that there is this other world which is keeping everything sustainable, without knowing what it is."[7] As Curator Hripsimé Visser has observed, both this and the "Self-Portrait Suspended" series "provide a paradoxical image of unrestrained freedom. With the danger that attends that. The dark edge they all have is like a window that allows a glimpse of another dimension, of life after death."[8]

The film *Prelude in Air* (2005) depicts a virtuosic cellist playing Bach, totally absorbed, immersed mentally and physically, as if transported. In this scenario, however, there is no musical instrument. Taylor-Wood asked the musician to simulate the performance without his cello. In rendering the instrument invisible, the artist brings the emotion and physicality of the performer into heightened focus, creating an almost visceral, kinesthetic experience for the viewer. The richness and intensity of Bach's music is not only aural, but becomes nearly palpable as tension and movement ripple throughout the musician's arms and body. Here, Taylor-Wood renders music, which is imperceptible to the eye, almost visible as we seem to see and feel it moving sinuously throughout in the man's nerves and tissues. In isolating this fragment of experience—focusing on and expanding it in this way—Taylor-Wood examines passion at a level of *hyper-real* intensity. *Prelude in Air,* like *Leap* or the "Self Portrait Suspended" photographs, conveys a transcendent experience. Through the intoxicating power of music, the musician is immersed in an altered or heightened state of consciousness, removed or suspended from the everyday.

The Last Century (2005) is reminiscent of a 19th-century Parisian café scene by Édouard Manet, but here a group of five people are gathered in a smoky East London pub. Timed to the length of time that it takes a cigarette to burn down, this film looks initially like a photograph or a still tableau. The five actors seem motionless, but it soon becomes apparent that they are all struggling to hold still poses. Traffic goes by outside, smoke curls up slowly, and it becomes clear that the work is not a photograph at all, but a film taking place in real time. In *The Last Century* a mundane moment paused becomes complex. Taylor-Wood appears to stretch time, extending a single moment, while juxtaposing it against the ongoing advance of time outside. "It's a frozen moment, of life stilled, in time and strangely out of time."[9] In such states of suspension, there is no beginning, and no end. Life is set in a perpetual present. In capturing the instant, yet eternalizing it, there is no closure. For Taylor-Wood it seems, that moment is open.

And unbound.

In this, perhaps, there is freedom.

Endnotes

1. Sam Taylor-Wood, in "Interview with Louise Neri and Sam Taylor-Wood," in *Theatre of the Selves: Sam Taylor-Wood's Portraiture*, exh. brochure, Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney, 2005), unpaginated.
2. Taylor-Wood, in "Essay/interview. Germano Celant/Sam Taylor-Wood: Soliloquy," in *Sam Taylor-Wood* (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 1998), p. 137.
3. Kieko Toyoda, in "Commentary on Works in the Exhibition," in *Sam Taylor-Wood To Be or Not To Be.* (Tokyo: Shiseido Gallery, 2002), p. 28.
4. The hare, throughout history, has symbolized fecundity and lust. In ancient Greece the hare was sacred to the goddess of love, Aphrodite, and the protectress of childbirth, Artemis. In Christian cultures the hare often symbolized lust. See Rowena and Rupert Shepherd, *1000 Symbols* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002). See also James, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974), p. 144.
5. Taylor-Wood, in *"Sam Taylor-Wood in conversation with Annushka Shani,"* in Peter Doroshenko, Harland Miller, James Fox, and Annushka Shani, *Sam Taylor-Wood: Still Lives,* exh. cat., BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art (Gateshead/Eng./Göttingen: BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art /Steidl, 2006), p. 134.
6. Taylor-Wood, in a lecture, September 15, 2007, at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia.
7. Taylor-Wood, in *"Sam Taylor-Wood in conversation with Annushka Shani,"* p. 131.
8. Hripsimé Visser, *Sam Taylor-Wood. Films and Photography* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 2002).
9. Alessandro Vincentelli, *Sam Taylor-Wood. Still Lives,* exh. brochure, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art (Gateshead, Eng., 2006), unpaginated.

In Context: Sam Taylor-Wood

Barbara London

Video emerged as an art form in the mid-1960s, when portable cameras appeared on the consumer market. The earliest activity was distinguished by an interdisciplinary approach, as artists had come from other mediums. The field gradually took shape as collectives formed around the sharing of the initial equipment and artists commandeered derelict industrial spaces for ad-hoc exhibitions. The first media projects were improvisational, often the byproduct of experimentation. During this "modernist" phase, artists explored the specific characteristics of video and gravitated toward ideas over beautiful images.

Back then, long before email, the pace was dramatically slower and contemporary art activities tended to be regional. Events were fewer and farther between, with just a handful of contemporary galleries and cutting-edge museum programs. Young curators culled up-to-date information by frequenting artist hangouts and reading the occasional, after-the-fact reports in such magazines as *Studio International* and *ArtForum*.

Video surfaced at a time of radical transformation in the arts. Painting was becoming three-dimensional; sculpture was morphing into immersive installations, often addressing the particulars of a specific venue or location. Actions carried out by artists alone in their studios—framed specifically for the camera lens—were captured first on Super-8 film and then on videotape. A few of the earliest media practitioners began their careers in music before switching to time-based visual media.

Avant-garde (experimental) media artists worked on the fringes of established systems. They showed their "real time" (editing video or Super-8 film was next to impossible) site-specific work in "alternative" spaces where visual art, music, and other performing arts melded into intermedia "happenings." Information spread through word of mouth. Video and filmmakers climbed dusty staircases with bulky cassettes and reels tucked under their arms and screened their latest pieces at impromptu show-and-tell events, often played back on monitors piled up on the floor for impact (projectors barely existed). They sent new work via parcel post to special events on the other side of the globe. Independently produced magazines with how-to articles had small circulations and reached pockets of media activists. Without a market, artists made videos in "unlimited editions" that reached art school students, festivals, as well as museum and library audiences.

During in the 1980s, portable video cameras proliferated yet were expensive and a bit too clunky to readily carry around. At the same time polish and glossy production values became the rage. (Some artists shot in 16 or 35 mm film for a denser image, which they transferred to video.) In the early 1990s, after more than a decade of high-end special effects being limited to expensive, exclusively commercial production studios, personal computers made effects and editing more accessible.

By the mid-1990s brighter, smaller, and cheaper projectors had become handy tools that offered new possibilities. Some artists—avid filmgoers—began deconstructing standard story-telling language. Wall-sized narrative video installations blossomed. At panoramic scale, the artists Shirin Neshat and Mary Lucier dealt with the mutability of memory over time. With the DVD as an exhibition format, dealers explored how to market media art in limited editions. Suddenly projection installations infiltrated biennials and contemporary survey shows.

At this time a young Sam Taylor-Wood graduated from Goldsmiths College where she experimented with video and photography. While at school she had become familiar with the in extremis actions of such artists as Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley, and started to make unsettling narratives of her own. She struck an emotional chord with a straightforward approach that paralleled her London-based peers Tracey Emin and Gillian Wearing. The latest Hi-8 video cameras, again compact and user-friendly, gave this generation the freedom to experiment with media alone.

Taylor-Wood's *Travesty of a Mockery* (1995) consists of two large projections that mimic cinema's scale and surround sound. But unlike the conventional movie theater experience—viewers buy a ticket, take a seat, and as lights go down anticipate being carried away on a communal narrative ride—Taylor-Wood's installation is spatial. Viewers enter a darkened but seating-less gallery to engage with *Travesty of a Mockery*. They interact by moving closer to or farther away from the two contiguous projections, compelled as much by sound as by image to become involved.

Taylor-Wood structured *Travesty of a Mockery* using the episodic format of TV soap operas, whose ardent viewers anticipate cathartic emotional experiences. Portrayed side by side in distinctly separate projections, an enraged young couple emotes from their stage set kitchen. Against the backdrop of a refrigerator and a counter outfitted with provisions, the female protagonist occupies the left screen. She screams at her partner and tells him to leave, drinks a glass of milk, and then throws it and a frying pan over to his side. He yells back but remains in his barren space, his only prop a simple chair pushed up against a blank wall. Suddenly and aggressively, he barges over to her side, only to storm back to his again.

Tensions crescendo but stop abruptly as the work briefly fades to black, accompanied by abrasive static. It is as if someone is angrily tuning a radio, looking for a different music channel, which puts the tirade momentarily on pause and breaks the action up into short scenes. After ten minutes the work seamlessly loops back to its beginning; the man and woman are trapped forever by the Sisyphean patterns of their emotionally fraught relationship. Taylor-Wood turns what are usually considered private actions into something public, so familiar today with reality TV and Web cams.

Taylor-Wood takes her media work along two trajectories, now shooting most of her work on 35 mm film before transferring to video. She remains interested in the cinematic and distills her disconcerting stories down to their essence, something that in their lushness and brevity echoes what became vernacular in popular culture through advertising and music video. Her installations resonate with how fashion photographers Deborah de Tourbeville and Wolfgang Tillmans pack emotionally charged tensions in a single frame, and how filmmaker Atom Egoyan painstakingly draws tension out in his feature films. Working at projection-installation scale in the language of today's media landscape, Taylor-Wood connects with artists of her cinematically motivated generation—Aernout Mik and Eija-Liisa Ahtila. Each develops human dramas so rooted in what could actually be, but sets up an ambiguity and abstraction that elicits tension from the distancing from the real.

Flat-panel digital displays became readily available and affordable only recently. Thin screens turn media works into objects that readily hang on the wall or sit on a table. Artists now make projects specifically for an intimate, one-on-one setting to be shown in museum gallery spaces and collectors' homes with ambient light. Taylor-Wood first began using this flat screen format in 2001, and embarked along with other artists, such as Bill Viola, in exploring traditional painting genres. Stillness and the memento mori became favored themes, exemplified by her *Still Life* (2001) and her portrait *David* (2004).

The tempo of communication accelerates with technology's daily upgrades, and artists operate in this continuum. With conviction and a deft eye, Sam Taylor-Wood devises evocative scenarios that reflect the emotionally charged media landscape of today. Her art revolves around image and ideas, and she encourages viewers to pause and reflect on life's essentials regardless of unmitigated change.




Sequence of works on previous pages

Travesty of a Mockery, 1995
Two-channel projection
Duration: 10 minutes

Hysteria, 1997
16 mm film /DVD projection
Duration: 8 minutes

Self Portrait as a Tree, 2000
C-print
29 3/4 x 35 4/5 inches (75.6 x 91 centimeters)
Heather and Tony Podesta Collection

Self Portrait in a Single Breasted Suit with Hare, 2001
C-print
63 3/8 x 44 1/2 inches
(161 x 113 centimeters) including frame
Collection of Ninah and Michael Lynne

Pietà, 2001
35 mm film/DVD projection
Duration: 1 minute 57 seconds
Heather and Tony Podesta Collection

Still Life, 2001
35 mm film/DVD
Duration: 3 minutes 44 seconds
Private Collection, San Francisco

A Little Death, 2002
35 mm film/DVD
Duration: 4 minutes
Collection of Barbara Bluhm and Don Kaul

Ascension, 2003
35 mm film/DVD projection
Duration: 4 minutes 15 seconds
Heather and Tony Podesta Collection

WHEN THE STARS WEEP

Linda Nochlin

Sam Taylor-Wood's "Crying Men" is exactly that: a series of large-scale photographs, in color and black and white, of moist-eyed men facing the camera. Just men—except they all happen to be movie stars.

Paul Newman looks at us directly but veils most of the right side of his face with three outstretched fingers. His left eye, though revealed, has to work through a barrier of shadow to reach us. We are aware of the heavy ring, like the lock on a protective gate, circling his third finger, bearing the number 1, and of the network of wrinkles—no actress would ever allow them— that score his beauty with pathos. Willem Dafoe, red shirt blazing, hair tousled, covers his emotion with a diagonal sweep of his arm. Jude Law takes to grief passively but tellingly, huddled in a corner, legs drawn up, arms akimbo, a deep crease down his forehead, in a shot that is mostly moodily shaded blank wall. Kris Kristofferson, like Newman, confronts us directly, his wrinkles compressed. His expression is ambiguous, hovering between the serious and the heartbroken; we hardly know he is crying until we glimpse the drops of moisture beading his eyelids.

Benicio Del Toro stands to one side of a curtained window, dark against light, head lowered, hair tumbled, shirt open, eyes lowered, brow furrowed, lips parted, as though experiencing an emotion beyond utterance. Dustin Hoffman's sorrow is stoically withheld. His grief is diffidently contained within the dark silhouette of his naked arms and torso. Hunched over a white table, vulnerable and desolate, he lowers his eyes, as though refusing, or unable, to engage with the spectator. Laurence Fishburne gets into the crying game wholeheartedly: he is centrally and symmetrically planted in his bathroom, clutching the revers of a brown bathrobe, his head set off by a circular window, like a dark Buddha or a saint with a halo, perceptibly weeping. Robin Williams, scarcely recognizable, his clasped hands masking his mouth, sits facing us, the elbows of his shapely arms covered with a disconcerting mane of black hair, resting on his knees, the funny man ironically playing the man of sorrows. Robert Downey Jr. doesn't let grief interfere with sensual self-display: he mourns lying down and lightly draped, smooth-skinned and hairless, like a male odalisque or an epicene martyr, his arm raised provocatively over his head, his torso saucily twisted. Two older actors, on the other hand, Ed Harris and Michael Gambon, give their all to the task of sorrow. Their timeworn faces become maps of remembered feeling, sorrow-in-itself, as it were, a self-confrontation rather than a mere posing for an assignment.

As a series, "Crying Men" is brilliant, multilayered, and provocative. Consisting of twenty-eight large-scale photographs, twenty-two in color, six in black and white, it arouses potent desires, both aesthetic and personal, in the viewer. At the same time that these images arouse desire, however, they leave it unsatisfied. Or to put it another way: you begin by feeling you can get close to these captivating male stars, but it turns out that you can't. You are always kept at a distance, frustrated in your need for intimacy.

As a series, these photographs raise questions perhaps ultimately unanswerable. Why, for instance, is it "crying men," not "crying women," or "crying men and women"? The gender of the portraits is central to their impact, as is the fact that they are documents of portraiture, not journalism. What does it mean that famous men are doing the crying, not just the man on the street—the man on the street in Baghdad or Sarajevo, for instance, who may have just lost his wife and children, or the soldier who has lost his best buddy? We have seen plenty of those pictures recently. And it certainly must matter that these are famous actors, men whose profession it is to perform a role, to express feelings on command. The mark of a good actor or actress is indeed the ability to cry on command, I am told. These are portraits of men who were told they had to cry in order to have their portraits taken by a famous artist—and all of them rose to the occasion.

For the most part, though, crying never distorts these handsome faces; the sitters may protect the glamour of their famous looks with hands or shadows, but they are always recognizable, and they don't grimace with emotional pain, as people caught by news photographers may do. Deliberately and from the start, Taylor-Wood lets us know that this is not heartrending documentary; these are not men crying over real tragedies, personal losses; these are just good actors obeying the director's orders and performing. The woman artist has control over these powerful males; they weep at her bidding.

Yet the grief portrayed is real, in a way—convincing the way a good film is convincing. Does it matter that the onscreen stuff that makes us blub—Bogart saying goodbye to Bergman at the plane, juicy death scenes—is "only" acting? Aren't these images in many ways more moving, more tear-jerking, than most things we experience in life? That's not because the scenes are real, any more than Paul Newman's sorrow in Taylor-Wood's photograph is real; it's because of the acting. It's acting that makes me share Gambon's assumed pain, that makes me wonder what is touching Newman's heart—that makes me want to give Law a good hug, cheer him up a bit.

Maybe something more than mere sympathy is at stake here? But that's the point with movie actors crying, at any rate for a woman viewer, isn't it? They're so sexy when they're sad, these beautiful men. Their tears make them still more alluring. Their laughter wouldn't be half as seductive. Men crying: that's what's really interesting about this series, what draws us back to the images again and again.

The theme of men crying has resonances in social history, in ideas about gender difference, and most specifically in the context of Taylor-Wood's work in general, an oeuvre in which male vulnerability has played an important role from the start. Men aren't supposed to cry in public, nor too much in private, either. This regulation has eased up a little in recent years, but male weeping is generally viewed with disfavor—it is seen as a sign of moral and psychological weakness, of "effeminacy." The stiff upper lip, the lowered head, the furtive tear, the consolatory handclasp: in the male of the species, these are the substitutes for the outright expression of painful emotion. The past of Hollywood is marked by the ascendancy of the strong silent type: Gary Cooper didn't cry, and a tear-streaked John Wayne is almost unthinkable. Although crying is more permissible in our day than it was in theirs, it is still unusual to see men crying in public, despite the cult of male sensitivity. Men weeping in public are somehow an embarrassment.

Of course it hasn't always been this way. The heroes of the Old Testament and of classical antiquity poured forth buckets of tears on the slightest provocation. Tom Lutz, author of *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears*, notes that "Odysseus is hailed as a great warrior when he cries in almost every chapter of Homer's Iliad. And in the sixteenth century, sobbing openly at a play, opera or symphony was considered appropriately sensitive for men and women alike."[1] Johan Huizinga, the great historian of the late medieval period, points out that in the fifteenth century a surplus of tears came not only from great mourning, a vigorous sermon, or the mysteries of the faith. Each secular festival also unleashed a flood of tears. An envoy from the King of France to Philip the Good repeatedly breaks into tears during his address. When young John of Coimbra is given his farewell at the Burgundian Court, everyone weeps loudly, just as happened on the occasion when the Dauphin was welcomed or during the meeting of the Kings of England and France at Ardres. King Louis XI was observed to shed tears while making his entry into Arras; during his time as Crown Prince at the court of Burgundy, he is described by Chastellain as sobbing or crying on several occasions.[2]

For Lutz, the clandestine nature of manly sobbing is a modern phenomenon. It was the Industrial Revolution, he believes, that dried up the well of masculine tears, making a controlled, efficient, non-expressive demeanor a necessity for membership in bourgeois society:

Weeping itself became the problem rather than a reaction to a problem. Anger and stress became the substitute for tears—an attitude that persists to this day. Hardheadedness, what psychologists call "restricted emotionality," is still the paradigm for businessmen. If you cry you're weak, a bit of a Jessie.[3]

Apparently the same Industrial Revolution that took away men's permission to wear gorgeous, gaudy, sensuous silks, brocades, and lace, and to show off their well-turned calves in satin breeches, deprived them of the privilege of crying as well.

Taylor-Wood, then, is confronting a subject that has been underground, aberrant, until very recently. Yet "Crying Men" is far from her first engagement with the subject of vulnerable, seductive men—nor will it be her last. The figure of the vulnerable, even abject male is a constant theme in her work, although it takes different forms at different times. Earlier in Taylor-Wood's career, in the perverse and highly original updating of historical prototypes that constituted much of the "Soliloquy" series, dead men played an essential role. *Soliloquy I* (1998) shows its handsome young protagonist dead on a rumpled studio couch, his hair cascading down his forehead, his right arm limply dropping to the floor. The image is of course an updated takeoff on the British Pre-Raphaelite painter Henry Wallis's famous *Death of Chatterton* of 1854 (itself a British genre version of David's neoclassical *Death of Marat* of 1793), representing the young poet's suicide in a miserable attic, a death brought about by artistic failure and a self-administered dose of arsenic. Taylor-Wood's large photograph is far more ambiguous in its implications, an ambiguity reinforced by its accompanying predella, a panoramic 360-degree representation of contemporary men and women in a fantastically baroque interior. (The same "Chatterton" figure, incidentally, appears in a much livelier, multifigured context in Taylor-Wood's *Five Revolutionary Seconds XIII* of 1998.) Another work in the series, *Soliloquy VII* (1998), is a startlingly foreshortened modern version of Mantegna's late-fifteenth-century *Dead Christ*, using the technology of the modern C-type color print to increase its dramatic rush of linear perspective, and making the image even stranger—and deader—by coupling it with a peaceful landscape predella, so that the corpse's feet, enlarged and creased, seem to hang over the sunny bucolic panorama below.

The dead Christ, universal paradigm of male vulnerability, makes his appearance again in Taylor-Wood's *Pietà* (2001), a slow-motion film, about two minutes long, in which the artist herself plays the role of the Virgin Mary, lifting and lowering, with some difficulty, the inert body of the actor Robert Downey Jr., partially and inappropriately clad in un-Christlike trousers but in a pose that might have served as a prototype for his not dissimilar role in "Crying Men." A more ambiguous work from the same period is a small photograph of a beautiful strawberry-blonde nude in profile, and in a pose descended from Holbein's *Dead Christ* (1521). Teasingly, Taylor-Wood's figure could be either male or female, but in the context of her *Passion Cycle* (2002) (passion both in both the sexual and liturgical sense), in which it was shown, it functioned at least in my eyes as a vulnerable and seductive young male.

Taylor-Wood has captured still another type of vulnerable man with her camera recently, and he is neither crying nor dead, but sleeping. And it is not a still camera that records his slumber, but video. An hour-and-seven-minute-long moving picture of a man whose only movement is the twitch of an eyelid, or the languorous drift of an arm to shadowy, unseen nether regions, may seem a redundant reversion to outmoded Warholian tactics of overwhelming boredom, but this motionless man is well worth watching asleep over the course of an hour, for he is literally a sleeping beauty. I am referring, of course, to Taylor-Wood's notorious video portrait of the world-famous soccer star and sports idol David Beckham, filmed in one continuous shot, and recently installed in a darkened alcove of London's National Portrait Gallery. Not much happens in this filmic portrait, titled simply *David* (2004), before which I planted myself, seated on the floor, for half-hour segments. But when, for example, the unconscious Beckham moves his right arm to reveal one of his most recent tattoos, "Angel II," on his right shoulder and bicep, it is momentous. And of course one constantly wonders what is going on in our hero's unseen nether regions.

Reviewers have criticized *David* for failing to live up to Michelangelo's statue of the same name, or to the video's purported prototype, the same artist's *Night* on the Medici Tomb (1526-1533). Taylor-Wood herself opts for realism: "I wanted to create a direct, closely observed study. Filming while he was asleep produces a different view from the many familiar public images."[4] Yet at least two images from the high art of the past are imbricated in Taylor-Wood's image of the sleeping Beckham and his godlike beauty. One is Girodet's *Endymion* (1791) in the Louvre, which plays light and shadow over the ravishing form of the sleeping nude youth with similar effectiveness, and the other is Poussin's painting of Narcissus—dead rather than sleeping—watched over by the adoring nymph Echo (1628-1630). According to Ovid, Narcissus was punished for admiring his own reflection too much, but who could blame him? Lying in a position not unlike that of Beckham in Taylor-Wood's video, Narcissus reveals the beauty of his lifeless form to the spectator, as the contemporary artist reveals that of her modern idol. One could even say that the spectator—in this case myself on the floor of the National Portrait Gallery—is given the place of the admiring nymph in Poussin's painting. Is Beckham really sleeping? Does it matter, any more than the fact that the "Crying Men" are faking it? What matters is the work, in the end, and the potent emotional disturbance it gives rise to in those, like myself, who are seduced by the charms of the flesh presented under optimum conditions. As in so many of Taylor-Wood's works, including the "Crying Men," little touches of beauty's other—the ugly, animalistic side of the human male—enhance the visceral impact of the image, touches like the bristling black hair covering Beckham's shapely arms (see Robin Williams in the "Crying" series). Apollo and Dionysus are combined in a single mortal man, with shades of Nietzsche's theory of tragedy.

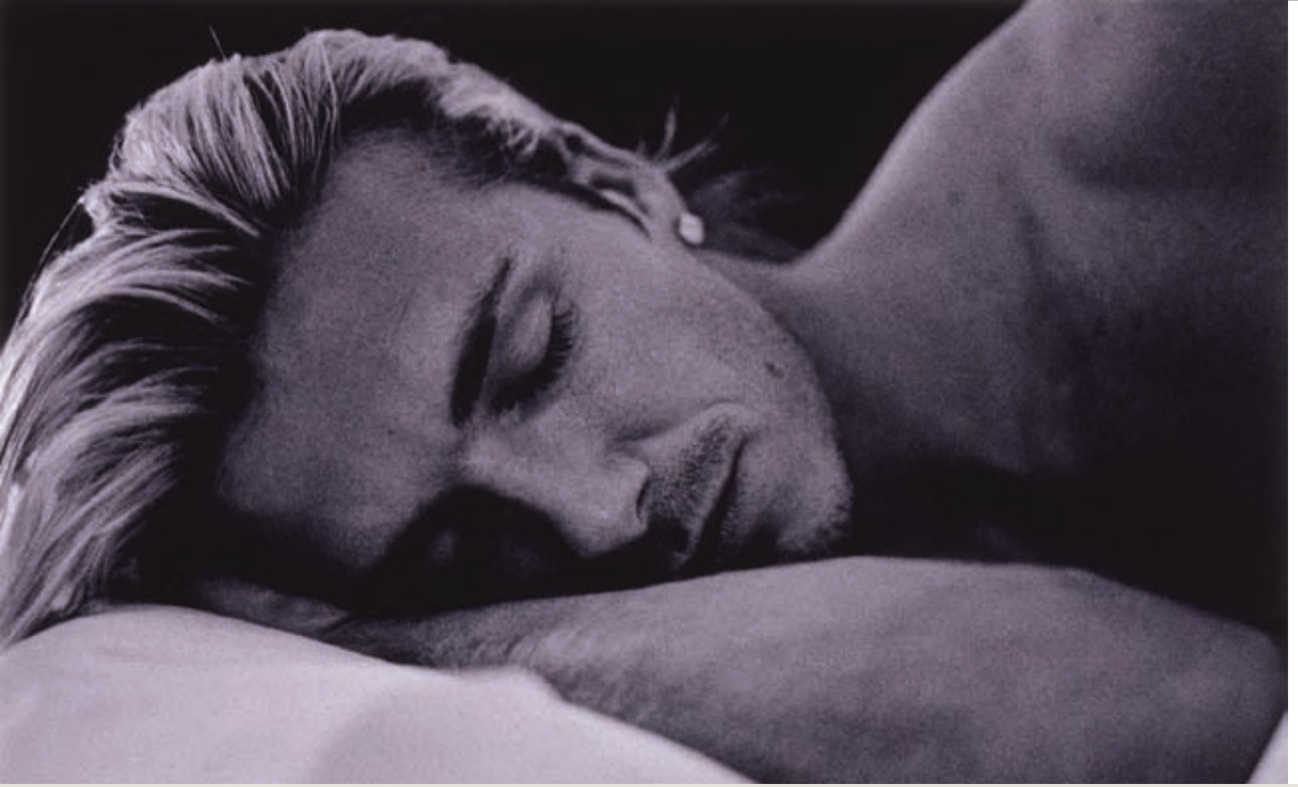
"Crying Men" is itself a part of a triad of works expressing, it would seem to me, different aspects of the human condition. The other two parts are, *Self Portrait Suspended* (2004), showing Taylor-Wood mysteriously suspended above the ground in a series of gravity-defying poses; and a short video, *Ascension* (2003), in which one man lies flat on the ground while another, with Ray Bolger-esque flexibility, tap-dances directly above him, a white dove ludicrously perched on his head and finally taking off for the great beyond. The three pieces together are ripe for allegory, even allegory with spiritual implications.

Surely the crying men represent all that is dark and earthbound, the misery, real or imaginary, tying us to our terrestrial fate. The trio of prone male figure, dancing man, and white dove is a grotesque, Bakhtinian parody of the Holy Trinity, and of would-be creative freedom. Only the artist herself, precariously suspended somewhere between the floor of her studio and its ceiling, between heaven and earth, accepting this intermediary position and its difficulty, attains a kind of freedom, finding, in the words of my student Jovana Stocik, "an uninhabited and uninhibited place—her own studio, but above the ground." Hers is the difficult position of grace.

Endnotes

When the Stars Weep by Linda Nochlin was first published in *Sam Taylor–Wood Crying Men* (Gottingen: Mathew Marks Gallery, White Cube and Steidl, 2004.)

1. Tom Lutz, Crying: *The Natural and Cultural History of Tears* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), quoted in Stuart Husband, "Big Boys Do Cry," *The Observer*, April 20, 2003, online at http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,6903,939758,00.html
2. Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, 1919, Eng. trans. J. Payton and U. Mammitzsch (Chicago: at the University Press, 1996), p. 8.
3. Lutz, *Crying*, in Husband, "Big Boys Do Cry."
4. Sam Taylor-Wood, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/a/hi/entertainment/3661245.stm



Sequence of works on previous pages

Benicio Del Toro, 2002
C-print
28 7/16 x 40 1/16 inches
(72.5 x 102.2 centimeters) including frame

Hayden Christensen, 2002
C-print
51 10/16 x 51 10/16 inches
(131.7 x 131.7 centimeters)

Laurence Fishburne, 2002
C-print
33 13/16 x 43 13/16 inches
(86.2 x 111.7 centimeters) including frame

Ed Harris, 2002
C-print
33 13/16 x 43 13/16 inches
(86.2 x 111.7 centimeters)

Tim Roth, 2002
C-print
38 14/16 x 38 14/16 inches
(99.2 x 99.2 centimeters) including frame

Daniel Craig, 2003
C-print
38 14/16 x 38 14/16 inches
(99.2 x 99.2 centimeters) including frame

Forest Whitaker, 2004
C-print
39 3/16 x 39 3/16 inches
(100 x 100 centimeters) including frame

David, 2004
DVD
Duration: 1 hour 7 minutes
National Portrait Gallery, London
Commissioned with the support of J.P. Morgan
through the Fund for New Commissions

Sequence of works on previous pages

Self Portrait Suspended III, 2004
C-print
53 3/16 x 63 13/16 inches,
(135.6 x 162.8 centimeters) including frame

Self Portrait Suspended II, 2004
C-print
53 3/16 x 63 13/16 inches
(135.6 x 162.8 centimeters) including frame

Self Portrait Suspended IV, 2004
C-print
53 3/16 x 63 13/16 inches
(135.6 x 162.8 centimeters) including frame

Self Portrait Suspended VI, 2004
C-print
53 3/16 x 63 13/16 inches
(135.6 x 162.8 centimeters) including frame

Self Portrait Suspended VIII, 2004
C-print
53 3/16 x 63 13/16 inches
(135.6 x 162.8 centimeters) including frame

Bram Stoker's Chair I, 2005
C-print
48 x 38 inches (121.9 x 96.5 centimeters)

Bram Stoker's Chair II, 2005
C-print
48 x 38 inches (121.9 x 96.5 centimeters)

Bram Stoker's Chair IV, 2005
C-print
48 x 38 inches (121.9 x 96.5 centimeters)

Bram Stoker's Chair V, 2005
C-print
48 x 38 inches (121.9 x 96.5 centimeters)

Bram Stoker's Chair VI, 2005
C-print
48 x 38 inches (121.9 x 96.5 centimeters)

Sequence of works on previous pages

Prelude in Air, 2005
35 mm film/DVD projection
Duration: 3 minutes 51 seconds

The Last Century, 2005
DVD
Duration: 7 minutes 12 seconds

That White Rush, 2007
DVD
Duration: 2 minutes 1 second

Authors

Margo A. Crutchfield's curatorial career has focused on presenting current, adventurous work by a range of emerging to established regional, national, and international artists. She is Senior Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland, having held positions as Associate Curator of 20th-Century Art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, as well as Assistant Curator and Interim Director at the Aspen Art Museum. Among the many exhibitions she has curated are the first solo museum exhibitions by such artists as Diana Cooper, Ingrid Calame, Hiraki Sawa, Tara Donovan, and Kori Newkirk, and group exhibitions such as *All Digital* (new media artists Charles Sandison, Lynn Hershman, John Simon, and others) and *Material Witness* (Santiago Sierra, Jun Nyugen-Hatsushiba, Johnny Coleman, Laylah Ali, and others). At the Virginia Museum she curated the *Martin Puryear* exhibition (traveled nationally in 2001–2002), as well as exhibitions by Beverly Semmes, Alison Saar, Philip Guston, Mimmo Paladino, and Magdalena Abakanowicz, among many others.

Curator **Barbara London** founded the Museum of Modern Art's video exhibition program and has guided it over a long pioneering career. She helped assemble MoMA's premiere media collection. Her recent activity includes *Automatic Update*, a show drawn from technology of the last decade with work by Cory Arcangel, Xu Bing, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Jennifer and Kevin McCoy, and Paul Pfeiffer; *River of Crime*, a community online project with the Residents, an avant-garde group that makes music as well as art; *Stillness: Michael Snow and Sam Taylor-Wood; Anime!!; Masters of Animation: Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata; Music and Media*, with Laurie Anderson/Greil Marcus, Michel Gondry/Ed Halter, and Brian Eno/Todd Haynes; Gary Hill's installation HanD HearD; TimeStream, a Web commission by Tony Oursler; and a series of Web projects undertaken in China, Russia, and Japan. She founded the "Video Viewpoints series" (1977–2001), in which artists discussed their work. She received Bunkacho and NEA fellowships to investigate electronic technologies and their effects on the arts in Japan. She has written and lectured widely.

Linda Nochlin is the Lila Acheson Wallace Professor of Modern Art at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University. She has published widely in the fields of 19th- and 20th-century art as well as contemporary art and is considered a leader in feminist art history studies. Her most recent book is *Courbet*, published by Thames and Hudson; her book *Realism* is a classic text in the field. In addition to teaching at NYU, Yale University, the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, and Vassar College, Nochlin has curated a number of exhibitions, including *Women Artists: 1550–1950* (1976, with Anne Suntherland Harris, Los Angeles County Museum of Art) and *Global Feminisms* (2007, with Maura Reilly, Brooklyn Museum of Art). She recently wrote a catalogue essay for the Louise Bourgeois exhibition at Tate Modern and an essay, "Renoir's Men," for a forthcoming Renoir exhibition in Rome.

Works in the Exhibition

Dimensions are in inches (and centimeters). Height precedes width.

Travesty of a Mockery, 1995
Two-channel projection
Duration: 10 minutes
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Hysteria, 1997
16 mm film/DVD projection
Duration: 8 minutes
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Self Portrait as a Tree, 2000
C-print, edition 5/10
28 3/4 x 35 1/4 inches (75.6 x 91 centimeters)
Heather and Tony Podesta Collection

Self Portrait in a Single Breasted Suit with Hare, 2001
C-Print
63 3/8 x 44 1/2 inches (161 x 113 centimeters) including frame
Collection of Ninah and Michael Lynne

Pietà, 2001
35 mm film/DVD projection
Duration: 1 minute 57 seconds
Heather and Tony Podesta Collection

Crying Men Series

Laurence Fishburne, 2002
C-print
33 13/16 x 43 13/16 inches
(86.2 x 111.7 centimeters) including frame
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Tim Roth, 2002
C-print
38 14/16 x 38 14/16 inches
(99.2 x 99.2 centimeters) including frame
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Hayden Christensen, 2002
C-print
51 10/16 x 51 10/16 inches (131.7 x 131.7 centimeters)
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Benicio Del Toro, 2002
C-print
28 7/16 x 40 1/16 inches (72.5 x 102.2 centimeters) including frame
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Self Portrait Suspended Series

Self Portrait Suspended II, 2004
C-print
53 3/16 x 63 13/16 inches (135.6 x 162.8 centimeters)
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Self Portrait Suspended III, 2004
C-print
53 3/16 x 63 13/16 inches
(135.6 x 162.8 centimeters) including frame
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Self Portrait Suspended IV, 2004
C-print
53 3/16 x 63 13/16 inches
(135.6 x 162.8 centimeters) including frame
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Self Portrait Suspended VI, 2004
C-print
53 3/16 x 63 13/16 inches
(135.6 x 162.8 centimeters) including frame
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Bram Stoker's Chair Series

Bram Stoker's Chair I, 2005
C-print
48 x 38 inches (121.9 x 96.5 centimeters)
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Bram Stoker's Chair II, 2005
C-print
48 x 38 inches (121.9 x 96.5 centimeters)
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Bram Stoker's Chair IV, 2005
C-print
48 x 38 inches (121.9 x 96.5 centimeters)
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Bram Stoker's Chair V, 2005
C-print
48 x 38 inches (121.9 x 96.5 centimeters)
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Bram Stoker's Chair VI, 2005
C-print
48 x 38 inches (121.9 x 96.5 centimeters)
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Still Life, 2001
35 mm film/DVD
Duration: 3 minutes 44 seconds
Private Collection, San Francisco

A Little Death, 2002
35 mm film/DVD
Duration: 4 minutes
Collection of Barbara Bluhm and Don Kaul

Ascension, 2003
35 mm film/DVD projection
Duration: 4 minutes 15 seconds
Heather and Tony Podesta Collection

Ed Harris, 2002
C-print
33 13/16 x 43 13/16 inches (86.2 x 111.7 centimeters)
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Daniel Craig, 2003
C-print
38 14/16 x 38 14/16 inches (99.2 x 99.2 centimeters) including frame
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Forest Whitaker, 2004
C-print
39 3/16 x 39 3/16 inches (100 x 100 centimeters) including frame
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Self Portrait Suspended VIII, 2004
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53 3/16 x 63 13/16 inches
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The Last Century, 2005
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Duration: 7 minutes 12 seconds
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

That White Rush, 2007
DVD
Duration: 2 minutes 1 second
Courtesy of the artist and Jay Jopling/White Cube, London

Selected Exhibition History

Sam Taylor-Wood

1967
Born in London.

1990
Graduated from Goldsmith's College, London.
Lives and works in London.
Represented by White Cube, London.

Solo Exhibitions

2008
Sam Taylor-Wood. Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland and Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

2007
Sam Taylor-Wood, Jackson Fine Art, Atlanta.
Sam Taylor-Wood, STUK Kunstencentrum, Leuven, Belgium.

2006
Still Lives, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, England.
Sam Taylor-Wood, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; and City Gallery Wellington.

2005
Sex and Death and a Few Trees, Galleria Lorcan O'Neill, Rome.

2004
Sam Taylor-Wood, Engineer's Palace, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, and Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow.
Ascension, Donald Young Gallery, Chicago.
New Work, White Cube, London.
Sorrow, Suspension, Ascension, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York.
David, National Portrait Gallery, London, and Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.

2003
Sam Taylor-Wood, BAWAG Foundation, Vienna.

2002
Still Life/Object/Real Life/Memento Mori, Tate Modern, London.
Sam Taylor-Wood, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal.
The Passion, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York.
Sam Taylor-Wood, Hayward Gallery, London.
Sam Taylor-Wood. Films and Photographs, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.
Sam Taylor-Wood, Shiseido, Tokyo.

2001
Mute, White Cube, London.
Sam Taylor-Wood, Kunstlerverein Malkasten, Dusseldorf.
Sam Taylor-Wood. Photographies et Films, Centre National de la Photographie, Hôtel Salomon de Rothschild, Paris.
Solo exhibition, Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej Zamek Ujazdowski, Warsaw.
Solo exhibition, Espacio Uno, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid.
Solo exhibition, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York.

1999
Solo exhibition, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart.
Directions: Sam Taylor-Wood, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

1998
Solo exhibition, Prada Foundation, Milan.
Solo exhibition, Donald Young Gallery, Seattle.

1997
Sustaining the Crisis, Regen Projects, Los Angeles.
Sam Taylor-Wood: Five Revolutionary Seconds, Sala Montcada de la Fundació "la Caixa," Barcelona.
Solo exhibition, Kunsthalle Zürich and Lousiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark.
Sam Taylor-Wood, Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers, France.

1996
16 mm, Ridinghouse Editions, London.
Pent-Up, Chisenhale Gallery, London, and Sunderland City Art Gallery.

1995
Sam Taylor-Wood, Gallerie Andreas Brändström, Stockholm.
Travesty of a Mockery, White Cube, London.

1994
Sam Taylor-Wood. Killing Time, The Showroom, London.

Selected Group Exhibitions

2007
Vertigo. The Century of Off-media Art from Futurism to the Web, Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna.
Poem of an Inland Sea, Ukrainian Pavilion, Venice Biennale.
About Time, Herzliya Museum, Israel.
Aftershock: Contemporary British Art 1990–2006, Capital Museum, Beijing.
Global Feminisms, Brooklyn Museum, New York; Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley, Massachusetts.

2006
Aftershock: Contemporary British Art 1990–2006, Guangdong Museum of *Art,* Guangzhou, China.
The Expanded Eye, Kunsthaus Zürich.
Walking and Falling, Magasin 3, Stockholm.
Icons and Idols, National Portrait Gallery, London.
Nothing Lasts Forever, Istanbul Museum of Modern Art.

2005
Superstars! The Celebrity Factor. From Warhol to Madonna, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna.
Stillness: Michael Snow/Sam Taylor-Wood, Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Baroque and Neo-Baroque, Domus Artium, Salamanca, Spain
Realit;-)t. Von Olaf Breuning bis Sam Taylor-Wood. 30 Videoarbeiten aus der Sammlung Goetz in München, Seedamm Kulturzentrum, Pfaffikon, Switzerland.
The Suspended Moment, Crac Alsace, Altkirch, France.
London Calling. Y[oung] B[ritish] A[rtists] Criss-Crossed, Galleri Kaare Berntsen, Oslo.
Chronos. Time in Art from the 17th Century to the Modern Day, CeSAC, Caraglio, Italy.
Body: New Art from the UK, Vancouver Art Gallery; and The Ottawa Art Gallery.

2004
Perspectives @ 25, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston.
Secrets of the '90s, Museum voor Moderne Kunst Arnhem.
Contemporary Photography Collection, Fundación Telefónica, Madrid.
Ideal and Reality. A History of the Nude from Neoclassicism to the Present Day, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Bologna.

2003
A Century of Artists' Film in Britain, Tate Britain, London.
The Process, Museum of Contemporary Art, Kiasma, Helsinki.
Revelation: Representations of Christ in Photography, International House of Photography, Hamburg.
Social Strategies. Redefining Social Realism, DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana.
Process...Encounters in Live Situations/Shifting Spaces, Kiasma, Helsinki.
Soliloqui: Sam Taylor-Wood, Tracey Moffat, Rineke Dijkstra, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich.

2002
A Show of Works from the Caldic Collection, Museum Bojimans van Beuningen, Rotterdam.
The Rowan Collection. Contemporary British & Irish Art, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.

2001
There Is Something You Should Know. Die EVN Sammlung im Belvedere, Österreichische, Galerie Belvedere, Vienna.
6 Biennale d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon.
A Baroque Party—Moments of Theatrum Mundi in Contemporary Art, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna.
The Body of Art, The Valencia Biennial.

2000
Art and Psychology from Leonardo to Freud, Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen.
Media City Seoul 2000, Seoul.
Une Mise en Scène du Réel: Artiste/acteur, Villa Arson Nice, France.
The Henry Collects: Video, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle.
Out There, White Cube, London.
The Self Is Something Else—Art at the End of the 20th Century, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf.
Quotidiana. The Continuity of the Everyday in 20th Century Art, Castello di Rivoli, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin
Making Time: Considering Time as a Material in Contemporary Video & Film, Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art, Florida.
Sincerely Yours. British Art from the 90s, Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo.
Contemporary Film and Video, Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

1999
Chronos & Kairos, Museum Fridericianum Kassel.
Video Cult/ures. Multimediale Installationen der 90er Jahre, Museum für Neue Kunst, Cologne.
Carnegie International 1999/2000, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh.
Talk Show. Die Kunst der Kommunikation in den 90er Jahren, Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal, and Haus der Kunst, Munich.
Looking at Ourselves: Works by Women Artists from the Logan Collection, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

1997
New British Video Programme, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Stills: Emerging Photography in the 1990s, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.
2nd Johannesburg Biennale.
5th Istanbul Biennial.
Sensation, Royal Academy of Arts, London; Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; Brooklyn Museum, New York.
Worldwide Video Festival, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.
Truce: Echoes of Art in an Age of Endless Conclusions, Site Santa Fe, New Mexico.
47th Venice Biennale.
A Ilha do Tesouro, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon.
International Film Festival, Rotterdam.

1996
Full House: Young British Art, Kunstmuseum, Wolfsburg.
Life/Live, Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, Centro de Exposições do Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon.
The Last Supper, Donald Young Gallery, Seattle.
Toyama Now. The 6th International Contemporary Art Exhibition, The Museum of Modern Art, Toyama, Japan.
Manifesta 1, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen and Witte de With, Rotterdam.

1998
Emotion. Young British and American Art from the Goetz Collection, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg.
Turner Prize, Tate Gallery, London.
New Photography, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Projected Allegories, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston.
Video: Bruce Nauman, Tony Oursler, Sam Taylor-Wood, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
Art from the UK : Angela Bulloch, Willie Doherty, Tracey Emin, Sarah Lucas, Sam Taylor-Wood, Sammlung Goetz, Munich.

1995
Masculin/Feminin, Centre George Pompidou, Paris.
Brilliant! New Art from London, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and Contemporary Art Museum, Houston.
Corpus Delicti, Kunstforeningen, Copenhagen.

Awards

1997
Illy Cafe Prize for Most Promising Young Artist, Venice Biennale.

Film Screenings

2006
KunstFilmBiennale, KW Kunstwerke, Berlin.
Destricted film screenings, Tate Modern, London.
Sundance Festival, Park City, Utah.

2005
Jump Cut Nights III, SK Stiftung Kulture der Sparkasse, Cologne.

2004
Film screenings, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Public Collections

Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo.
Bangkok Museum of Contemporary Art.
British Council, London.
Collection Lambert, Geneva.
Contemporary Art Society, London.
Caldic Collection, Rotterdam.
Centro Ordonez-Falcon, San Sebastian, Spain.
Domus Artium 2002, Salamanca, Spain.
Fondaciò "la Caixa," Barcelona.
Fundacion Telefonica, Madrid.
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.
Instituto d'Arte Contemporanea, Lisbon.
Israel Museum, Jerusalem.
Kanazawa Contemporary Art Museum, Japan.
Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark.
Major Art Collection, Curaçao, Lesser Antilles.
National Portrait Gallery, London.
New Orleans Museum of Art.
Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts.
Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Copenhagen.
Saatchi Collection, London.
Sammlung Essl—Kunst der Gegenwart, Klosterneuberg, Austria.
Sammlung Goetz Collection, Munich.
Samsung Museum, Seoul.
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
Sheffield Art Gallery, England.
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.
Tate Gallery, London.
The Robert Shiffler Collection, Greenville, Ohio.
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Further Reading

Selected books and exhibition catalogues

Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin, eds. *Global Feminisms: New Directions in Contemporary Art.* Exh. cat., Brooklyn Museum. London/New York: Merrell, 2007.

Michael Bracewell, Pi Li, and Emily Butler. *Aftershock: Contemporary British Art 1990–2006.* London: British Council, 2006.

Peter Doroshenko, Harland Miller, James Fox, and Annushka Shani. *Sam Taylor-Wood: Still Lives.* Exh. cat., BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art. Gateshead, Eng./Göttingen: / Baltic/Steidl, 2006.

Louise Neri. "Theatre of the Selves: Sam Taylor-Wood's Portraiture." In Rachel Kent, *Sam Taylor-Wood.* Exh. brochure, Museum of Contemporary Art. Sydney, 2006.

Linda Nochlin. *Sam Taylor-Wood. Crying Men.* London/Göttingen: Matthew Marks/Steidl, 2004.

Ingvild Goetz and Stephan Urbaschek. *Fast Forward: Media Art Sammlung Goetz.* Exh. cat., ZKM. Hamburg: Goetz, 2003.

Hripsimé Visser. *Sam Taylor-Wood. The Passion Cycle.* Exh. cat. Vienna: BAWAG Foundation, 2003.

Martin Hentschel, ed. *Third Party: Sam Taylor-Wood.* Exh. cat., Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2000.

Michael O'Pray. *Sam Taylor-Wood.* Exh. cat., Centre for Contemporary Art, Ujazdowski Castle. Warsaw, 2000.

Madeleine Grynsztejn. *Carnegie International 1999/2000.* Exh. cat., Carnegie Museum of Art. Pittsburgh, 1999.

Olga Viso. *Directions. Sam Taylor-Wood.* Exh. brochure, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution. Washington D.C.,1999.

Bruce Ferguson, Nancy Spector, Michael Bracewell, and Germano Celant. *Sam Taylor-Wood.* Exh. cat., Prada Foundation. Milan, 1998.

Carlos Basualdo et al. *Cream: Contemporary Art in Culture.* London: Phaidon Press, 1998.

Burckhard Riemschneider and Uta Grosenick, ed. *Art at the Turn of the Millennium.* Cologne/New York: Taschen, 1998.

Brooks Adams et al. *Sensation. Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection.* Exh. cat., Royal Academy of Arts. London: Thames and Hudson in association with the Royal Academy of Arts, 1997.

Michael Bracewell, Jeremy Millar, and Clare Carolin. *Sam Taylor-Wood.* Exh. cat., Hayward Gallery. Göttingen: Steidl, 2002.

Waldemer Januszczak: *To Be or Not to Be. Sam Taylor-Wood.* Tokyo: Shiseido Corporate Culture Department, 2002.

Hripsimé Visser. *Sam Taylor-Wood: Films and Photography.* Exh. cat., Stedelijk Museum. Amsterdam, 2002.

Sam Taylor-Wood: Contact. London: Booth-Clibborn Editions, 2001.

Uta Grosenick, ed. *Women Artists in the 20th and 21st Century.* Cologne/New York: Taschen, 2001.

Bernhard Bürgi, Kjeld Kjeldsen, Waldemar Januszczak, and Will Self. *Sam Taylor-Wood.* Exh. cat., Louisiana Museum of Modern Art/ Kunsthalle Zurich. Humlebaek/Zurich, 1997.

Rosa Martínez and Gregor Muir. *Five Revolutionary Seconds.* Exh. cat., Fundació/ "la Caixa." Barcelona, 1997.

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