

## Experiments in Ritual

Lower Gallery

Friday 30 November 2012, 6-8.30pm

### Tereza Buskova

Baked Woman of Doubice, 2012

HD video, single screen with sound, 8.53 min

### Matthew Cowan

The Barber's Pole, 2012

Video, single screen with sound, 9.30 min

Devils, 2012

Single screen silent, 25.00 min

Tereza Buskova and Matthew Cowan share a common passion for folklore. Earlier this year both artists joined Tamsyn Challenger in her ongoing investigations into Monoculture as the three set out to cross-fertilise each other's practice. This special screening premieres new works from that engagement.

**Baked Woman of Doubice** and **The Barbers Pole** are single screen video works made in response to notions of monoculture. Both works are filmed in agricultural settings where, paradoxically, idiosyncratic practices often linger on in the presence of a homogenized culture of cash crops.

The poet Andrew Marvell was already railing against the enculturation of nature in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In his Mower poems, Marvell substitutes the figure of the shepherd of pastoral idyll for the agrarian mower, in works that reference social unrest and land enclosure. Marvell's lovesick shepherd Damon is the inspiration for Matthew Cowan's barber, enacting the traditional fertility rite of a maypole dance on a lawn mower, which cuts down all in its path.

Tereza Buskova concentrates on the universal dependence on wheat, expressed in European culture through folk tradition. Set in the Northern Czech Republic village of her childhood, Buskova describes a fictional fertility ritual where the women of the village unite to knead and bake dough in order to create an edible woman<sup>\*1</sup>. Buskova identifies the positive values of the pervasive crop through the timeless activity of baking. The film simultaneously celebrates the historic, the personal and a sense of boundary-crossing sisterhood.

Artistic cross-fertilisation is evidenced in the ritual through the embroidered face of Tamsyn Challenger's 'Tamsynette'<sup>2</sup>, which appears on the Baked Woman, alongside Matthew Cowan's specially constructed costume made from hundreds of flowers. Both costumes are modelled live at this event.

Cowan's goes on to look at modern costume archetypes in his video loop Devils. Like Challenger's ongoing Mono-portrait<sup>3</sup>, the images reveal the tendency to conform; in this case, the remarkable similarity with which people variously portray evil. The work remarks on the idea that people can feel transgressive when safely playing with supposedly evil roles – a tradition important to many festivals and disguise rituals.

The event forms part of the **South London Art Map LAST Fridays** late openings:

<http://www.southlondonartmap.com/>



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<sup>1</sup> The pastry used in this ritual comes from Vizovice and carries out strong heritage sometimes being referred to as a "surviving pagan custom". It is a special pastry made from ingredients that can be found in any common household, originally used for religious celebratory purposes and often formed into the shapes of animals to represent human characteristics. I hope that the Baked Woman of Doubice similarly taps into something almost transcendental that can be found in the everyday, unifies people and yet at the same time acknowledges the essence of individuality in all cultural activity. Tereza Buskova

<sup>2</sup> Tamsyn Challenger's ongoing solo experiments around monoculture continue in the Arch Gallery

<sup>3</sup> Mono-Portrait is a participatory project currently available in the Arch Gallery.