

Laura Cooper – *Soft Revolutions*

8/2/13 – 23/2/13

Laura Cooper's practice considers personal and collective actions - often performative - that explore both ritual and sequence. Initially staging scenarios and events unannounced in public spaces, Cooper engages individuals and groups of performers or participants in simple but unusual activities. These events are then documented in various forms of video, sound, drawings, maps and scores.

For *Soft Revolutions* Cooper presents a series of new and recent works, which have been reworked and reinterpreted for the gallery space at SIB. Layering documented performance, live performance and installation the artist has created a relational and ephemeral environment in which exchanges between two people or groups of people are translated from event to documentation and back to event again.

In *Divine Intervention* (2013) a collaborative intervention between the artist and market stallholders on Ridley Road is recorded; the stall's green striped tarpaulin is repainted and replaced with shimmering gold stripes with its function documented over the course of the working day as the stallholders carefully unfold, use and pack up their tarpaulin cover. For *Break* (2012) performers were asked to experiment with tying a tie around each other's hair and then plaiting it together. The two 'office workers' share a seemingly intimate moment in a public space to create a tangible, seductive and yet uncomfortable performance to camera.

Playfully engaging her subjects in absurd, poetic or transformative actions - most often responsive to a specific place or site - Cooper creates works that aim to capture the hypnotic effects of a private ritual. Creating an external code, or set of instructions, as a starting point the resulting works present the possibility of bringing people together to create something beyond them, or out of the ordinary.

Through the artist's deliberate use of repetition and framing subtle relationships are created; both between the elements on camera and the elements presented within the space. A female performer holds a screen on which *Spinning Ritual* (2012) plays on a loop. Her role serves to support and reinforce the work, whilst also adding layers to how we experience it. Her presence activates the space, creating a new encounter and a live, changeable environment that implies a sense of continuous flux.

The artist has also included several raw objects which appear extracted, drawing the work out of the space and referencing the sites in which the performances took place. The interjection of the hoody (bought from the stall in *Divine Intervention*) and the inclusion of the logs act as a reminder of the importance of site and event.

The rhythm and choreography within the performances, both on and off camera, reveals both the absurdity of the task set to the participants, and their essentially human attempts to succeed or 'act out' in the possible face of failure. This sense of improvisation within a set structure is essential to the tension created within the work, producing both a collaboration and an autonomous artwork.

The title, *Soft Revolutions*, implies a circular development, not a linear movement or progression but a change of state. As in *Spinning Ritual* the possibility of a revolution that begins in a soft way, which then gathers momentum to create the opportunity for gentle transformation, or the subversion of meaning, is key to this exhibition.

Laura Cooper received her undergraduate degree from Glasgow School of Art in 2006 and has recently completed her MFA in Fine Art Media at the Slade School of Art, London. Cooper has also worked with The British Arts Council Thailand and SAP Seoksu Market International residency program in Anyang City South Korea. Recent exhibitions include *Play, Game, Place, State*, at Collyer Bristow Gallery London and *Voice and The Lens*, IKON Gallery Birmingham. She has also been awarded the prestigious Franklin Furnace Fund for Performance 2012/13.

Soft Revolutions is kindly supported by the Arts Council England.

List of Works

Spinning Ritual

Performance to camera, 3 minutes, 2012

Divine Intervention

Documented performance, looped, 10 minutes, 2013

Break

Performance to camera, 2.30 minutes, 2012

Additional Objects

Logs (from Shropshire)

Hoody (fake American Apparel from Ridley Road Market)

Performers

Anitgone Avid & Stella Papi

Participants

Spinning Ritual & Break - Martina Conti, Jenifer Haynes, Hugo Damien.

Divine Interventions – Stallholders; Mohammed Raja, Mr T. Sha & Mr Ganesh.

The artist would like to thank Julie & Colin Cooper, Rob Crosse, Alexander Mulligan, Boldizar Aswesaw, Jimi Delime, Ian Giles, Jasmine Raznahan & Xavier Poultney, Hannah Hooks & Laura McFarlane.

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Soft Revolutions runs 8/2/13 – 23/2/13

Gallery open Fridays & Saturdays 12–6pm, or by appointment

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