

## Anneè Olofsson: Photographs and Videos

17 June – 24 September 2006

Te Manawa ART presents the first Australasian exhibition of Swedish artist Anneè Olofsson curated by Alice Hutchison. Although this will not be her first visit to New Zealand, she will be travelling from Sweden to be present for the installation and opening. Two recent moving image works 'Evil Eye' and 'Say Hello Then Wave Goodbye' (both 2004) will be screened alongside new photographs that explore elements of the family unit, often at the heart of her compelling body of work that, in Olofsson's hands, is transformed into something uncanny and often sensually unnerving, and has become a signature of her practice. The situation presented in her photographic images and videos may appear straightforward: relations of power, family connections, bonds of affection and intense emotion; but there is an unsettling sense of making visible small, even unconscious fears in a familial setting. 'Wanted' (2006) presents three images of the artist, three of her father and three of her mother shot from the front and profile in the manner of prison ID photographs; Anneè then took her parents to a plastic surgeon who drew lines on her parents faces where they would be cut to return them to their daughter's age. The facial markings evoke tattoos; as masked protagonists, she shares a constant fascination to get under the skin.



*The title certainly doesn't give anything away, a carefree exonerated, no less - of the dark matter about to be visualized on screen. Say Hello Then Wave Goodbye (DVD, 12 min.), 2004, is a study in, at once, a human presence (a self portrait of the artist) dissipated and dissolved, transmogrified, sublimated via alchemy - painterly tonal contrast (exploring chiaroscuro in the metaphor of light to dark); transformation in states from solid to liquid, but most apparently, and irresistibly, a visualization of the death drive. A cast of Anneè's face and upper torso are frozen white - as if her body had been left out in the snow for one hundred Nordic winter nights. The nose, shoulders and edges of her hair slowly darken to black from the atomic glow of some unknown presence off-camera; slowly the face; lastly the neck fades to black, ebbing into a background eerily growing like a dark halo around the figure, melting, spreading to the edges of the screen upwards until completely saturated within the fixed frame. Watercolour pathos. A minimal synth score by Sean McBride articulates the pace of deterioration. The once frosty face now glistens black like an oil slick, reflecting, melting striations radiate around the dissolving figure. Suddenly face, eye-sockets dissolve into an inner cavity void. What were ears have lost out to the smooth curvature of a skull, now the head dissolves fast, neck and shoulders still prominent. A pale underside cavity begins to appear. The face has completely melted to reveal an un-human brain-like ovoid. No words, simply fading to black, becoming one with the background, seeping into the dark pall, part of the miasma sea.*

*A thrust of tectonic plates and there is a continental rift between the island of a head breaking off from its peninsula neck. In turn, they froth and lather and dissolve into their murky waters to disappear. Fade out. Both this film and Evil Eye (DVD, 10 min.), 2005, obsess upon mortality, share a passive aggressive sado-masochism, the act of extinguishing life, both memento mori.*

*Evil Eye contemplates not merely being a victim of murder, but going through the subjective position of being a victim to manifold deaths under multiple circumstances. Anneé's alter-ego's recreate these scenarios in each, in one she is physically present, in the aforementioned, her body is absent, and yet bares more physicality than the expressionless woman in Evil Eye. On the one hand, Evil Eye recounts narrative scenarios, revisited deadpan. Both present Anneé as a masked stand-in for herself, both allowing only one take. The other, an abstraction: a non-narrative experiential visualization; a doppelganger, cast to undergo a trial of death and transfiguration, through matter transformed, through visual (and sonic) metaphor; the death drive, vis-à-vis Kristeva not Freud, again Kristeva's abjection and Black Sun. Evil Eye could at once be an epic condemnation of violence against women revealing universal proportions, as Anneé recounts countless acts of murder; vicious murder; a verbal diatribe offered in monotone of stories conjoined by their basis around the first person "I" upon whom the violence is perpetrated; and by extension, perpetuated. The linear construction of an ongoing, non-ending narrative of being murdered, being present for the act of her own murder and able to provide simultaneous commentary on the brutally graphic means; whether an act of jealousy, revenge, or accident, are all explicitly recounted to the point of absurdity. Compounded upon one another the stories gain momentum to verge on the scandalously ridiculous, while they are linked solely by the presence of the woman on screen (another Olofsson self-portrait), by the melodic continuity of Bach's keyboard concerto accompaniment. Seemingly her eyes don't blink at all. They stare front-on directly at us. It becomes apparent that these staring blue eyes are in fact handcrafted simulacra and camouflage. Her eyes blink and open and we are very much aware this is a make-up decoy. The deadpan single shot upon her motionless face is steady until the fade out end. It could repeat ad infinitum, perhaps just like the cycle of violence; and yet it is she who takes morbid pleasure in recounting the stories for our voyeuristic pleasure; or perhaps simply to pleasure her own contemplation of death. Memento mori run deeply within our psyche, not simply as Catholic penitence and symbol. The single shot saves the performance from coming close to hysteria as does the disembodied voice-over deliverance of her multiple grim fates. The credits allow us at the end to finally comprehend that these tales of murder are actual – an abridged snapshot of bloody murder collated and distilled from magazines, attesting to a much wider sociological fascination. But every one of these deaths has come back to haunt her, and us.*

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*Evil Eye*