

## PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

**Martha Rosler**

**Prototype (God Bless America)**

**05 July - 03 October 2012**

Launching on Independence Day, Wednesday 4 July 2012, Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is delighted to stage a special presentation of Martha Rosler's short film, *Prototype (God Bless America)*, 2006 in The Box, the gallery's microproject space. Rosler was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award by New York's Guggenheim Museum in 2010, and is the sixth contributor to the programme of special commissions for The Box, following Ai Weiwei.

With reference to the context of the 'miniature' in The Box and the importance of scale in this piece, Rosler says:

I found this dancing doll in a shop of Chinese-made goods in my neighborhood, standing next to a plastic Godzilla. At first I rejected it and then I had to have it. I vaguely understood how the dancing action was accomplished, and I rolled up the pants leg to check. I was right: the leg was like a prosthetic limb. One of the two defining injuries of the US war in Iraq and Afghanistan is traumatic limb amputation, generally of the leg, as a result of the roadside bombs. I had already made a 3-meter high swinging prosthetic leg, *Prototype (Freedom Is Not Free)*, to signify this injury; the dancing doll gave me the chance to point to that injury in miniature. I find changes in scale to be useful in reframing an issue; another interesting element was the oddly incorrect uniform and helmet of the doll, and its unrepresentatively Asian features: it was 'America' in some other nation's imagination. The doll is filmed in operation standing in my kitchen between a miniature tea set and a miniature TV. This one-minute video, simply by panning down to the exposed knee joint as it flexes and bends, provides viewers with a moment of shock and Brechtian 'alienation'.

Irving Berlin's *God Bless America* was the song sung nightly, as a peace song, by the popular singer Kate Smith on her radio show before and during the Second World War; it remained a sentimental favourite thereafter. Her rendition of the song was the opener at many sporting events, in particular in baseball and hockey, in place of The Star-Spangled Banner, the US national anthem.

Martha Rosler has had numerous solo exhibitions at museums and galleries across the globe. A retrospective of her work was staged at Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Turin in 2010. Other recent solo shows include Portikus, Frankfurt; Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; Centro José Guerrero, Granada; and the International Biennial of the Moving Image, Geneva. Her work has been included as part of important group exhibitions at Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Modern Art, New York; International Center of Photography, New York; Fotomuseum Winterthur; Reina Sofía, Madrid; Skulptur Projekte Münster 07; Documenta 7 & Documenta 12, Kassel; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Venice Biennale; Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam; Tate Modern, London; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and the Singapore Biennial 2011.

Rosler completed a DAAD Artist residency in Berlin earlier this year and is working towards a solo show at MoMA, New York, in November, where she will mount a "Meta-Monumental Garage Sale".

Opening Hours: Mon-Fri 10-6, Sat 10-4.

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