

# ICA

ICA Cinema presents

## *Perestroika*



**A film by Sarah Turner**

**1 September - 16 September 2010**

UK, 2009, 118mins, cert tbc

ICA Cinema 1, The Mall, London, SW1Y 5AH

**Press Screening: Wednesday 11 August, Noon, ICA Cinema**

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A poetic essay about loss and memory: twenty years after the death of a dear friend, the filmmaker re-enacts a journey on the Trans-Siberian train to investigate how ghostly images of the past invade the present. Both psycho-geography and emotional revelation, the film blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction.

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**1 September 2010, 7.30pm**

**Panel Discussion**

*Perestroika* is a film work that explores technologies of memory, temporality and loss. It is a documentary which is autobiographical, a fiction which is also an essay, but mostly a poem which is an extended meditation on the nature of affect and the ability of the image to represent experience.

The blurring of fact and fiction and the form of the essay poem are fertile territory for artists; what is less clear is why artists are still compelled to make single screen work for the cinema as opposed to the gallery, given that the spaces of exhibition are now so limited. How do we experience immersiveness and embodiment in a cinema space? What is especially compelling about the experience of collective immersion?

The panel will explore ideas around how artists' film engages with cinematic conventions both as aesthetic practice and spatial experience.

### **Directors Statement**

*Perestroika* is a ghost story that exploits technologies of memory in order to explore what we forget and how we remember. Part psycho geography, part dream, imagery is limited to views from the window of the Trans Siberian train shot in 1988, and then again in 2008. The film culminates at the haunting visual expanse of lake Baikal.

The filmmaker herself is the ghost: she is suffering from retrograde amnesia following a head injury caused by a cycling accident. She is repeating a journey to Siberia that she took 20 years ago with her best friend, and also where her best friend subsequently died, following a head injury caused by a cycling accident. The re-enactment of the journey is a memory work, a re-enactment of the past in the present through the process of filming. This is mediated by a continual referencing of the archive sounds and imagery which were shot on the original journey. The hope is that this return will precipitate another return, the return of memory through a re-enactment of trauma. However, this hope is derailed by extreme insomnia and the claustrophobic heat of the train, which ultimately produces delusion and a very different trauma. The voice over comments on the present but it also retreats into the past through the 'archive' footage. The prose starts to fuse what is being seen, what has been seen and what is seen internally. Although this is staged as a confusion between sleeping and waking states it is also a discussion of the status of the image, as the relationship here shifts from 'truth', 'fact' and 'record' to complete misrecognition, or, an experience of the uncanny.

The work exploits tropes of documentary and autobiography in order to explore the idea that memory is a narrative response to affectual spaces; the experience of memory is always determined by the affectual filter of now as much as then. The journey to Siberia is as much a psychic voyage as a geographical one - the difference between place and its image in memory; between here and there, or between experienced physical space and imagined space.

Ultimately, the work is a meditation on time, memory, association and dissociation; what we know and choose not to know, what we see and choose not to see. One reading suggests that memory is a construct, the truth of a moment or an event contingent on whichever narrative is framing it. Another reading suggests an explicit environmental allegory.

### **For more information and images please contact:**

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### **About the ICA**

The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) is a not-for-profit, multidisciplinary arts centre established in 1947 by a collective of artists, poets and writers to champion contemporary culture across the broadest range of art forms. Housing two galleries, two cinemas, a theatre, reading room, bookshop and cafe/bar, the ICA has been at the forefront of cultural revolution since its formation and has presented some of the most radical exhibitions, artists, films, music and thought to have shaped our world. It exists today as a committed proponent of the 'now', presenting an international and contextualised programme of work in new and experimental frameworks across a variety of platforms.

This release demonstrates a continued future commitment to presenting artist film and video work at the ICA.

### **About the Director**

Sarah Turner is an artist who writes and makes films. Her work spans single screen gallery pieces (rooted in the formal preoccupations of the avant-garde from which she emerged) to feature length projects that explore new narrative forms and the cinematic potential of subjective storytelling. All of her films have toured nationally and internationally and several have been broadcast through artists' showcases on Channel 4.

### **Filmography**

*Overheated Symphony* (collaborative project for Birds Eye View film festival) (2008)

*Ecology* - 97 mins- (2007)

*London Birds Can't Fly* - 10 mins- (2003) / *Cut* - 18 mins- (2000)

*A Life in a Day with Helena Goldwater* - 25 mins- (1996)

*Sheller Shares her Secret* - 8 mins- (1994)

*A Tale Part Told* - 4 mins- (1991)

*One and the other time* - 5 mins- (1990)

*She Wanted Green Lawns* - 4 mins- (1989)

### **Publications and Selected Bibliography**

*CUT. COIL magazine* - 1999

*The Raw and the Cooked* - The fourth ICA Biennial. B. Ruby Rich, Chris Darke 1997

*A Directory of British Film and Video Artists* - Arts Council Of England/University of Luton Press 1996

*Beacons of Style* - Cinenova/The Arts Council Of England 1998 [www.bftv.ac.uk/avantgarde](http://www.bftv.ac.uk/avantgarde)

If you need more information about the Director please email [jenniferb@ica.org.uk](mailto:jenniferb@ica.org.uk)

