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**SIX COLORFUL TALES: FROM THE EMOTIONAL SPECTRUM (WOMEN)**

**Jen Liu & John Baldessari**

16 September - 22 October 2011

**Preview 15 September 6-8pm**

<i>CAUGHT RED HANDED:</i>	<i>When a maniac would stop at nothing!</i>
<i>THINKING ORANGE:</i>	<i>If you think you're being followed home, keep telling yourself it's all in your mind....</i>
<i>CATATONIC YELLOW:</i>	<i>Once you've seen this you'll never feel safe in the dark again....</i>
<i>GREEN HORN:</i>	<i>Don't go in the woods.....alone!</i>
<i>FEELING BLUE:</i>	<i>A stunning portrait in psycho-terror on the open water!</i>
<i>APOPLECTIC VIOLET:</i>	<i>Death walks in high heels!</i>

In 1977, John Baldessari enlisted six women to tell stories from their childhoods and young adulthoods on video in ***Six Colourful Tales from the Emotional Spectrum (Women), 1977***. He set them against coloured backgrounds that dwarfed the tellers, cropped in the manner of 'talking heads'. Their stories range from subtle trauma to the banal, but they all shared aspects of violence: as victims and perpetrators, imagined and real.

In Jen Liu's homage to the original ***Six Colorful Tales from the Emotional Spectrum (Women), 2011***, Baldessari becomes Giallo, a brand of low-budget Italian horror-thriller films that peaked in the 70s. In these films, beautiful brunettes rule a violent world, populating it with psycho killers, detectives, and bloody corpses. If Baldessari's brunettes reminisce about their experiences of violence, Liu's brunette enacts them as a fever-dream of misinterpretation, hyperbole, and narrative disruption.

Liu also references Baldessari's processes in her new series of large drawings, each based on a colour from the spectrum, taking themes from her video and expanding upon them with imagery from 1977. Grey structures impose upon intensely coloured blotches and blobs, echoing the visual play between Baldessari's subjects and their coloured backgrounds. Ink 'lovelies' from Giallo novels and posters float on top, with text from the video. As "film posters" they advertise the video in a wholly inaccurate and exaggerated way – staying true to the tradition of B-movies. Smaller drawings by Liu combine stills from Giallo films, compositionally 'presented' by the ladies of 1977 porn magazines. They present the promise of death, wearing Suprematist-shaped hats, coats, and elbows of deep space.

Baldessari's original film, that forms the title of the exhibition and inspiration for Liu, will be screened at the gallery alongside a selection of available photo-based works by him that predominantly incorporate decontextualised expressions, such as ***Intersection Series: Landscape; Two Persons (One with Prize)***, 2002 which features two smiling faces juxtaposed with a hand holding a 'prize' and a photograph of a landscape. The hole within the landscape echoes the mouths of the women, whilst the red and green crayon in the central image relate us back to the films and the potentiality of violence or disruption within the subject and the image.

Baldessari's sharp insights into the conventions of art production, the nature of perception, and the relationship of language to mass-media imagery are tempered by a keen sense of humour, reflected in ***Man with blue shape***, 1991, which features a man's frown, framed in a close-up, with the top lip painted blue and rendered slug-like. The mouth, the tool for communication, is abstracted and deconstructed, the expression within the image simultaneously forming and resisting narrative. ***Vertical Series: Books***, 2003, the only 'colour-less' image in the show, connects to Liu's incorporation of retro, sexualised images women, initiating, poised, cropped, re-configuring themselves and the context in which they occupy.



Baldessari references film in particular as "it mirrors the real world, but it's in another place. It's always set up"<sup>1</sup>. In producing all aspects of her films (sets, costumes, lights, audio, editing), Liu is consciously constructing fictions that she uniquely extends through her drawings and paintings, literally 'setting-up' a parallel narrative in order to interrogate contemporary society.

### **Notes to Editors**

John Baldessari is one of the most influential artists of his generation and his lifelong interest in language, both written and visual, has been at the forefront of both his artwork and his teaching.

Ceri Hand Gallery artist Jen Liu was Baldessari's archivist from 2001-2003 and the summer of 2004, between studying at De Ateliers in Amsterdam.

Jen Liu b. 1976, lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Solo exhibitions include 'Brody Condon and Jen Liu', On Stella Rays, New York, 2010, 'The Last Alphabet/Pasta Belt Health', Upstream Gallery, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2009 and 'Drastic Measures, Unknown Pleasures', Ceri Hand Gallery, Liverpool, 2008. Group exhibitions include 'Space. About a Dream', Kunsthalle Wien, Switzerland, 2011; 'Utopian Structures', ALTERFABRIK, Berlin, 2011; 'You Can Heal Your Life!', curated by Emma Gray, Circus Gallery, LA, 2010, 'The Fruits of Traumata', Czarna Gallery, Warsaw, Poland, 2009 and 'Building Paradise', 7+Fig Art Space, LA, 2009. Liu's paintings on paper, videos and installations draw on diverse histories and she develops texts that begin with a single line of enquiry, such as 'the environment gets worse', which then metamorphosise into giant, abstract, dazzling watercolours, shot through with sampling, salvaging and recycling from modernism to constructivism. In association with these she devises and produces all aspects of her films (rarely featuring dialogue), resulting in dream-like non-linear narratives with fantastical props and costumes, infused with a delicious reverie of music and the absurd, but which always retain a melancholia that subverts and enhances our observations in the work and the worlds we inhabit.

John Baldessari b. 1931, lives and works in Santa Monica, California. He attended San Diego State University and did post-graduate work at Otis Art Institute, Chouinard Art Institute and the University of California at Berkeley. He taught at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, CA from 1970 - 1988 and the University of California at Los Angeles from 1996 - 2007. Baldessari's artwork has been featured in more than 200 solo exhibitions and in over 1000 group exhibitions in the U.S. and Europe. His projects include artist books, videos, films, billboards and public works. His awards and honours include memberships in the American Academy of Arts and Letters and in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Americans for the Arts Lifetime Achievement Award, the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative, the BACA International 2008, and the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement, awarded by La Biennale di Venezia in 2009. He has received honorary degrees from the National University of Ireland, San Diego State University, and Otis Art Institute of Parsons School of Design. Recent projects include exhibitions in New York, Europe, and Los Angeles; a curatorial project at the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington D.C.; installations at the Museum Haus Lange in Krefeld, Germany, and at Sprüeth Magers London; a print retrospective at the Legion of Honor in San Francisco, CA (2009); an exhibition with the Fondazione Prada in Milan, Italy; and the traveling retrospective "John Baldessari: Pure Beauty." 'John Baldessari: A Catalogue Raisonné of Prints and Multiples 1971-2007' was published in December 2009 by Hudson Hills Press.

**For a full list of works, images and more information on the exhibiting artists please visit contact Ceri Hand or Lucy Johnston on [info@cerihand.co.uk](mailto:info@cerihand.co.uk) 0044 (0) 151 207 0899.**

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Nicole David, Associate Editor of Artnet Magazine, Santa Monica, CA, April 12, 2004.