



SASKIA OLDE WOLBERS
TRAILER
October 3 - November 30, 2007

Trailer, 2005

"Somewhere in the vast Amazonian forest, among plants whose indigenous, Spanish and Latin names compete with one another outside of their awareness ..." These are the opening words of *Trailer*, which are accompanied by a shot of exotic vegetation. As the work unfolds, it shifts between two distinct spaces, two parallel worlds: the green and humid lushness of a tropical forest and the muffled red interior of an empty movie theatre. A man's voice recounts the story of his "brutal" discovery of the great secret of his life.

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Saskia Olde Wolbers, a Dutch-born artist who lives and works in London, creates narrative videos that draw us into strange episodes, apparently part imagination, part dream. Her work is notable for the hypnotic pull of its images, the brilliance of its texts and the subtle interaction between the tone of the narration and the camera's movement. Her videos are pure inventions, driven by the suggestive power of the voice-over narrative. Using neither action nor dialogue, Saskia Olde Wolbers takes us deep into the inner life of a protagonist we never actually see.

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Interestingly, writing is not the starting-point of her creative process: "There's no story-board," says the artist. She begins by constructing the images – literally, since what might appear at first glance to be computer-generated images are in fact filmed sequences of meticulously built models. After hand-crafting all the objects and sets, Saskia Olde Wolbers submerges the models in liquid. *Trailer* was filmed in a small paddling pool, resulting in an image with an enigmatic quality that seizes the viewer's gaze with an almost mesmerizing power.

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The stories recounted in these videos often have their origin in real events. *Octet* (1997), for example, was inspired by the experiences of a British woman who was pregnant with octuplets. *Kilowatt Dynasty* (2000) imagines various dramatic consequences of the construction of the Three Gorges Dam on China's Yangtze River. *Placebo* (2002) and *Interloper* (2003) are both based on a squalid news story about a man who succeeded for eighteen years in convincing his family that he was a research doctor working

for the World Health Organization in Geneva; when his deception was about to be discovered, he murdered his whole family before trying, unsuccessfully, to commit suicide. There are always gaps in the TV and newspaper reports of such events, information that is missing, and it is in these cracks and chinks that Saskia Olde Wolbers's imagination operates: "I guess this is what draws me to stories and makes me write," she says. "To get to where there is no access, where reality has no place, where only the imagination can travel, and you can only ever guess about a situation." < <

The narrative that drives *Trailer* is more complex than those of Saskia Olde Wolbers's previous pieces. "My work often has a source for the story: this one has several. First, I came across a documentary about Judy Lewis, whose mother, Loretta Young, was a film and TV star during the fifties. All her life, her mother had told her she'd been adopted when she was nineteen months old. It wasn't until she was in her thirties that she learned she was the illegitimate daughter of Clark Gable, and that Loretta Young was in fact her real mother. What intrigues me about this story is the pretence. I'm often attracted by stories set in a time when facts were hidden." < <

In a cinema in a small Ohio town, the narrator, Alfgar Dalio, learns by chance during the screening of a trailer that he is related to the two actors onscreen and that he bears the same name as an extinct Amazonian moth. We also hear about a carnivorous plant – a species of flytrap named after Elmore Vella, a little-known actress from the twenties who survived a plane crash in the Peruvian jungle. Another element of *Trailer* is its evocation of a short-lived technique that is part of the history of cinema: kinemacolor, an additive colour process in which a black-and-white film was projected through alternating red and green filters. In *Trailer*, the jungle and the movie theatre represent the green of an innocent childhood and the red of a confusing present. < <

In each of Saskia Olde Wolbers's works the protagonist is placed in a microcosm that holds the keys to their existence, a space that both reflects and transcends them. "These spaces also become a metaphor for a space in the character's head." The narrator of *Trailer* sees his life as an overlapping of illusion and reality. "Watching the films," he murmurs, "I realized a memory had slowly started to form ... And with it came an emotion forgotten since childhood ... Was I building fiction in the void of reality, or was this an actual memory?" <



SASKIA OLDE WOLBERS

Born in Breda, Netherlands, in 1971.
Lives and works in London.

Biobibliography

An asterisk (*) indicates a publication.

Solo Exhibitions

- 2007 *Trailer*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montréal (QC), Canada.*
Maureen Paley, London, England.
- 2006 *The Falling Eye*, Stedelijk Museum CS, Amsterdam, Netherlands.
- 2005 *Trailer*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.
Trailer, South London Gallery, London, England.
- 2004 Maureen Paley, London, England.
Now That Part of Me Has Become Fiction, Neue Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen, Saint-Gall, Switzerland.*
- 2003 *Art Statement*, Kunstmesse Basel, Basel, Switzerland.
Interloper, Galerie Diana Stigter, Amsterdam, Netherlands.
Now That Part of Me Has Become Fiction, Museum Het Domein, Sittard, Netherlands.*
Art Now: Lightbox, Tate Britain, London, England.
Placebo, Transmission Gallery, Glasgow, Scotland.
- 2002 *Placebo*, Büro Friedrich, Berlin, Germany.
Galleria Laura Pecci, Milan, Italy.
Helsingin Taidehalli, Helsinki, Finland.
- 2000 *Cosmos*, Centre d'art contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland.
Virtual Theme Park, Galerie Herold, Bremen, Germany.
Mindset, Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands.*
- 1999 *Huis in Park Ostermann-Petersen*, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- 1998 *Cross Currents*, Gallery 291, London, England.

Principal Group Exhibitions

- 2007 *Genesis: Life at the End of the Information Age*, Centraal Museum Utrecht, Utrecht, Netherlands.
Stop, Look, Listen: An Exhibition of Video Works, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., United States.
- 2005 *British Art Show 6*, The Hayward Gallery, Manchester, England.*
- 2004 *Into My World: Recent British Sculpture*, Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Conn., United States.*
Another Zero, GAMEC - Galleria d'arte moderna e contemporanea, Bergamo, Italy.*
Beck's Futures, Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London, England.

*WonderHolland, Trajan's Markets, Rome, Italy.**

*Drawn By Reality: Encapsulated In Life, Wood Street Galleries, Pittsburgh, Penn., United States.**

2001 *Casino 2001: 1st Quadrennial, S.M.A.K. Stedelijk Museum voor Aktuele Kunst, Ghent, Belgium.**

Principal Catalogue and Periodical Articles

- 2006 Bokern, Anneke. – "Saskia Olde Wolbers' Totally Original Universe: The Falling Eye and Other Storytelling Tripiness?" – *Amsterdam Weekly*. – (June 22, 2006). – Pp. 6-7
- Princenthal, Nancy. – "Magical Thinking" – *Art in America*. – No. 9 (Oct. 2006). – Pp. 183-185, 209
- 2005 Bullock, Natasha. – *Saskia Olde Wolbers: Trailer*. – Sidney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2005. – 8 pp.
- Hackworth, Nick. – "The Secret Life of Plants" – *Evening Standard*. – (May 19, 2005). – P. 30
- Herbert, Martin. – "Anti-trust and Saskia Olde Wolbers: Critics Choice" – *Time Out London*. – (June 1-8, 2005). – P. 68.
- Satz, Aura. "Saskia Olde Wolbers" – *Tema celeste*. – (Sept.-Oct. 2005). – P. 83
- 2004 "Good Migrations" – *Art Review*. – (Feb.-March 2004). – P. 16
- Alberge, Dalya. – "Car Crash Coma Film Wins ICA Art Prize" – *The Times*. – (April 28, 2004). – P. 8
- Glueck, Grace. – "A Softer Generation of British Sculptors with Less Zip" – *New York Times*. – (Aug. 27, 2004). – P. E24
- Jury, Louise. – "'Delusional' Video Filmed in a Paddling Pool Wins Beck's Prize" – *The Independent*. – (April 28, 2004). – P. 9
- Leitch, Luke. – "Beck's Prize Winner Hard to Fathom" – *Evening Standard*. – (28 April 2004). – P. 14
- Ribas, Joao. – "Great Expectations" – *Art Review*. – (June 2004). – P. 25
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- Williams, Eliza. – "Saskia Olde Wolbers" – *Art Monthly*. – No. 280 (Oct. 2004). – Pp. 30-31
- 2003 *Now That Part of Me Has Become Fiction*. – Texts by Stijn Huijts et al. – Amsterdam: Artimo, 2003. – 87 pp.
- Schwabsky, Barry. – "Saskia Olde Wolbers" – *Artforum*. – Vol. 42, no. 3 (Nov. 2003). – P. 202
- 2002 Ashton, Edwina. – "Liquid Light: Saskia Olde Wolbers" – *Make: The Magazine of Women's Art*. – No. 92 (2002). – Pp. 57-59
- Bush, Kate. – "Kate Bush on Saskia Olde Wolbers" – *Artforum*. – Vol. 40, no. 5 (Jan. 2002). – P. 122.
- Schlaegel, Andreas. – "Saskia Olde Wolbers: Placebo" – *Contemporary*. – No. 46 (Dec. 2002). – Pp. 91-92



In 1997, in London, Saskia Olde Wolbers received an ACAVA First Base Award for promising young artists. Since her first solo exhibition the following year, her work has earned her a number of other prizes, including the Prix de Rome Film & Video and the Charlotte Köhler Prijs, both in the Netherlands, the Baloise Prize at Art Basel 2003 and the 2004 Beck's Futures Award. Saskia Olde Wolbers's first book, *Now That Part of Me Has Become Fiction*, was published by Artimo in 2003.

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Photos SASKIA OLDE WOLBERS, from *Trailer*, 2005. DVD for projection, 10-minute loop.
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