

Susan PHILIPSZ

Here Comes Everybody

March 22nd – April 19th, 2008

Opening reception: Saturday March 22nd, 6-8pm

Gallery two

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is very pleased to present *Here Comes Everybody*, Susan Philipsz's first exhibition with the gallery and the artist's first solo presentation in New York. Interested in both the psychological and sculptural potential of sound, Philipsz uses recordings, predominantly of her own voice, to create immersive environments that heighten the visitor's engagement with their surroundings while inspiring thoughtful introspection. Dealing with universal themes such as presence and absence, nostalgia and hope, love, longing, and the cyclical nature of time, the songs Philipsz chooses respond to the space in which they are installed, and range from Irish folk tunes to David Bowie's Ziggy Stardust. Philipsz's renditions are arrestingly earnest, and while each is idiosyncratic they are all immediately recognizable, triggering personal reactions while also connecting the individual to the collective popular repertory. This dynamic between interiority and exteriority, the personal and the universal, is particularly important for the artist—indeed, it is the point of departure for *Here Comes Everybody* which Philipsz describes as follows:

“When I first came across the line ‘here comes everybody’ in James Joyce’s novel, *Finnegan’s Wake*, it made me think of both a great ocean of people with a common aim that generated feelings of togetherness, solidarity and strength and also the opposite, as if one was waiting in trepidation for ‘everybody’ to descend upon you. I can identify with both these feelings. My exhibition *Here Comes Everybody* is about the need to retreat from, and the need to participate in the world.”

Created with the unique architecture of the Tanya Bonakdar Gallery in mind, *Here Comes Everybody* utilizes both gallery spaces, one bright and open, with lots of natural light, and the other more intimate and dark. For the darker more secluded space Phillipsz recorded herself singing ‘Trees and Flowers’ (by the Glasgow punk duo Strawberry Switchblade)—a song about a fear of the outdoors and wanting to be alone. Phillipsz sings *a cappella* in a way that suggests solitude—as if she is singing to herself.

For the more open space Philipsz transcribed the melody of ‘Trees and Flowers’ into a method of singing known as ‘fasola,’ or shape note singing, developed in the 1800’s by American choral directors to make reading music more accessible to public congregations. ‘Fasola’ singing grew popular in the Southern region of the United States during the early 19th century, and continues today with gatherings sometimes referred to as “The Big Singing” where hundreds of people convene to sing together from shape note songbooks. This type of singing is strikingly democratic and does not prioritize any specific voice, instead each person in the large group stands on equal footing with the others. Predominantly tonal, yet with unusual harmonizations and strange sounding syllables, the songs can be somewhat discordant, yet there is something powerful about the way they are sung; the participatory nature of the singing and the force of each voice produce a disarming effect that seems to add up to even more than the sum of its parts. Although Philipsz ‘fasola’ version of ‘Trees and Flowers’ is just her voice alone projected over three strategically installed speakers, it is likewise powerful in the merging and harmonization of the recordings. The three parts, melody and harmonies, move from speaker to speaker, mimicking a common practice of ‘fasola’ singers, who physically move from their group to sing with another; a soprano may move to a the alto’s section, or vice versa. Filling the space, Philipsz disembodied voice seems to move around the room, circling the listener, as a shape note singer might circle the room at a “Big Singing.” Also in the tradition of ‘fasola’ singing, where dedications are common at the start of the song, Philipsz would like to dedicate *Here Comes Everybody* to her sister Sarah.

Born in Glasgow and currently living and working in Berlin, Philipsz work has recently been seen in: *Susan Philipsz*, CGAC - Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 2007 (solo); *Skulptur Projekte Münster 07*, Münster, 2007 (group); *Unmonumental*, New Museum for Contemporary Art, New York, 2007 (group); *Busan Biennale*, Busan, 2007 (group); *Of Mice and Men* 4th Berlin Biennale, Berlin, 2007 (group). It is with particular excitement that we announce Philipsz’ forthcoming participation in *Life on Mars*, The 55th Carnegie International, The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh which opens May 3rd, 2008.

For further information please feel free to contact the gallery at info@tanyabonakdargallery.com or 212-414-4144.