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THE SHELLEY & DONALD RUBIN FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES

ENACTING STILLNESS

**AN EXHIBITION FEATURING ARTISTS JOHN AHEARN, JOAN JONAS,
BRUCE NAUMAN, and CLIFFORD OWENS, AMONG OTHERS**

The 8th Floor, 17 West 17th Street, NYC

September 21, 2016 - January 13, 2017

Opening Reception, Wednesday, September 21, from 6:00 to 8:00pm



Bruce Nauman. *Dance or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square (Square Dance)*, 1967-68.
Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

New York, August 8, 2016 – The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation is pleased to announce *Enacting Stillness*, an exhibition that considers the political potential of slowing down and stopping as forms of resistance, protest, and refusal, opening on September 21, 2016 at The 8th Floor. An international group of artists in the exhibition engage time-based practices that challenge and upend our expectations for the continuity of performative compositions, lines of

movement, and thought. Working with the disciplines of choreography, theater, moving image, sculpture and performance, the exhibition presents a multivalent reflection on political histories from the Americas to Europe and Asia, with projects that employ a range of gestures and time-based practices to question what unexpected ruptures like meditation, contemplation, rest, and the reversing of movement and time might mean to both the artist and the viewer.

Enacting Stillness features artists **John Ahearn, Rehan Ansari, Nicolás Dumit Estévez, Brendan Fernandes, Alicia Grullon, Yoko Inoue, Joan Jonas, Claudia Juskowicz, Kirsten Justesen, Kimsooja, Carlos Martiel, Bruce Nauman, Clifford Owens, Kameelah Janan Rasheed, Emily Roysdon, and Roman Štětina.**

Located along a spectrum between temporal schisms and perceptions of one's own presence, the artists featured in *Enacting Stillness* reconsider their places in space and time. **Nicolás Dumit Estévez's** project *For Art's Sake* (2005-2007) was staged as a series of urban pilgrimages throughout the boroughs of New York City that sought to reverse the traditional relationship between art and religion while drawing attention to the durational qualities of performance art. Mapping out the dynamics of performative thought and action, **Emily Roysdon's** *Ecstatic Resistance* (2009-2010) diagrams and analyzes the interplay between intentionality and improvisation. She illustrates the boundary between the spoken and unspeakable in the thought processes leading to the staging of performance art and activism.

Acting as performative precedents to Roysdon's diagram, works by **Bruce Nauman, Kirsten Justesen, and Joan Jonas** force us to consider how embodied movement impacts our understanding of the world. Choreographed by Meredith Monk, Nauman's *Dance or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square (Square Dance)*, (1967-68), is an exercise that creates an awareness only possible through physical engagement. Nauman has described the process of such physical exercises as a way of pinpointing the tensions implicit in the act of finding balance and the process of performing a gesture to the point of fatigue. Justesen says of *Sculpture II* (1968): "a sculpture is a plinth with a form on top and it's often a naked woman up there. My *Skulptur II* is a cardboard box with a black and white photograph of me inside." Justesen goes on to describe it as "a plinth you can walk around, with a woman inside"- in this case, the artist herself. As if stepping out on a grand scale, Jonas' video *Song Delay* is both a piece of choreography and a time-based earthwork that draws on movement, sound, and theatrical gesture, using lower Manhattan's urban landscape as a stage.

In **Kimsooja's** *A Needle Woman* (1999-2001), the artist faces away from the camera, standing still against the movement of fast-paced streets in New York, Delhi, Lagos, and Mexico City, among other locations. Through this exercise in relative stillness, Kimsooja demonstrates how a meditative stance juxtaposed against the chaos of international urban centers reveals their characteristics. In other words, her stillness provides a mirror.

Repurposing the visual language of ballet and meditation, **Brendan Fernandes** and **Roman Štětina** slow movement down - both their own and that of other performers - to a halt in order

to locate sites of activation in a variety of poses and gestures related to the labor of artistic production. Fernandes' *The Working Move* (2012) connects performing art with visual art by staging scenes of dancers interacting with plinths that typically support sculptural objects in a gallery setting, questioning the value of human physical labor in the context of art. Štětina's *Test Room* (2015) captures on video, a lone performance by a camera operator whose tense choreography likens the steadycam rig to a military tool for carrying weaponry.

Claudia Joscowicz's two-channel video *Sympathy for the Devil* (2011) is a meditation on a recurring situation in post-World War II Latin America, when the region offered asylum to both persecuted Jews and fleeing Nazis alike. The victims and their oppressors coexisted, often unknowingly, in Latin America.

Yoko Inoue and **Rehan Ansari's** projects - Inoue's a durational, public performance and Ansari's a full-scale play - are both shaped by the after-effects of globalization. Inoue's *Transmigration of the SOLD* (2006-2016) explores the connections between immigration, global politics, and the conditions of labor by reversing the cycles of production of artisan crafts typically found for sale in most makeshift marketplaces. Ansari's play *Unburdened* tells the story of a Canadian journalist covering the war in Karachi, Pakistan, staying with his elderly aunt and uncle who live with a secret that dates back to the Partition of India. A reading of Ansari's *Unburdened* will be presented during the run of the exhibition.

Breaking through the fourth wall between audience and performers, **Clifford Owens'** enactment of performance scores provided by other artists (as part of his project *Anthology*, 2011) calls out the tensions and power relations negotiated between choreographer, performer, participant, and audience. **Carlos Martiel's** endurance performances are staged to test the limits of his own physical capacity and the audience's level of comfort in the role of witness. Addressing a related theme, **John Ahearn's** sculpture *A Mirror for Andrew Glover* (2015) pays homage to a program that keeps sentenced youth out of jail through counseling, training, education, and job assistance.

Artists **Alicia Grullon** and **Kameelah Janan Rasheed** explore the under recognized experiences of communities impacted by gentrification arising from urban development. Grullon's silent, masked street performance *An Auto-Ethnographic Study: The Bronx* (2008), is met with stories of displacement by the public she encounters, while Rasheed mines unspoken and invisible narratives to give voice to those whose histories are overlooked by official institutions. Her piece *How to Suffer Politely (and Other Etiquette)* (2014-2016) emphasizes that the imposition of cultural change does not need to be met with resignation by the displaced and disenfranchised.

Together, the artists in this exhibition reveal the parallel connections between art and political engagement, between stillness and activation. Each of the artists works with an economy of means to test the limits of performance - for the performer, the viewer, and the participant - provoking us to question how our own positions, whether still or in motion, connect to larger social and political concerns.

About The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation

The Foundation believes in art as a cornerstone of cohesive, resilient communities and greater participation in civic life. In its mission to make art available to the broader public, in particular to underserved communities, the Foundation provides direct support to, and facilitates partnerships between, cultural organizations and advocates of social justice across the public and private sectors. Through grantmaking, the Foundation supports cross-disciplinary work connecting art with social justice via experimental collaborations, as well as extending cultural resources to organizations and areas of New York City in need. sdrubin.org

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