

MARY BOONE GALLERY
745 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10151. 212.752.2929

ERICKA BECKMAN

Hiatus

3 March to 23 April 2016

On 3 March 2016 Mary Boone Gallery will open at its Fifth Avenue location *Hiatus* by ERICKA BECKMAN. The exhibition, curated by Piper Marshall, realizes the eponymous film as a double-projection; the original film is screened alongside never-before-seen, original material.

"How might it be possible to create a sense of freedom within a mediated age of representation?" —Ericka Beckman

When cyber-punk protagonist Wanda loads a floppy disk onto her computer and slips into a wired-up black suit, she transports herself into virtual space where the game is on. We see the setting change from her office to a Tetris-like black box; we see her growing "programs" by tilling a garden... until an electrical storm threatens her crop and power supply, bringing with it Wang – "Player 33, from Houston" – who lays claim to her land. In the film *Hiatus*, the virtual reality game world serves as a perfect playing field where Beckman pits the "user", instinctive Wanda, against another player, the militaristic Wang.

In *Hiatus*, however, the "true" threat to Wanda is not Wang, but what he represents: expropriation by a third party. Wanda struggles to maintain her power by deploying intuition, rather than her seductive skills and memory, which she stores in her computer corset. Wanda deploys the strategies of the game to her own ends; she mirrors our own user-fantasies. Mediating between "the real" and "the virtual" allows artist Ericka Beckman to unfold the central conflict: the cultivation and control of virtual reality by military and scientific communities.

Important to this film are the investigations Beckman conducted at NASA's Ames facility in Silicon Valley. In 1990, the artist worked with the scientists and hardware developers who realized the first visual representations of virtual reality and the Internet. The visual vocabulary for *Hiatus* comes from the artist's testing of proto virtual reality headgear. Motivated by the dearth of games for girls, she created a story with a female protagonist in the then yet-to-be-envisioned virtual reality game world. *Hiatus* shows us the playful game space that Beckman envisioned. This optimism provides a striking contrast to our contemporary situation, where corporate interests threaten not only virtual space, but dream space too.

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Central to Beckman's work is the engagement with gaming and its discipline of the body. This film continues Beckman's commitment to making film works that deliver their material through the structure of a game, as opposed to the more traditional narrative. In dealing with gaming, Beckman closes in on our relationship to technology, our conflict with its jurisdiction, and its inevitable conditioning of social behavior.

The exhibition, at 745 Fifth Avenue, will be on view through 23 April 2016. For further information, please contact Ron Warren at the Gallery, or visit our website www.maryboonegallery.com.