THE PARADISE INSTITUTE

JANET CARDIFF AND GEORGE BURES MILLER

Presented at MOCA Cleveland, from the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

MARCH 16—JUNE 9, 2013

Main Gallery

In addition to their solo art practices, Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller have collaborated on a number of projects that investigate perception and immersive environments. The Paradise Institute is one of their most ambitious and complex works to date, exploring the psychological effects of cinema.

From the outside, the installation’s plywood structure looks plain and unassuming. Inside, however, visitors enter what appears to be a large 1930s-style movie house, complete with plush velvet seating. This expansive spatial effect is achieved through careful attention to perspective and material. Sixteen viewers can be seated for each 13-minute screening, with individual sets of headphones that transmit disorienting directional sounds. This highly convincing audio component aims to trigger physical and emotional reactions, which in turn affect visual perception. On screen, a dark and mysterious narrative develops and begins to blend with events taking place in the theatre, building into a dramatic crescendo.

By immersing viewers in a simulated environment, Cardiff and Bures Miller engage both the tradition of realistic trompe l’oeil (“trick of the eye”) painting, and more contemporary illusionistic technologies such as virtual reality. How do we separate our lived experiences and memories from those we absorb through images? Is the boundary between reality and entertainment more flexible than we think? Though it has been over a decade since The Paradise Institute was first exhibited at the Venice Biennale, in many ways the work is more relevant than ever, as an increasingly screen-based culture draws people deeper into a fragmented, media-saturated existence.

Please note that The Paradise Institute contains mature themes. Visitors with children under the age of 13 may wish to discuss the content with a gallery attendant, docent, or visitor services team member.

Janet Cardiff (1957, Brussels, Canada) and George Bures Miller (1960, Vegreville, Canada) live and work together in Berlin and Grindrod, Canada. They have been collaborating on multi-media projects since the early 1990s. Exhibitions of their work have been held at the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; and Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin. They have been included in group exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; Skulptur Projekte Muenster; the 16th Biennale of Sidney, and the Yokohama Triennale of Contemporary Art, Japan. In 2001 they represented Canada at the 49th Venice Biennale, winning the Golden Lion Award for The Paradise Institute.

ARTIST TALK: JANET CARDIFF
SUNDAY, MAY 5, 2013 (TENTATIVE DATE)

This program is OFFSITE at the Cleveland Museum of Art

MOCA Cleveland’s presentation of The Paradise Institute has been programmed in collaboration with the Cleveland Museum of Art, which will present Janet Cardiff’s sound installation, The Forty Part Motet (2001), May 4–June 9, 2013. As in The Paradise Institute, The Forty Part Motet uses isolated and directed sound to create an uncanny spatial experience.

SPONSORS

This exhibition is funded by Leadership Circle gifts supporting inaugural year programs and exhibitions: Britton Fund, Agnes Gund, Scott Mueller, Doreen and Dick Cahan, Becky Dunn, Harriet and Victor Goldberg, Donna and Stewart Kohl, and Toby Devan Lewis.

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