Eve Sussman
89 Seconds at Alcázar

We are pleased to present 89 Seconds at Alcázar by Eve Sussman, a work lauded at the 2004 Whitney Biennial and presently on display at the reopened Museum of Modern Art, New York. The exhibition, Eve Sussman: 89 Seconds at Alcázar, features the first large-scale high-definition video to be presented at the Haggerty Museum of Art. Also included in the exhibition are digital C-prints and three DVDs shown on flat-screen LCD monitors.

I would like to thank the artist, Eve Sussman, and Joel Beck, Christian Viveros-Faune and Peter Ryan of Roebling Hall for their cooperation with this exhibition. Special thanks to the artist for providing a copy of 89 Seconds at Alcázar and to Richard J. Massey for generously providing digital C-prints and videos from his collection. I would also like to thank Jon Pray, Associate Provost of Educational Technology and the Instructional Media Center for technological support for the exhibition. Eve Sussman: 89 Seconds at Alcázar and this gallery guide were made possible in part from funding provided by the Richard and Ethel Herzfeld Haggerty Museum Endowment Fund.

Curtis L. Carter
Director

Works in the Exhibition

1. 89 Seconds at Alcázar, 2004
   High Definition video installation, 12 minute loop
2. The Monkeys, 2004
   Digital C-print, 40 x 30 in.
3. Montage from 89 Seconds, 2004
   Digital C-print, 108 x 30 in.
4. Empty Set, 2004
   Digital C-print, 45 x 30 in.
5. Serving the Mills, 2004
   DVD, flat-screen LCD monitor, 10 x 16 in.
6. The Dog Rolls, 2004
   DVD, flat-screen LCD monitor, 10 x 16 in.
7. The Queen Turns, 2004
   DVD, flat-screen LCD monitor, 10 x 16 in.
8. Erin as Maria, 2004
   Digital C-print, 45 x 30 in.
9. The Three (Velázquez, Mariva & the Infanta), 2004
   Digital C-print, 40 x 50 in.
10. The King & the Infanta, 2004
    Digital C-print, 40 x 30 in.
11. Nico & the Mastiff, 2004
    Digital C-print, 40 x 30 in.
12. Philip & Mariana Reflected, 2004
    Digital C-print, 50 x 40 in.
    Digital C-print, 40 x 50 in.
14. King Sleeps, 2004
    Digital C-print, 40 x 50 in.

Acknowledgements

Eve Sussman: 89 Seconds at Alcázar

Collection of Richard J. Massey

Photo: Benedict Partenheimer, © Eve Sussman and the Rufus Corporation

Haggerty Museum of Art
Marquette University
February 18 - May 22, 2005
Las Meninas has been interpreted as “a candid representation of an actual event” and a highly structured composition with visual and intellectual subtleties. It is an extraordinary story of art which has inspired countless artists. Its painter, Diego Velázquez, was court painter to Philip IV of Spain from 1623 until his death in 1660. His primary responsibility was to document the royal family. In recognition of his achievements, he was made a knight of the Order of Santiago in 1659.

Las Meninas (The Maids of Honor), 1656

The Maids of Honor

89 Seconds at Alcázar


Eve Sussman: Artist’s Statement

My work originates from fascination with simple gestures and casual expressions, which I observe, capture, and stage in videos, films, installations, and photographs. Before making the move to High-Definition video in my last project, I often used Super-8 cameras and simple, low-tech surveillance devices to capture mundane actions associated with the observer’s mundane relationships. I have referenced both scientific methods of long-term observation common in zoological and anthropological studies and the “cinema verité” tradition in filmmaking.

My piece, 89 Seconds at Alcázar (2004), is a carefully constructed video that takes Diego Velázquez’ famous painting Las Meninas (1656) as a point of departure, treating it as the seminal cinematic film still. The piece ultimately looks baroque but was inspired by the opposites—opera and baroque—of the everyday. By restaging the situation leading up to the moment depicted in the painting, 89 Seconds presents an imagined unfolding of minute movements that could have framed the scene. By linking the singular scene of the painting with a continuity of events I attempted to script and choreograph body language, instead of simply observing its evidence. This plays with the role of the spectator.

Over the past few years I have begun foraying into narrative, and became interested in how the seemingly untouched reality of cinema verité and the controlled operation of scripting and choreography overlap and collide. In my short film 89 Seconds at Alcázar, 1997, I presented live-feed 89 seconds in time when the royal family and their courtiers would have come together in the exquisitely composed painting. The video was shot at Town Topic in Kansas City, a short film featuring soprano Kati Agocs, a 4 projector installation, 180°. Hammock Fly Right, a video tripod of Hasilg girls playing with a ball.

Exhibitions & Installations

2003 Eve Sussman: 89 Seconds at Alcázar, Patrick and Beattles Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI Union Gallery, London, UK
2005 Las Meninas, Las Meninas, 1656, at the Museo del Prado. The video is an artistic revision of the moments leading up to and directly following the approximately eighty-nine seconds in time when the royal family and their courtiers were to have come together in the exact configuration in Velázquez’ painting.

To make 89 Seconds at Alcázar, the artist assembled a team of thirty-five which included an architect, set designer, choreographer, costume designer and film director. While the actual shooting of the 360° video using a Steadicam was done in four days, the project took over three years to realize.

In the installation Ornithology (1997), I presented live-feed installations behind the gallery where the work was shown. Wall-projections of pigeons observed from an extremely near vantage point both monumentalized and animalized animals and suggested different economy of gestures. A bird catching tower in the airshaft was accessible to visitors via a ramp through the window. Once outside, the viewers became subjects under surveillance to be studied along with the birds in the video projections.

For How to Tell the Future from the Past, presented at the 1997 Istanbul Biennial, I wired the entire Serkeci train station with surveillance cameras and combined the live-feed video with narrative components. The re-creation of the synthesis of the live imagery with the stories created hybrid moments in which the action happening in the present became the illustrations for the recounting of the past.

89 Seconds at Alcázar (1997), single channel video based on Diego Velázquez’ Las Meninas, 1656.

9 Seconds at Alcázar (2004), single channel video of Eve Sussman, China/White (Art Reviews), September 2004.


Select Bibliography


Diego Velázquez, Las Meninas (The Maids of Honor), 1656

Oil on canvas, Prado Museum, Madrid

On the inspiration for 89 Seconds at Alcázar

Originally called simply Portrait of the Royal Family, Las Meninas (or The Maids of Honor) is a seminal work in the history of art which has inspired countless artists. Its painter, Diego Velázquez, is one of the most important European artists of the seventeenth century, and Las Meninas is arguably his most famous work. At 105° x 95°, the painting—which hangs at the Prado Museum in Madrid—is in grand composition and scale.

The Maids of Honor

89 Seconds at Alcázar

Eve Sussman’s 89 Seconds at Alcázar, 2004, is a High-Definition video installation by the artist Eve Sussman. The project was done in four days, the project took over three years to realize.


Eve Sussman: Artist’s Statement

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