

PRESS RELEASE

Martine Syms

Vertical Elevated Oblique

September 17 - November 1, 2015

Bridget Donahue presents *Vertical Elevated Oblique*, a new body of work from Martine Syms. For her first solo show with the gallery, Syms was inspired by a riff on a popular joke. “Everybody wanna be a black woman but nobody wanna be a black woman.” Using the 17th century text *Chirologia: Or the Natural Language of the Hand* as a guide she created an inventory of gestures for performance.

Notes on Gesture is a video comparing authentic and dramatic gestures. The piece alternates between title cards proposing hypothetical situations and short, looping clips that respond. The actor uses her body to quote famous, infamous, and unknown women. She repeats and interprets each movement several times, switching from a physical vernacular to acting techniques like blocking and cheating. The world of the film is imported to the gallery through costumes, staged objects, a monochromatic fake wall, and a color filter used for simulating purple neon or a nightclub atmosphere.

Alongside these works is a suite of double-sided photographs mounted on century stands, a standard workhorse of film production. This ad hoc collection gathers images of women sourced from family photos, magazines, advertisements, movies, and television. Each image features a “speaking motion” forming a chorus of action. The women pictured are models of agency. Their bodies are frequently used to express popular ideas and emotions. What do they signify? What politics do they perform?

In the office: For the duration of the exhibition, the gallery will host a bookshop featuring editions from Dominica and associates, including Lauren Anderson, Black Radical Imagination, E. Jane, Gene’s Liquor, Nicky Benedek, Marco Braunschweiler, Kayla Guthrie, David Hartt, Kahlil Joseph, Chloe Maratta, Hassan Rahim, Diamond Stingily and Wilmer Wilson IV.

Martine Syms (b. 1988) is an artist based in Los Angeles. She is the founder of Dominica, a publishing imprint dedicated to exploring blackness in visual culture. From 2007–11, Syms directed Golden Age, a project space focused on printed matter. Her artwork has been exhibited and screened extensively, including presentations at the New Museum, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, MCA Chicago, Green Gallery, Gene Siskel Film Center, and White Flag Projects. She has lectured at Yale University, SXSW, California Institute of the Arts, University of Chicago, Johns Hopkins University, and MoMA PS1, among other venues.