

CRITICS' PICKS

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- Rachel Rose

London

Rachel Rose

SERPENTINE GALLERIES
Kensington Gardens
October 1–November 8

“Um, I’m the voice of dead people, so. . .” are the first words channeled through the female protagonist in Rachel Rose’s video *Palisades in Palisades*, 2014, which is filmed atop a cliff in upstate New York’s Palisades Interstate Park, a former battleground of the Revolutionary War. This is also the location of the beginnings of pre-Hollywood cinema, and the protagonist bears subtle references to tortured women in popular movies—von Trier’s *Melancholia*, Tarantino’s *Kill Bill*, Cuarón’s *Gravity*, Godard’s *Pierrot le Fou*. The site’s violent history is recollected through a synesthetic relationship to this woman’s body. Men populating painted battle scenes appear eerily as her own extensions. The footage is spliced with forensic close-ups of her blue eyelashes, her sweater, her white skin: barriers between her selfhood and the molecular calamities from which it is constituted.

A Minute Ago, 2014, Rose’s other video on view, opens with a harbinger. A freak hailstorm pelts down on a group of midsummer beachgoers in Siberia. “If we die, know I love you,” one character says over shaky footage of sunbathers clinging to parasols and lilos for shelter. This event becomes the script for what follows: a tour of Phillip Johnson’s Glass House, whose monument to modern architecture—both embracing and offering protection from the outdoors—crumbles into a seething mass of particles. Across both videos and sound work in the Serpentine Sackler Gallery, itself a former arsenal, mortality loops between historical narratives and the perturbing psychic undercurrents of the present. It is worth remembering here that palisades were not only built to defend the nascent American Empire during the Revolutionary War but that their delineating function also helped to create the very idea of what lay outside. A timely exhibition, when the most pressing violence finds itself once more between the border and the surround.



View of “Rachel Rose: Palisades,” 2015.

— Alex Davidson

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