

IN TWO MINDS | Sophie Whettnall

Vera Cortês, Art Agency
Opening on 6th July at 22h

From 7th July to 29th July
Monday to Friday from 11h to 19h and Saturday from 15h to 20h

Sophie Whettnall was born in Brussels in 1973. Although her work is still relatively unknown in Portugal, this artist has an extensive and geographically diverse exhibition history indicating a programmatic orientation with a singular aesthetic that is still developing and expanding.

Working and showing regularly since 1999, Sophie Whettnall is currently living and working in Madrid, where she is completing a 2-year residency at Casa Velasquez. She works in video, photography, multimedia installation, and performance, and has had exhibitions in New York, Madrid (ARCO, Galeria Moriarty), Barcelona (*The Video Art Foundation*), London (ICA), Toronto (*Video Underground Zero*), Paris, Antwerp, Athens, Groningen, and Santiago de Compostela with a recent installation in the space *La Chocolataria*.

In Sophie Whettnall's conceptual universe, the construction and use of technology is important fundamentally regarding the promotion of the ways that we experience establishing an almost physical relation with the viewer. This sensation rises from the intensity with which the viewer is confronted with the artist's own universe, presented in forms so simple and obvious that the combinations and variations of its significations and psychological projections are amplified from individual to individual, in a free and exponential way. The unique mark of the artist becomes visible in its simplicity, clearness and formal linearity. This is reorganized and operates using subtle presentation techniques that, eliminating the explicit and withdrawing from the viewer, illustrates its more subjective, but also more universal psychological aspects.

In fact, Sophie Whettnall's career has been constructed upon the precariousness of this balance between contradicting forces of the human condition. Behind a first, apparently uneventful and consensual signification, Sophie Whettnall's images develop an interactive relationship with the viewer, returning a reflex of their longings, urges, frustrations and fears.

This remarkable way of experiencing is its ineffable character, of which one can only detail the totality of its essential properties, defending the mirror of our own ethical and human condition. The work suggests and poses questions existing at a level that we cannot delegate or renounce because of its inherently human political and ethical nature. It is about choosing how to handle the decision of facing the world and the attitudes that give meaning to its essence: how to feel and how to think in face of a moment that is presented but is not resolved nor updated?

Whettnall's video images are far from any spectacular or immediate purposes, and still they enclose beauty and everyday, common situations which, after being edited and integrated in 'installation' and *mise en scène* devices, strengthen the confrontation effect between an entity, the *Self* (substance), and the *Other*.

The artist, who studied Painting, has practically renounced the medium, exchanging it for the video camera. In this way, she can wander and work directly in the street and in her trips, give meaning to the autobiographical and nomadic conception of her artistic production and of her own subjective and psychological experience of the world. She is especially interested in reflections that unfold from the perspective of self-portrait and landscape.

In Lisbon, at the Vera Cortês Agência de Arte, Sophie Whettnall will present *In Two Minds*, a group of four recent videos, which stress the course of the artist in handling situations that are apparently ordinary (details of landscapes or details of daily actions). The closer investigations of these reality excerpts become moments of passage into the psychological universe of Sophie Whettnall.

This passage works by means of a confrontation (*In Two Minds*) with a *potential*, a continuous announcement of something that is only updated in the individual experience of the viewer, always mediated by the possibility of *looping* and repetition. One might say that the transportation to the artist's universe is at the viewer's own risk, and it could not be any other way.

The situations of *becoming* are conjectures of actuality in the permanence of actions, but they are also conjectures on the (im)possibility of communication. Before a dreamt world of the suggestion of another reality, we quickly consider abandoning what we know for the simple fact that we wish to open new possibilities, finally because we are condemned to desire itself, with all the suffering and uneasiness conveyed by this condition.

That uneasiness is inside us, but with it is the responsibility to act in the face of our own configuration of reality, and changing it.

Miguel Caissotti