Eastside Projects

A new artist-run space as public gallery
for the City of Birmingham

Feature: Architecture
Shezad Dawood

Launch: Friday 5th December 7-9pm
6 Dec 2008 – 31 Jan 2009

Feature: Architecture is anchored around Shezad Dawood's ambitious first full-length film *Feature*. *Feature* uses a hands-on approach to exploring the slippage between live performance and cinematic representation resulting in an unpredictable contrapuntal narrative. Like much of Dawood's work, Feature engages with mythologies, (in)authenticity, multiple authorship and intercultural interpretations. It was conceived and filmed as a series of live performances linked by an overarching narrative of The Battle of Little Big Horn, perhaps the most famous war between the US Federal Government and Native Americans. The re-enactment departs from a traditional or revisionist interpretation as it takes on Billy the Krishna (a merging of Billy the Kid and Hinduism's Lord Krishna, played by Dawood himself), a Valkyrie opera singer and dead cowboys reawakening as zombies. Including a mystical vision (a reference to the early 'mystery plays', the music hall and operating somewhere between Jean-Luc Godard's *Weekend* and Robert Altman's *Buffalo Bill & the Indians*, both with a 1970's critical edge) the film deconstructs the Western film genre as Dawood interweaves other fictional and factual characters. History, film and performance are overlaid and the relocation of the battle to a Cambridgeshire landscape further challenges the residual idea of authenticity creating a new open-ended text that feeds back into a narrative dynamic - that of the process itself.

The performances were written and directed by Dawood, and also incorporated improvisation by the artist collaborators invited to take part. This includes established artists such as Jimmie Durham (as Sitting Bull) and David Medalla (as Crazy Horse) who have both dealt with performance and issues of cultural colonization within their own work. Younger artists featured are recent British Art Show exhibitor Doug Fishbone, Royal Danish Opera mezzosoprano Hetna Regitze Bruun and Manchester-based artist/musician Mike Chavez-Dawson. Further interweaving of history, mythologies and disparate cultures are performed with participation from sourced individuals and open casting. These included jockeys from Newmarket racecourse, a Cambridge Chinese football team and children from the local area of Wysing Arts in Cambridge who hosted a residency by Dawood in 2007.

For the staging of the film as exhibition Dawood and Eastside Projects have generated a development of the faux Western film sets produced for the filming by seasoned film set makers. The set makers will be combining and extending the distinctive architecture of Eastside Projects with the efficient narrow facades of Cowboy saloons and store-fronts further complicated by the commissioned backdrops painted by artisans in Pakistan of Wild West landscape. The installation of post-industrial Birmingham meeting a skewed Wild West explores the temporary architecture of the film platform in relation to its capacity to represent both fact and fiction. The architecture is further extended into that of exhibition design to also serve the purposes of Henrik Schrat who is exhibiting new work in Eastside Projects at the same time. Dawood and Schrat have joined up to produce one of Schrat's one-day-comics and jointly make use of the external and internal billboards at the gallery to further the blurring and co-operative genres between the two "solo" exhibitions and continue Eastside Projects exploration of shared, charged, fictional and collaborative public space.

Focussing on the screen as architectural device Feature: Architecture becomes an interface between viewer and participant: whether it be Hindu God, Scandinavian Valkyrie or zombie cowboy. The film becomes the gallery architecture and the gallery becomes an antechamber to the Mythic space of Dawood's cinematic world.

Shezad Dawood (b. 1974, London) lives and works in London. He has exhibited internationally over the last few years with a forthcoming project at the Tate Triennial curated by Nicolas Bourriaud. Dawood is represented by Paradise Row, London. *Feature: Architecture* is part of a series of exhibitions in collaboration with Castlefield Gallery, Manchester and Leeds Met Gallery, Leeds, produced by Catherine Williams and supported by an Arts Council England National Touring grant.

A book of the project, *Feature: Reconstruction,* is published by Book Works and available for sale at £14.95.

Shezad Dawood & Henrik Schrat Artists Talk: 5th December 5.30pm £3

6 Dec 2008 – 31 Jan 2009 (closed 21 December – 7 January)
open Thursday to Saturday 12-5pm

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