

Ursula Mayer

Austrian born artist Ursula Mayer choreographs female protagonists against a background of iconic architecture and clues drawn from cultural history. Cutting between monochrome and colour, erotic movement and statuesque pose, Mayer's films offer a distillation of space and time.

Interiors is set in the home of the Hungarian émigré architect Erno Goldfinger and his wife, heiress and artist, Ursula Blackwell. Their famous modernist apartment in Hampstead, London, which houses sculptures by Barbara Hepworth and Max Ernst, is dramatised by two women who, like chameleons, take on the appearance of 20th century avant-garde works of cinema and art. They do not meet, ascending and descending its spiral staircase and occupying its rooms through movement and touch. Their focus is a rotating sculpture by Barbara Hepworth which becomes a beacon for silent communication between two generations

The art deco Eltham Palace in South London provides the set for *The Crystal Gaze* which features three women each embodying a distinct era of glamour. The refrain of the American singer, Peggy Lee's existential song 'Is that all there is?' (Lieber and Stoller, 1969) and the crystalline refraction and looping structure of the film explore aesthetics and female subjectivity.

Mayer's most recent film, *The Lunch in Fur/Le Dejeuner en Fourrure*, reflects on the influence of femininity and race in the formations of Surrealism with an encounter between entertainer and activist, Josephine Baker, photographer, poet and muse Dora Maar and surrealist artist, Meret Oppenheim. Brought together in middle age they meditate through the spoken word and the touching of objects on memory and their historic persona in the early half of the 20th century.

Mayer studied in Vienna and London where she continues to live and work; and has shown in many European kunsthalls. This project is presented as part of *Art in the Auditorium*, a collaboration organised by the Whitechapel Gallery with institutions from Europe, Asia, South America and the USA to provide an international showcase for some of the most exciting artists working with film, video and animation today.

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