

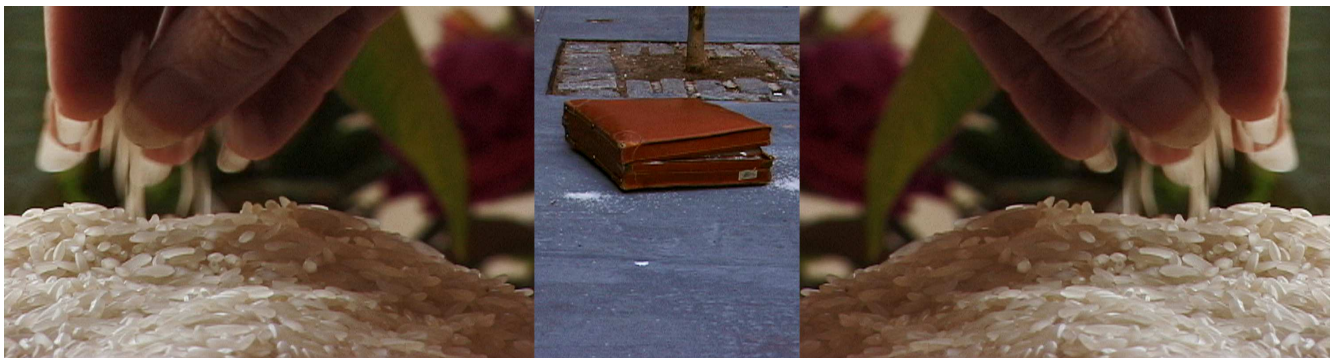
**Ellen Zweig**

Curated by Eleanor Antin

October 26 - December 2, 2006  
(Opening Thursday, October 26, 6-8pm)

“... there is a very distinctive poetry to Ellen’s camera.  
The pictures flow by with a cool, elegant musicality ...”

– Eleanor Antin



Three video stills from *Testing the Waters*, 2006. Courtesy of Ellen Zweig

Ellen Zweig’s site specific video installation, *Testing the Waters*, explores the artist’s ongoing fascination with China through witty and poignant observations of the cultural practices and minor details governing daily life. Fueled by childhood memories of Pearl Buck novels, ink paintings, Buddha statues and Chinese restaurants, Zweig set out to discover the China of her fantasies in 2000. She arrived there often finding that it indeed existed in the cherished traditions and the commonplace situations, gestures, words, and sounds, which populate daily life.

Two video monitors placed at the entrance followed by video projections displayed as diptychs and triptychs throughout the exhibition space combine footage taken from the many hours that Zweig spent in China’s urban parks, city streets and in rural locales with constructed scenarios of an imagined China shot at home in New York. As a poet, performance, and video artist, Zweig is interested in exploring how the process of communication involves the layering of words, images, gestures, and sounds. Under her guidance, fragments of language appearing alone or within the context of situations, actions, and performances on view, reveal the extent to which dialogue is subject to interpretation. In the current installation, visual imagery is accompanied by ambient sound tracks featuring a selection of street noises, such as the pouring of rice or footsteps on pavement. Though muted, they add further immediacy and dimensionality to Zweig’s lyrical depictions of subject and place.

The title of the exhibition when literally translated from Chinese means “throw rock ask road”. This phrase aptly describes the new developments at play in this current installment of Zweig’s continuing series. Rather than retaining the role of observer, the artist places herself directly into the frame in scenes ranging from her struggling to pronounce Chinese words and phrases to duplicating in her kitchen at home the subtle movements of a woman who has casually dipped her hand in a bag of rice at the market. By focusing on very small, unconscious gestures, and by mimicking these types of movement as a form of self mockery, she captures the futility of her attempts to get inside the skin of another culture. “When I shoot, I often choose things that attract my curiosity without knowing whether or not they are indicative of the culture. I am depicting my fantasies about China from an outsider’s perspective, with a little reality seeping through by accident,” says Zweig.

(Cont.)



Video stills from *Testing the Waters* (Qian Yi reciting Shakespeare), 2006. Courtesy of Ellen Zweig

Two of the large-scale projections further address the theme of imitation, by emphasizing how identity can be revealed and disguised through the conventions of Eastern and Western classical theatre. In one panel of the diptych, an American dressed as a Judge Bao (a popular character appearing in many Chinese operas), sings a few lines from traditional Chinese opera. In the accompanying panel, a young Chinese opera singer recites one of Viola's speeches from *Twelfth Night*. Later, as the Westerner mimes the footwork of the opera character, Chinese couples dance a waltz. These cultural exchanges comically and poignantly expose both sides of the mirror: Westerners imitating China; and China imitating the West right back.

Throughout the exhibition, Zweig humorously and poignantly exposes the deceptions and misinterpretations that sometimes occur when two cultures meet by directing the viewer's attention to those inescapable, ironic moments in which earnestness and artifice collide.

*Catalogue available.*

#### **ARTIST'S BIO:**

Ellen Zweig is an artist who works with video, audio, installation and performance. Her most recent work is the video series, *HEAP*. As an installation, *HEAP* (Shanghai version), was exhibited at DDM Warehouse, Shanghai, China, in April, 2006. Three sections of *HEAP* were shown at the Thailand New Media Art Festival, 2004. (*unsolved*) *Robert van Gulik* screened at the Athens International Film & Video Festival, 2005. *a surplus of landscape* screened at the New York Video Festival, 2005 and at Images Contre Nature International Festival of Experimental Video, Marseilles, 2006. Zweig is presently working on a related series about her father.

In her previous installations, Zweig has used optics to create camera obscuras, video projection devices, and miniature projected illusions. Her multi-channel video installations have toured the US and include *The Invisible Woman...* (P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, 1993); *Hubert's Lure*, (42<sup>nd</sup> St. Art Project, Creative Time, New York, 1994); *Critical Mass* (jointly with Meridel Rubinstein: Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe, 1994; List Visual Arts Center, MIT, 1995; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, 1997) among others. In the 1980s, she toured throughout the U.S, Europe and Australia with a series of performances, including those held at the Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris, 1984); San Francisco Art Institute (San Francisco, 1984); Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (Melbourne, 1986); The Detroit Institute of Arts (Detroit, 1986); and The Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, 1991).

#### **RELATED PUBLIC PROGRAM AT CUE:**

Friday, October 27, 2006 7:00-8:30 pm

Exhibiting Artist, Ellen Zweig, and exhibition curator, Eleanor Antin, will discuss each other's work, their respective creative processes and the influences that have shaped their art.

NB: Public programs at CUE are **FREE**, reservations **ARE** required. Please call 212 206-3583 or email [kara.smith@cueartfoundation.org](mailto:kara.smith@cueartfoundation.org) to reserve a seat.

#### **ABOUT CUE:**

CUE Art Foundation, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit arts organization, is dedicated to providing a comprehensive creative forum for contemporary art by supporting under-recognized artists via a multi-faceted mission spanning the realms of gallery exhibitions, public programming, professional development programs and arts-in-education.

CUE Art Foundation was established in June of 2002 with the aim of providing educational programs for young artists and aspiring art professionals in New York and from around the country. These programs draw on the unique community of artists, critics, and educators brought together by the Foundation's season of exhibitions, public lectures, workshops, and its studio residency program: all are designed to be of lasting practical benefit to aspiring and under-recognized artists. The entire CUE identity is characterized by artistic quality, independent judgment and the discovery of genuine talent, and provides long-term benefits both for creative individuals associated with CUE and the larger art marketplace. Located in New York's Chelsea gallery district, CUE's 4,500 square feet of gallery, studio and office space serves as the nexus for educational programs and exhibitions conducted by CUE.

CUE Art Foundation's operations and programs are made possible with the generous support of foundations, corporations, government agencies, individuals and its membership. Support for exhibitions is provided by Accademia Charitable Foundation, Ltd., Holland & Knight Charitable Foundation, Inc., Viking Foundation, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and with public funds from the City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York State Council on the Arts through the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and the Experimental Television Center.

For additional information, please contact Kara Smith, Programs Assistant, CUE Art Foundation, 212-206-3583, or email [kara.smith@cueartfoundation.org](mailto:kara.smith@cueartfoundation.org). Gallery hours: Tues.-Sat., 10am-6pm.