

Mercer Union, a centre for contemporary art
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Plural Dreams of Social Life

Beatrice Gibson

13 April 2019 – 1 June 2019

Opening Reception: 12 April 2019, 7PM

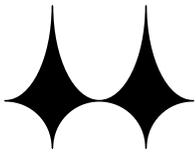
Curated by Julia Paoli, Director of Exhibitions & Programs

Mercer Union is delighted to present the first exhibition in North America by Franco-British filmmaker Beatrice Gibson. ***Plural Dreams of Social Life*** takes its title from Bernadette Mayer's ***The Desires of Mothers to Please Others in Letters*** (1994) written during and in response to the gestation of her third pregnancy. Mayer's book is comprised of a series of crabby and ecstatic letters—to friends, contemporaries, objects, and the dead—chronicling and connecting the labour of childbearing and the labour of writing, whilst distinctly situating both in communal space. In similar fashion, Gibson's two new films, ***I Hope I'm Loud When I'm Dead*** (2018) and ***Deux Soeurs Qui Ne Sont Pas Soeurs*** (2019) co-commissioned by Mercer Union, see the artist seeking out a more explicitly female lineage while addressing the anxiety and intimacy of motherhood as it interfaces with a world mediated by images of terror.

As deeply citational works, formed by on- and off-screen relationships, Gibson's new films feature friends and contemporaries alongside figures who have supported and enabled her working life; from Diocouda Diaoune, her son's first carer, to renowned American poet Alice Notley, whose pioneering poetry on motherhood, the daily, dreams and the unconscious, is profoundly connected to Mayer's poetry. It is through this porous and leaky constellation of relationships, both academic and concrete, that Gibson figures the present moment, proposing friendship, kinship, intimacy and empathy as tools for navigating an ever more unsettled world.

Featuring celebrated American poets Eileen Myles and CAConrad, ***I Hope I'm Loud When I'm Dead*** was developed on the eve of the 45th American presidential inauguration in 2017, and filmed throughout the following year in America and Western Europe. Titled after a poem by CAConrad, the work is an intimate 16mm film weaving together images of the artist's children with poems by Conrad and Myles, alongside the words of fellow poets: Adrienne Rich, Alice Notley and Audre Lorde. In bringing these words together across time, Gibson summons a collective spirit to reckon with an increasingly turbulent present. Her connection to the Grenfell fire in London and asylum seekers off the coast of Sicily give urgent and personal cause to the film. Solaced by prose and possibility, Gibson casts the poet as prophet fit to navigate the complexities of human experience during times of fear and fragility.

Made over the same period, ***Deux Soeurs Qui Ne Sont Pas Soeurs*** takes Gertrude Stein's eponymously named screenplay as its point of departure. Stein's script was written in 1929 amidst rising fascism across Europe. Set almost a century later, Gibson's adaption deploys Stein's original as a talismanic guide through a contemporary moment beset with social and political unrest. Featuring a close network of friends and practitioners and playing on Stein's interest in



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autobiography and fiction, *Deux Soeurs* is both an abstract crime thriller and a collective portrait of its cast that eschews conventional narrative form in favour of a more dream-like and associative montage. Two serendipitous pregnancies and the election of yet another authoritarian nationalist become triggers for a deeper personal exploration of ideas around inheritance, responsibility, ethics and futurity. Shot on 16mm anamorphic by close friend and collaborator Ben Rivers, *Deux Soeurs* features an original soundtrack by composer Laurence Crane.

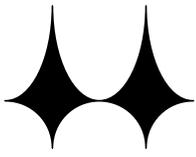
I Hope I'm Loud When I'm Dead is commissioned by Mercer Union, Toronto; Bergen Kunsthall; Camden Arts Centre, London; and KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin. The work is produced with support from the Julia Stoschek Collection, Outset Germany_Switzerland and Arts Council Norway.

Deux Soeurs Qui Ne Sont Pas Soeurs is commissioned by Mercer Union, Toronto; Bergen Kunsthall, Borealis Festival, Bergen; Camden Arts Centre, London; and KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin. The work is produced with support from Fluxus Art Projects and Arts Council England, and features a score by Laurence Crane commissioned with support from Arts Council Norway.

The exhibition is presented by Mercer Union and realized in partnership with Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival: 1–31 May 2019, and Images Festival: 11–18 April 2019.

Plural Dreams of Social Life is made possible with Leading Support from the Hal Jackman Foundation.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Beatrice Gibson is an artist and filmmaker based in London. Her films are often improvised in nature, exploring the pull between chaos and control in the process of their own making. Drawing on figures from experimental modernist composition and literature—Cornelius Cardew, Robert Ashley or Gertrude Stein—her working method is often participatory, incorporating co-creative and collaborative processes and ideas. Recent solo exhibitions include: Camden Arts Centre, London (2019); Bergen Kunsthall (2019); and KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2018) Gibson's films have been included in such festivals as the New York Film Festival; Toronto International Film Festival; BFI London Film Festival; International Short Film Festival Oberhausen; Courtisane Festival, Ghent; Punto de Vista International Documentary Film Festival, Spain; among others. Gibson is twice winner of the Ammodo Tiger Short Award, International Film Festival Rotterdam; and winner of the 17th Baloise Art Prize awarded at Art Basel. In 2013 she was nominated for both the Film London Jarman Award and the Max Mara Art Prize for Women. Gibson's films are distributed by LUX, London. She is represented by Laura Bartlett Gallery, London.

Mercer Union, a centre for contemporary art, Toronto

Mercer Union is a non-profit, artist-centred space in Toronto. We have a unique track record of presenting innovative exhibitions by diverse Canadian and international artists in formative and established stages of their careers. We are dedicated to supporting the production of new and experimental work, assisting artists in realizing pivotal projects.

Mercer Union has the will and flexibility to take on ambitious projects. We foster an intimate and supportive space for artists to develop and take risks with their work. In turn, their exhibitions play a role in shaping the cultural landscape of Toronto, Canada and beyond.

Art is crucial to expanding minds and pushing boundaries. Our exhibitions, educational programs, artists' talks, events and publications, both on and off site, encourage critical inquiry and conversation.

Mercer Union. Cultivating artists and challenging audiences since 1979.

Please send all requests for images and interviews to:

press@mercerunion.org

For more information please visit:

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Mercer Union acknowledges the support of its staff, volunteers and members, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Government of Ontario through the Ontario Arts Council and the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council.

Admission is free and all are welcome.