

PRESS RELEASE

**Corin Sworn  
Silent Sticks**

4 October 2015 – 28 February 2016



Corin Sworn, winner of the fifth edition of Max Mara Art Prize for Women, in collaboration with Whitechapel Gallery, presents her large installation *Silent Sticks* at Collezione Maramotti, where it will enter its permanent collection, after being shown at Whitechapel Gallery, London (20 May-19 July 2015).

Continuing her artistic research weaving history, memories and fragments of true or imagined tales, in this new work Corin Sworn has drawn inspiration from the characters and stories of *Commedia dell'Arte*, a form of improvisational theatre developed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Italy where it continues to play an important cultural role even today; the characters of *Commedia* have continued to influence artists and writers for hundreds of years, from Shakespeare and Marlowe to Goya and Picasso. The work is the result of the artist's residency in Italy in 2014, when Sworn explored in depth the culture of Rome, Naples and Venice, studying traditional stage plays and meeting actors and experts of *Commedia dell'Arte*.

Sworn is interested in the idea of mistaken identities and the frequent recourse to this literary device in the stage productions of *Commedia dell'Arte*: the first players and characters with radically different appearances (a woman passing as a man, a master dressed as his servant or a nobleman with the look of a beggar) toyed with the perception of strictness linked to rank and social standing, and represented the anxieties derived from the instability

characterising society at the time, by winking at liberty and social mobility. Inspired by these ideas, *Silent Sticks* reworks the story of a famous case of imposture in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is set like a stage scene with props, costumes, sound and video elements. In particular the costumes designed by the artist who researched many historical and iconographic sources and found inspiration in the text *Il teatro delle favole rappresentative* by Flaminio Scala, were hand-made in collaboration with a team of designers and artisans from Max Mara.

The exhibition is accompanied by a book documenting Sworn's experience, her residency in Italy, her sources of inspiration and the development stages of the project. The book comprises an interview with the artist by Guest Curator Bina von Stauffenberg and a text by Daniel F. Herrmann, Eisler Curator at the Whitechapel Gallery.

For the opening of the exhibition, Corin Sworn will be joined by Whitechapel Gallery's Eisler Curator and Head of Curatorial Studies, Daniel F. Herrmann, to discuss the making of the new commission *Silent Sticks*. One of the foremost proponents in research-led practice working in the UK today, Sworn will talk about her working methods and development from residency through to script, performance, film and object-making. Revealing the academic and historical influences on her thoroughly contemporary take of *Commedia dell'Arte*, Sworn and Herrmann will explore the concept of 'Objects as Impostors' and the role of stage properties in installation art.

Private view by invitation: 3 October 2015, at 6.00pm.  
Followed by *The Making of Silent Sticks*, a conversation between Corin Sworn and Daniel F. Herrmann at 7.00pm.

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The exhibition, with free admission, can be visited in the opening hours of the permanent collection.

Thursday and Friday 2.30pm – 6.30pm

Saturday and Sunday 10.30am – 6.30pm

Closed: 1 November, 25-26 December, 1 and 6 January

**Info**

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### **Editors' note**

The biennial Max Mara Art Prize for Women promotes and supports women artists working in the United Kingdom, by offering winners the opportunity to develop their artistic potential by producing new artworks during their six-month residence in Italy. The jury of the fifth edition of the Prize was composed of: Iwona Blazwick, president of the Prize and director of Whitechapel Gallery; Pilar Corrias, gallerist; Candida Gertler, collector; Runa Islam, artist; Lisa Le Feuvre, curator and writer.

### **Collezione Maramotti wishet to thank for the support in the artwork production:**

**Donata Ramos, Ermanna Montanari, Franco Nasi, Giuseppe Regano, Joseph Kierney, Laura Lusuardi, Luigi Ceccarelli, Lisa Robertson, Margaret Salmon, Max Mara, Simon Donger and the MA Scenography students at Royal Central School of Speech and Dram (London), Sara Holmes, Theo deBoick, Whitechapel Gallery ADI Audio Visual.**

### **Short biographical notes**

**Corin Sworn** was born in 1975 in London; she lives and works in Glasgow. She received a BA in Psychology from the University of British Columbia, in Vancouver; an BFA at the Institute of Art & Design of Vancouver and an MFA at The Glasgow School of Art. Sworn creates films and installations. In *The Foxes* (2012), shown at the 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, the artist has taken a collection of slides shot in 1973 by social anthropologist Gavin A. Smith in a village in the Peruvian uplands. Although inspired by Smith's original research on the agrarian reform in Peru and the tactics of farmers' rebellion, Sworn's installation focuses on the readability of photographs and the way they are narrated through a collective discussion. Her solo exhibitions and screenings comprise: Whitechapel Gallery, London (2015, 2012); Inverleith House, Edimburgh (2014); Chisenhale Gallery (2013); Tate Britain, London (2011). Her most recent exhibitions include: 19<sup>th</sup> Sydney Biennial (2014); Venice Biennale (2013); National Gallery of Canada (2013).

**Daniel F. Herrmann** is an art historian, Eisler Curator and Head of Curatorial Studies at Whitechapel Gallery. Recent exhibitions curated by Daniel F. Herrmann include: *The London Open* (2015), *Max Mara Art Prize for Women: Corin Sworn* (2015) *Hannah Höch* (2014); *Max Mara Art Prize for Women: Laure Prouvost* (2013); *Gillian Wearing* (2012), *Josiah McElheny: The Past Was A Mirage I'd Left Far Behind* (2012) and *John Stezaker* (2011). Starting from the announcement of Corin Sworn as winner of the fifth edition of the Max Mara Art Prize, he has worked with the artist over two years to develop the new work *Silent Sticks*, which is presented at the Whitechapel Gallery (20 May-19 July 2015) and Collezione Maramotti (4 October 2015 – 28 February 2016).