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Suddenly

in Splendour

Rose English

Performance

Presence

Spectacle

EN

Begin

Suddenly

in Splendour

July 5, 2024—February 2, 2025

Rose English

Performance

Presence

Spectacle

Rose English (b. 1950 in Hereford, GB) developed her unique form of performance amid the conceptual art, dance, and feminist scene of 1970s Britain. Her oeuvre—which spans five decades—combines elements of theater, dance, circus, opera, comedy, and poetry, collapsing the boundaries between the ephemeral arts, gender identities, reality, and illusion.

English's love of the materiality of objects and her deep interest in working collaboratively across disciplines was already evident when she was an art student at Leeds Polytechnic (1971–1973). Her fascination with ballet and dressage, as well as in their shared roots in the courtly spectacles of the European Baroque, was the impetus behind her renowned performance *Quadrille* (1975) and her later groundbreaking solo stage performance with a horse, *My Mathematics* (1992). From the mid-1970s, English became an important voice in London's feminist arts scene. Together with filmmaker Sally Potter, she channeled her critique of the male-dominated hierarchies and the structures of contemporary art and society into new experimental forms, including their epic four-part site-specific performance *Berlin* (1976).

From the mid-1980s, after a series of international solo performances, English appeared with an extensive cast on stage at London's major theaters, entertaining and enchanting her audiences as performer, author, and director of the spectacular trilogy *Walks on Water* (1988), *The Double Wedding* (1991), and *Tantamount Esperance* (1994). Here, English placed ephemeral presence in the foreground, exploring the metaphysics of performance and manifesting the impossible on stage.

Costumes, props, archive materials, and documentation (photographs and film) form the material legacy of English's performances, which the artist has assembled into installations and thematic groups of works for this exhibition. Ranging from the 1970s to the 1990s, they offer an insight into her trailblazing universe that has defined performance art.

The diagram consists of a large rectangular frame. Inside, there are several regions and lines:

- Region 1:** A large rectangular area on the left side.
- Region 2:** A rectangular area below Region 1.
- Region 3:** A small rectangular area to the right of Region 2.
- Region 4:** A small rectangular area to the right of Region 3.
- Region 5:** A large rectangular area at the bottom, containing two vertical lines.
- Region 6:** A small rectangular area at the top right.
- Region 7:** A small rectangular area at the top right, adjacent to Region 6.
- Region 14:** A small rectangular area at the bottom right.
- Region 15:** A small rectangular area at the bottom left.

The diagram uses various line styles: solid black lines, dashed lines, and lines with small gaps. Some regions are filled with a grid pattern. The numbers 1 through 15 are placed within or near the regions they identify.



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8
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Berlin, 1976

Rose English and Sally Potter created their groundbreaking site-specific performance *Berlin* in London in 1976. The performance comprises four parts, performed on six evenings over three weekends in a private house, an ice skating rink, and a public swimming pool. As writers, directors, and performers, Potter and English are the only speaking protagonists and are accompanied by a silent male chorus and a young boy.

In this ambitious production, the two women combine their shared exploration of performance conventions. By mixing and overlapping various media, times, and motifs, they create an experimental structure that interrupts the linear form of traditional storytelling. The themes and methods of this collaboration shaped both English's and Potter's future careers. While English ultimately focused on her performance practice, Potter became a celebrated film director.

English and Potter met in London in 1974. For a while they shared a home in a squat, which is where they also presented Part One and Part Four of *Berlin*. The performance makes reference to the Weimar Republic (1918–1933) and its capital, whose salons and cabarets offered space for artistic and social experimentation. Potter and English saw a parallel to developments in 1970s London. The sociopolitical climate was defined by economic insecurity and Margaret Thatcher's election as leader of the Conservative Party. English and Potter worked collaboratively and across disciplines to critique Thatcher's focus on privatization and the free market economy. Their form of collaboration was also influenced by the values of second-wave feminism of the 1970s. During this time, artistic collaboration became a way to actively effect changes to society and cultural policy.

Berlin is a compilation of multiple elements and ideas, developed through the artistic exchanges of the artists and their colleagues. The epic performance was presented in four parts producing a particularly cinematic work. The recurring elements of fire, ice, and water pervaded the various scenes. In the performance the artists called into question the very images they were presenting. This is particularly evident in English and Potter's performance personas—as “the woman in black” and “the woman in the leaf crinoline” they are simultaneously embodying and analyzing their own images. In doing

so the two are turning patriarchal structures on its head.

The video from 2023 is a montage of atmospheric photographs taken by Paul Derrick, Roger Perry, and Geoff White during the performance of *Berlin*. Together with the costumes, performance elements, and archive materials, the photographs form the material legacy of the performance. The text in the voice over is based on notes by English and Potter written immediately after the final performance.

Part One:

The Preconditions (in the house)

The performance begins at 41 Mornington Terrace, London, NW1, in a large squat. English, wearing a black dress, leads the audience through the rooms, carrying a stool. Potter wears a crinoline covered in magnolia leaves and holds a fur muff, her torso is bare. In a key scene, English stands under a burning light bulb until tears start streaming down her face. Potter holds a monologue about her role in the performance in relation to the representation of the female nude in art history.

Part Two:

The Spectacle (on ice)

The performance continues the following weekend at the Sobell Centre Ice Rink in Islington. English sits on a stool placed on the ice and talks about the sequence of the performance in the past tense, as if the action had already taken place. She leads a young boy onto the ice and talks to him. Potter is then pulled around the ice rink by the male chorus. A cradle covered in leaves ignites going up in flames and causing the ice to melt.

Part Three:

Remembering the Spectacle (in the water)

The following evening in the swimming pool at Swiss Cottage Baths, English carries a wooden stool and climbs onto the high diving board, from where she oversees the proceedings. Potter speaks to English through a microphone, picking up an earlier discussion between the two in which they debated their own representation within the performance. The men remove their jackets and wade into the swimming pool until the water is up to their waists. Potter then takes to the water

exclaiming “Rose!” at which point English jumps from the high diving board into the pool. The two swim together across the pool, continuing their discussion.

Part Four: The Arguments (at home)

The following weekend, the performance ends where it began: in the house at 41 Mornington Terrace. A photograph of Potter from Part One is standing on a piano and wine glasses cover the floor. The male chorus is crowded together precariously balancing on top of the mantelpiece. In a room on the next floor, English, who is wearing swan’s wings, stands on a block of ice that is starting to melt from the open fire. In her hand she holds a scroll, which Potter takes from her. Potter then stands under a burning light bulb, unrolls the scroll, and shows it to the audience. It is a photograph of English from Part One in the same position as Potter. English stands behind Potter and the two ask each other “Hast du Berlin gefunden?” (did you find Berlin?). Their answers are a verbal inventory of all the objects, costumes, materials, locations, structures and concepts featured in the performance the previous evenings.

The photographs document the events of the performance. They are evocative of film stills and reflect the influence of theater and cinema in the staging of *Berlin* as well as the skill and ability of the photographers to capture it in the moment.

The installation *Berlin: Remembering the Spectacle* (2023) by Rose English and Sally Potter revisits the performance *Berlin* created in 1976 by English and Potter.

Berlin: Remembering the Spectacle, 2023

Installation

Mixed media

Commissioned by HEIRLOOM

center for art and archives

4 gelatin silver prints on paper, 1976

Berlin: Part One

Photographs by Roger Perry

24 gelatin silver prints on paper, 1976

Berlin: Parts One and Four

Photographs by Paul Derrick and Roger Perry

Suspended tungsten light bulb, 1976/2023

Berlin: Parts One and Four

Light bulb

Invitation card, 1976

Paper

Wall vinyl: the men in the water, 1976/2024

Berlin: Part Three

Photograph by Paul Derrick

Wall vinyl: Rose on the high diving board, 1976/2024

Berlin: Part Three

Photograph by Paul Derrick

Wooden stool, 1976

Berlin: Parts One – Four

Wood

Mute swan's wings and black silk dress on mannequin, 1976
Berlin: Parts One – Four
Wings: swan feathers (taxidermy)
Dress: silk
Mannequin, 2023: metal wire

Magnolia leaf crinoline on mannequin and
fur muff, 1976
Berlin: Parts One, Two, and Three
Skirt: magnolia leaves, fabric, and steel wire
Muff: fur
Mannequin, 2023: metal wire

Wrought iron cradle, 1976
Berlin: Parts One – Four
Wrought iron

Carved wooden framed mirror, 1976
Berlin: Parts One and Four
Mirror, wood

Wine glasses, 1976/2023
Berlin: Part Four
Glass

Berlin, 2023
Single channel projection
Video (black and white, sound)
13:39 min.
Photographs by Paul Derrick, Roger Perry, and Geoff White,
1976
Text by Rose English and Sally Potter, 1976

All: Courtesy of Rose English Studio

Early Works

From 1971 to 1973, Rose English studied fine art at the Department of Art and Design at Leeds Polytechnic. Her love of objects, their symbolism, and materiality was already evident, and she explored the kinetic potential of objects in motion. English was influenced by the art school's collaborative and interdisciplinary approach. She would stage artist friends and fellow students, together with the porcelain objects she had made, in photographic studies. "Performances to camera" subsequently became an integral part of her working process.

English's degree show at Leeds Polytechnic included *A Divertissement* (1973), which was also her first performance. Here she cast a critical gaze at the heteronormative romanticization of ballet, celebrating the subversive power of feminine eroticism. In 1974, English moved to London. She explored ballet, art, and dressage of the Baroque era, developing her groundbreaking performance *Quadrille* (1975), which she presented during a dressage competition.

The colorful, glazed porcelain ballerinas were part of English's degree show at Leeds Polytechnic. The focus of the photographs, which are shown together with porcelain pointe shoes, is also the figure of the classical female ballet dancer. Through the lens of ballet history, English examines the romanticized representation of femininity, using her witty, risqué figurines to turn it on its head.

Porcelain Dancer 1, 1973

Porcelain, enamel, gold, and silver
 Courtesy Richard Saltoun Gallery,
 London, Rome and New York

Porcelain Dancer 2, 1973

Porcelain, enamel, gold, and silver
 Private collection, Switzerland

Porcelain Dancer 3, 1973

Porcelain, enamel, gold, and silver
 Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery,
 London, Rome and New York

Porcelain Dancer 4, 1973

Porcelain, enamel, gold, and silver
 Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery,
 London, Rome, and New York

Study for a Divertissement:

Diana with crinoline and pointe shoes II, 1973

Chromogenic print on paper,
 porcelain, and hand-glazed enamel
 Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery,
 London, Rome and New York

The collages are English's studies for what later becomes her performance *A Divertissement* (1973). Elements featured in the performance appear in this series, like the feather mattress and the pink cache-sexe ribbon. All the collages combine magazine pages of historical buildings with photographs taken by the artist, that she terms "performances to camera." The photographs reference the dual act of looking and being looked at.

Baroque Harriet 1, 1973

Chromogenic print on paper and collage
 Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery,
 London, Rome and New York

Baroque Harriet 2, 1973

Chromogenic print on paper and collage
 Private collection, London

Baroque Harriet 3, 1973

Chromogenic print on paper and collage
 Collection of Michaela Spiegel

Baroque Ruby 1, 1973

Chromogenic print on paper and collage
 Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery,
 London, Rome and New York

Baroque Ruby 2, 1973

Chromogenic print on paper and collage
 Private collection, Switzerland

Baroque Ruby 3, 1973

Chromogenic print on paper and collage
 Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery,
 London, Rome and New York

English's first performance *A Divertissement* was performed in 1973 at Leeds Polytechnic as part of her degree show. Although the performance was not documented, the preparatory photograph series *Study for a Divertissement: Diana and Porcelain Lace Veil* shows the porcelain sculptures made by English. The staging of performers for the camera before the performance itself was to become an integral part of English's artistic process.

A Divertissement is performed by a ballerina and two female performers. The dancer enters a stage-like setting behind porcelain curtains and unties the knot in a ribbon that holds together a feather mattress on the floor, revealing two female performers sleeping in the nude. They tie ribbons with heart-shaped porcelain objects around one another's hips. As they kiss, the curtains drop, shattering with a crash. The sensual atmosphere is heightened by live piano music by Eric Satie and the scent of fresh flowers and perfume.

*Study for a Divertissement:
Diana and Porcelain Lace Veil, 1973/2013*
5 cibachrome prints on paper
Edition: 5 + 3 AP
Courtesy Richard Saltoun Gallery,
London, Rome and New York

English created this installation for the group exhibition *Sweet Sixteen and Never Been Shown* at the Women's Free Art Alliance in London. The show featured exclusively female artists. The venue was founded by Kathy Nairne, Mary Sergeant and Joanna Walton in 1973 to support women's self-empowerment and artistic expression. For her installation, English arranged portraits of young debutantes from the high-society magazine *Country Life* on the floor as if on parade. Next to them, she placed miniature porcelain horses wearing headscarves in the style of the fashion brand Hermès. At that time, English was engaged in a deep exploration of equestrian culture. Her installation created a critical link between this culture and the roles of young women in conservative British society.

Untitled (Country Life), 1975/2014

27 framed *Country Life* portraits of debutantes,
 25 unglazed white china model horses, and 14 silk headscarves
 Magazine pages 31.5 × 22.5 cm each, 34 × 24 cm framed
 China model horses: 4 different sizes
 each approx. 18.5 cm in height
 Dimensions variable, installation approx. 32 × 350 × 200 cm
 Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery,
 London, Rome and New York

Commissioned by the Southampton Festival of Performance Art, English created the site-specific performance *Quadrille*, which was performed by six young women at the Southampton Horse Show in 1975. English transformed actual horse hooves and tails into centaur-like costumes. *Quadrille* was performed by Joanna Bartholomew, Sally Cranfield, Helen Crocker, Maedée Duprès, Judith Katz, and Jacky Lansley. At the beginning of the performance, English marked out the arena with miniature porcelain horses. The performers then trotted into this arena and paraded around it. The costumes and movements in the performance transformed them into hybrids of woman and horse. By performing outside of conventional arts venues, and with its poetic transcription of feminist discourse, English succeeded in making *Quadrille* one of the era's most feminist and subversive works of art.

Quadrille, 1975/2015

Film, Super 8 mm (color, no sound),

transferred to digital video

Filmed by Simon English

10:57 min.

Edition: 3 AP / 6 + 3 AP

Courtesy of Rose English Studio

Walls, from left to right:

Rose on Horseback with Tail, 1974/2012

Chromogenic print on paper

Edition: 3/6 + 4 AP

Quadrille (Rose and Dancers Entering), 1975/2012

Chromogenic print on paper

Edition: 6 + 4 AP

Untitled – Rose with Porcelain Horses, 1974/2012

Chromogenic print on paper

Edition: 4 AP / 6 + 4 AP

All: Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery,
London, Rome, and New York

A few weeks after the performance of *Quadrille*, English performed in a fairytale woodland outside Nottingham, England, wearing an almost identical costume, except that this time she also wore a pair of swan wings on her shoulder blades. As a female version of the mythological hybrid Pegasus, she placed a winged miniature porcelain horse on the ground by her feet. The photographer Michael Bennett captured this moment with his camera. In this encounter, English expresses her deep engagement with the natural world, humans, animals, and material objects.

Pegasus, 1975/2016

Photograph by Michael Bennett

Gelatin silver print on paper, exhibition copy

Courtesy of Rose English Studio

Next to it:

Two Girls Riding Porcelain Horses, 1974/2015

Gelatin silver print on paper

Book edition: *Rose English – Abstract Vaudeville Edition*, silver gelatin print and slipcase, Ridinghouse 2015, 20 + 5 AP

Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery,

London, Rome and New York

My Mathematics, 1992

Since the mid-1970s, the horse has been a recurring figure in Rose English's oeuvre, appearing both as a motif and a protagonist in many of her works. After decades of researching the culture of equestrian sports and dressage, in the early 1990s, English created *My Mathematics*, her internationally celebrated stage performance with a horse.

The ninety-minute show in two acts toured between 1992 and 1994 and was shown at the Lincoln Center in New York, in theaters in the UK (Queen Elizabeth Hall, Sadler's Wells, the Theatre Royal, and the Edinburgh Festival Theatre), and at festivals in Adelaide and Sydney in Australia. English collaborated with a different horse on each continent.

The performance includes elements of circus, spoken-word theater, improvisation, and comedy. In Act One, English performs solo as the aging showgirl Rosita Clavel wearing an evening dress and long false eye-lashes. In this role, English reminisces about her glorious appearances with circus horses like *Mathematics*. In Act Two, English performs as a showgirl in a sequined leotard alongside the horse, who she introduces as “the horse that studies its own form.”

During the performance, there are moments where it is unclear whether the horse’s disobedience is part of the act or whether it actually isn’t following English’s instructions. English draws on her experience as a solo performer in the 1980s, her feel for the audience gained through interaction and improvisation, and her extensive research on the performing arts.

My Mathematics, 1992/2014

Single channel projection

Video, digital transfer from VHS video tape (color, sound)
78 min.

Commissioned and produced by Cultural Industry
in association with the South Bank Centre,
London, and the Lincoln Center, New York

Video recorded live at the Theatre Royal, Brighton, 16 May
1993

British Library Sound Archive

Edited by Sue Giovanni

Wall next to the video, from left to right:

My Mathematics – Lincoln Center, New York 1, 1992/2014

My Mathematics – Lincoln Center, New York 2, 1992/2014

My Mathematics – Lincoln Center, New York 3, 1992/2014

Photographs by Jack Vartoogian

Digital prints on paper

All: Courtesy of Rose English Studio

The objects exhibited in the vitrine are elements worn and animated by English, as the performance persona Rosita Clavel in *My Mathematics*. The ultra-long eyelashes were made by the British jewelry designer Simon Fraser and were named after Rosita Clavel's seven horses: Venus, Vulcan, Beauty, Beau, Bonita, Princess, and Mathematics. The eyelashes were exhibited in the foyer of the Queen Elizabeth Hall during the performance. In her opening monolog, Rosita Clavel reveals that the horses' names originate from the time when she still "had a great troupe of horses."

Vitrine:

My Mathematics – elements worn and animated by Rose English during the performance, 1992–1994
 Giant red plastic comb, sequined (smoking) pipe,
 pair of uncut giant false eyelashes in velvet box,
 15 pairs of cut giant false eyelashes, red sombrero hat,
 large scissors
 Mixed media
 Courtesy of Rose English Studio

Collection of false eyelashes created by jewelry designer Simon Fraser for Rosita Clavel in the shape of whips and flowers etc., and originally exhibited in the foyer of the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, before the performance *My Mathematics*, August 5, 1992
 6 pairs of false eyelashes on brass "trembler" spring display mounts
 Mixed media
 Courtesy of Simon Fraser

Wall, from left to right:

My Mathematics workbook page, 1992
 A4 sheet, polaroid and pencil on paper

Rosita Clavel workbook page, 1992–1998
 A4 sheet, typescript, and pencil text/drawing
 annotation on paper

My Mathematics – performance to camera (giant eyelashes),
1992/2014

Photograph by Gavin Evans
Gelatin silver print on paper

All: Courtesy of Rose English Studio

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Performances to Camera

The two photographs by Gavin Evans show Rose English in her role as Rosita Clavel with Goldy, the circus horse, with whom she performed *My Mathematics* in the United Kingdom. The preparatory portraits taken for the performances draw attention to the similarities between the showgirl and the circus horse.

My Mathematics – performance to camera 1, 1992/2014

My Mathematics – performance to camera 2, 1992/2014

Photographs by Gavin Evans
Chromogenic prints on paper
Courtesy of Rose English Studio

Trilogy, 2024

In the late 1980s, Rose English created three full-length shows with extensive casts of performers at London's theaters: *Walks on Water* (1988) at the Hackney Empire, *The Double Wedding* (1991) and *Tantamount Esperance* (1994) at the Royal Court Theatre. With this trilogy, English created a “total work of art” combining various performance genres and forms, including music hall, circus, figure skating, spoken-word theater, and acrobatics.

In each of her leading roles, as showgirl, hostess, and magician, English holds the audience spellbound. With charming self-irony and poetic profundity, she challenges norms and categorizations such as high and popular culture as well as illusion and reality, while foregrounding the ephemeral nature of performance and the conventions of the proscaenium, the front of the stage.

For these shows, English worked with the designer Simon Vincenzi and the musician and composer Ian Hill, remaining true to the collaborative nature of her practice. For this exhibition Vincenzi designed the site-specific installation *Trilogy*, the first ever presentation of all three performances featuring video documentation, performance elements, and work notes.

Trilogy, 2024
Site-specific installation
Mixed media
Conceived by Rose English in collaboration
with Simon Vincenzi
Designed by Simon Vincenzi
Commissioned by Museum der Moderne Salzburg

Walls, from left to right:

Walks on Water – performance to camera, 1988/2024
Photograph by Mike Laye
Giclée print on paper, mounted on aluminum

The Double Wedding – performance to camera, 1991/2024
Photograph by Hugo Glendinning
Giclée print on paper, mounted on aluminum

Tantamount Esperance – performance to camera, 1994/2024
Photograph by Hugo Glendinning
Giclée print on paper, mounted on aluminum

Hackney Empire, 1987
Photographs by Rose English
Photographic collage, gelatin silver prints on paper

All: Courtesy of Rose English Studio

The two hour long performance in three acts, formed the framework for three metaphorical worlds. The cast includes a male chorus, a children's ballet, and a stuntwoman. In the role of a showgirl, the artist hosts the evening with wit and irony. She interacts with the audience and performs a stunt in which she appears to walk on water.

Walks on Water both enacts and deconstructs a number of stories and visual illusions. In the final act, the interplay between reality and fiction collapses entirely, when the chorus, wearing street clothes, leaves the stage through the auditorium, signaling the end of the show.

Walks on Water, 1988/2024

Single channel projection

Video (color, sound), digital transfer from Umatic video tape
126:46 min.

Video recorded live at the Hackney Empire Theatre, London, November 18, 1988, by Steve Littman / Hands on Productions
Performers: Rose English, Teresa Blake, Tony Bluto, Matthew Bowyer, Bertie, Pascal Brennan, Jon Conrad, Jacob Marley, Roy Miles, Hamish McColl, Stuart Rose, Uri Roodner, Craig Sheppard and Victor Wood; Chou Chou Ballet Company: Charlotte Bovingdon, Harriet Bovingdon, Marianne Davies, Amy Dunning, Claire Roberts, Sally McEvoy, Carrie und Lauren Lukasiewicz, Zoe Evans, Ihsan Pickstock, Marie-Louise Robotham, Lauren Short, Emma Harris und April-Louise Ryder

Trilogy edit design: Simon Vincenzi

Online editor: Sue Giovanni

Sound mix: Chu-Li Shewring

Commissioned by Museum der Moderne Salzburg

Wall:

Walks on Water workbook page, c. 1982

A4 sheet, typescript, and pencil on paper

Walks on Water workbook page, 1987

A4 sheet, typescript on paper

Walks on Water – performance to camera, 1988

Photography by Mike Laye

Printed postcard on paper

Walks on Water – Rose’s red satin “placenta” cape, 1988
Satin fabric and steel chain weights
Walks on Water workbook page, c. 1988
A4 sheet, typescript, pencil, and photocopy collage on paper

Walks on Water workbook page, c. 1988
A4 sheet, typescript, and pencil on paper

All: Courtesy of Rose English Studio

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The Double Wedding, 1991

In this performance in two acts, English appears as the hostess, wearing an elegant sequined dress and holding a ceremonial glass cane. At the beginning and again at the end of the show she asks the audience the central question: “What is the difference between a void and a vacuum?”

The double wedding of the title is both the theme of and the occasion for the performance. The actual event, however, does not take place. Through changing constellations of couples and cross-dressing, gender and identity attributions become blurred.

The Double Wedding, 1991/2024
Single channel projection
Video (color, sound), digital transfer from VHS video tape
112 min.
Barclays New Stages at the Royal Court and
London International Festival of Theatre
Video recorded live at the Royal Court Theatre, London,
July 8, 1991, by Simon Maggs and Steve Hall
British Library Sound Archive
Performers: Rose English, Steven Beard, Nigel Charnock, Giovanni Curati, Matthew Hawkins, Wendy Houstoun, Brian Lipson, Roddy Maude-Roxby, Thom Osborn and Claire Roberts;
Aerialists: Lucy Allen and Joanne Robley-Dixon; Ice skaters:
Paul Askham and Sharon Jones
Trilogy edit design: Simon Vincenzi
Online editor: Sue Giovanni
Sound mix: Chu-Li Shewring
Commissioned by Museum der Moderne Salzburg

Wall:

The Double Wedding – the Hostess’ glass cane, 1991
Twisted glass

The Double Wedding workbook page, c. 1991
A4 sheet, typescript and polaroid on paper

The Double Wedding workbook pages, c. 1991
4 A4 sheets, typescript and pen on paper

The Double Wedding workbook page, c. 1991
A3 sheet, photocopy on paper of the diagram of
space-time from S.W. Hawking and G.F.R. Ellis's
The Large Scale Structure of Space-Time,
Cambridge University Press, 1973

All: Courtesy of Rose English Studio

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Tantamount Esperance, 1994

The third part of the trilogy, in which English plays the role of the magician Tantamount, is tinged with melancholy. While the character Tantamount comes from the nineteenth century, the other performers embody immortal souls who gather together only once every thousand years. The performance is interspersed with magic tricks, acrobatics, and people appearing and disappearing. A swiveling bank of lights functions as the central structuring element between the nine acts, referred to in the performance as “nine nights.” At the end, the silver curtain goes down and the bare architectural bones of the theater architecture is exposed. The illusory world of the theater dissolves into “emptiness.”

In *Tantamount Esperance*, English captured the zeitgeist of the 1990s at the threshold of the new millennium: nostalgia and an expectant eye cast into an uncertain future. English, in the role of the tragic hero Tantamount, battles against this nostalgia. The script for the performance begins with an instruction that Tantamount also refers to in the first act: “Begin suddenly in splendour say the stage directions.” This information,

which is in fact directed at the ensemble, is almost impossible to execute, however. It is a reference to the essence of performance art—that is, the exploration and embodiment of abstract concepts such as existence, reality, and the nature of being through the act of performance.

Tantamount Esperance, 1994/2024

Single channel projection

Video (color, sound), digital transfer from VHS video tape
90:09 min.

Barclays New Stages at the Royal Court

Video recorded live at the Royal Court Theatre, London,
June 4, 1994

British Library Sound Archive

Performers: Rose English, Hélène Patarot, Jan Pearson, Alison Swann and George Yiasoumi; magicians:: Fluke and Paul Kieve; aerialist: Jeremy Robins; musicians: Simon Christopher, Enrique Guerra and Ian Hill; tango choreography and dancing: Christine Denniston

Trilogy edit design: Simon Vincenzi

Online editor: Sue Giovanni

Sound mix: Chu-Li Shewring

Commissioned by Museum der Moderne Salzburg

Wall:

Tantamount Esperance workbook page, c. 1994

A4 sheet, pen on paper

Tantamount Esperance workbook pages, c. 1994

2 A4 sheets, typescript and pencil on paper

Tantamount Esperance workbook page, c. 1994

A4 sheet, typescript, pencil, and postcard collage on paper

Tantamount Esperance workbook page, c. 1994

A4 sheet, typescript, pen, and photocopy collage on paper

Tantamount Esperance – Tantamount's beard,
moustache, and wig box, 1994

Hair, net, and moustache wax, and cardboard box
labelled "Miss Rose English"

Behind the silver curtain:

Onstage and Offstage: A Flea in Her Ear, 1989/2024

Photograph by Rose English

Wall vinyl

All: Courtesy of Rose English Studio

Sustainability and gender equality

A museum for everyone—for us, this also means that we want to offer and preserve a valuable and artistic tomorrow for future generations. We want to make our contribution to creating a mindful and sustainable approach to our world! We take a holistic view of our museum's operations and base our actions on goals and guidelines. As a sustainable museum certified with the Austrian Ecolabel, we ensure that all our printed materials and publications are certified accordingly.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. There has been progress over the last decades, but the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. Yet gender inequality persists everywhere and hinders social progress. With this exhibition, we are showing a queer-feminist artist whose work has been addressing gender equality in art and society since the 1970s.

Sustainability and gender equality affect us all—and it usually starts with small steps. As a museum visitor, you can play an active role in the sustainability work of the Museum der Moderne Salzburg. For example, by traveling by public transport, paying attention to waste separation in the museum building or collecting the exhibition publications at home. Take these steps with us and help us to achieve our sustainability goals!

We are committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals



Publication
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Harald Krejci and Marijana Schneider
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Copy Editing: Greg Bond

Graphic Design: Atelier Anna Liska

Production: Museum der Moderne Salzburg

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Image credit, cover:
Rose English, *Pegasus*, 1975, detail, gelatin silver print
on paper, courtesy of Rose English Studio Archive,
photo: Michael Bennett

Printed in Austria.

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Booklet published in conjunction with the exhibition

Begin Suddenly in Splendour
Rose English: Performance, Presence, Spectacle
July 5, 2024—February 2, 2025
Museum der Moderne Salzburg

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