



EXHIBITION DATES

November 29, 2007 –
February 24, 2008

ARTIST TALK

February 7, 2008, 7 p.m.

Free event; limited seating

Catherine Sullivan's *Triangle of Need* is co-commissioned by A Foundation, Liverpool; Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, Miami; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. A Foundation's commission is supported by Arts Council England and the Henry Moore Foundation. Catherine Sullivan's artist residency at the Walker Art Center was made possible by generous support from the Nimoy Foundation. Additional support is provided by Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Foundation, Miami; Galerie Catherine Bastide, Brussels; Metro Pictures Gallery, New York; Galeria Gio Marconi and Galerie Christian Nagel, Cologne/Berlin.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CATHERINE SULLIVAN

CONTEMPORARY ARTS PROJECT

A new program that builds on Vizcaya's history as a place of creative exchange, the Contemporary Arts Project engages artists to develop site-specific installations at this National Historic Landmark estate.

In 2006, Miami-based artist Gustavo Matamoros presented his sound installation titled *Organic Pipes* and in spring 2007, New York-based artist Anna Gaskell unveiled *Still Life*, a site-specific installation filmed at Vizcaya.

Concurrent with Catherine Sullivan's installation, Miami-based Cristina Lei Rodriguez exhibits her site-specific installation, *Struggling for Grandeur*, on view from November 8, 2007 – February 24, 2008.

For more information about the **Contemporary Arts Project** and related public programs at Vizcaya, please visit www.vizcayamuseum.org or call 305-250-9133.

Vizcaya Museum & Gardens

3251 South Miami Avenue
Miami, FL 33129

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CONTEMPORARY ARTS PROJECT



TRIANGLE OF NEED CATHERINE SULLIVAN

NOVEMBER 29, 2007 – FEBRUARY 24, 2008

TRIANGLE OF NEED

A multi-channel film project in collaboration with Sean Griffin, Dylan Skybrook and Kunle Afolayan

Chicago-based theater and film artist Catherine Sullivan's ambitious new work, *Triangle of Need*, introduces "Neanderthals," e-mail scams, and figure skating into Vizcaya's lush and seemingly placid environment. The resulting installation is at once visually seductive and conceptually alienating, mixing cinematic conventions with difficult and abstract ideas about evolution, human behavior, and social inequality.

Triangle of Need was filmed primarily at Vizcaya and in a nondescript apartment in Chicago, the city in which James Deering's International Harvester firm was based. At Vizcaya, Sullivan screens the Miami and Chicago apartment footage on three monitors in the Renaissance Hall. An additional monitor is placed in the second-floor Cathay bedroom, juxtaposing scenes of Minneapolis figure skater Rohene Ward against grainy images of young women celebrating their *quincies* (15th birthday) in Vizcaya's gardens. The latter scenes were shot using discontinued Super 8 film stock from Ukraine, evidencing Sullivan's interest in technical experimentation.

Identifiable characters and distinct narratives emerge in *Triangle of Need*; some of these were based on Sullivan's analysis of the Pathéscope company's catalogue of silent films, from which James Deering ordered movies to view at Vizcaya.



However, Sullivan infuses the piece with complexity and incongruity, making these familiar personalities and stories virtually impossible to comprehend. Actors play multiple roles, while settings and plots fluidly merge.

The predominant narrative revolves around three "orphans" who arrive at a bayfront mansion (Vizcaya) by speedboat and are identified as the world's last surviving "Neanderthals." Three specialists—women of diverse character—are recruited to breed the "Neanderthals" and reintroduce the species for practical applications, including labor. One of the women relies on movement, another on play, and the third on force—but their captives grow increasingly morose and are unwilling to reproduce under these cruel conditions. Sullivan became interested in how the scientific study of Neanderthals was used in the past to assert the superiority of Western civilization and colonization.

An intersecting narrative is built around a fraudulent e-mail that Sullivan received: the supposed sender, Doctor Obi from Nigeria, claimed that a man by the name of Harold Bowen was killed in an accident, leaving a vast sum of money without an heir, or next of kin. In this common scam, the sender promises to transfer the deceased's funds to the recipient, pending the provision of personal information. In *Triangle of Need*, the concept is liberally reinterpreted: Mr. Bowen lives and he interacts with the menacing eugenic specialists at Vizcaya; and a character actually named "Next of Kin" resides in the Chicago apartment, next door to Dr. Obi.

Vizcaya provided a relevant backdrop for Sullivan's focus on class and the evolution of wealth in America. But Sullivan also sought to meet the estate's "high standard for the imagination." Explaining how the property was compatible with her approach, the artist noted: "Vizcaya is a place of great historical 'noise,' with a pastiche of styles and decorative chronologies; there is no singular experience of one moment in time. Histories overlap and leave behind loose ends." Sullivan complements Vizcaya's eclectic qualities and adds to the film's visual pleasure by using historically evocative costumes and props that at first glance may deceive the viewer into thinking that she is representing a specific time in history. For example, Sullivan seems to reference Deering's International Harvester firm in her repeated depiction of hay in the film. Further consideration, however, demonstrates that the costumes and accessories are drawn from sources as diverse as Vizcaya itself.

Triangle of Need is a richly collaborative project. Sullivan partnered with Minneapolis-based choreographer Dylan



Skybrook to develop movements for the actors based on studied and imagined theories of Neanderthal movement. She also worked closely with Los Angeles-based composer Sean Griffin, who created the original score and invented "Mousterian," a complex performative language spoken throughout the work. As a counterpoint to her own directorial style, Sullivan worked with Nigerian actor/director Kunle Afolayan, who filmed the scenes spoken in English and those using a combination of close-ups along with wide and medium shots.

Triangle of Need is noteworthy for its juxtaposition of the familiar and the strange. Skybrook's choreography, Griffin's musical score and spoken language, and Afolayan's cinematography combine with Sullivan's characters, plotlines, and costumes, and the beautiful Vizcaya settings to establish a sense of ease. This ease, tenuous at best, is continuously challenged by elements that are irregular or incomprehensible, leaving visitors with considerable freedom to interpret *Triangle of Need*.

Sullivan's work has been featured at several major institutions including the Whitney Museum (New York); Seattle Art Museum; Tate Modern (London); Walker Art Center (Minneapolis); Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles); Goetz Collection (Munich); Palais de Tokyo (Japan); and Centre d'Art Contemporain (Switzerland). Ms. Sullivan is the Walker Art Center's 2007 artist-in-residence. She holds an M.F.A. from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, and a B.F.A. from California Institute of the Arts.