



Sam Taylor Wood's latest show, at White Cube<sup>2</sup>, is called Mute. Those who saw it on the private view night with hundreds of people may have rather missed the point Taylor-Wood to a certain extent has it all - an extremely successful artistic practice embracing photography, video and film and any number of rich influential friends. She is beautiful, a media darling and has survived cancer ... twice.

It says something about her indomitable spirit that she has made any work in the last two years at all. Performance, endurance and time have always been tropes that have dominated her practice and these are very much in evidence in her recent work, including the sheer strength that it took to fill the White Cube space with such a variety of images. Hanging in the entrance to the gallery you

were confronted with a visual pun, Taylor-Woods defiant "Self Portrait in a Single Breasted Suit with Hare". She remarked that the first thing that you think about when you have cancer is that you are going to lose your hair.

So, an artwork that is also a serious joke, she has always loved ambiguity. As you enter the darkened space of the first gallery, with an atmosphere in ideal conditions of a hushed chapel, you see "Still life (2001)" a video about beauty and decay based on Renaissance iconography. Slowly a beautiful bowl of fruit disintegrates. Her 35mm film Breach (Girl and Eunuch) is a clear reference to earlier sound works such as Method in Madness. A young woman extremely distressed, for ten minutes thirty seconds plays out her intense emotional state before the camera in absolute

silence. A concrete unicorn lies on the floor of the gallery. The relationship between the two left for the audience to speculate. It is interesting that in this show her camera which she has worked with for the last few years, an aerial RAF model which turns through three hundred and sixty degrees in five revolutionary seconds does not play a role. There are no huge groups of people relentless coordinated but rather isolated single figures or animals.

The most poignant image in the show was "self portrait as a tree", which contained no figure at all. The spotlight in the dimmed space literally absorbed by the unglazed photograph, giving an impression of a work literally lit from within. This is an image imbued with pathos and the only one Taylor-Wood made in 2000, the year of her breast

cancer. It is both a metaphor and a state of mind. A tree is silhouetted against the light, the sky that strange luminous purple you get just before a storm, the image silent and electric. Taylor Wood confessed to me a few years ago that she sometimes felt rather like a white witch, that she often photographed or made work that was a precursor of some dramatic change about to occur. This show is about change, artistically she is embracing both past art as in "Bound Lamb" and "Poor Cow" and a post ironic surrealism, using a variety of medium. Her work still revels in a theatricality, but this time although the sound is mute her artistic cry is coming through loud and clear.