

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Press release



The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents on September 8, 2016

Sam Taylor-Johnson: *Sigh*

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- Dates: September 9–December 11, 2016
- Curator: Lucía Agirre
- Film & Video Gallery (103)

From September 9 to December 11, 2016, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao will host the premiere in Spain of Sam Taylor-Johnson's *Sigh* (2008). This will be the eighth piece in the Film & Video gallery's program since it was inaugurated, in 2014, to showcase video art, video installations, and moving images.

Sigh is an audiovisual installation of eight projections in which different sections of the BBC Concert Orchestra seem to be playing the musical score written specifically for this work by renowned composer Anne Dudley. Although the sound is clearly audible, the musicians are not playing their instruments but merely miming the gestures and movements of the musical performance. The fact that the musicians are missing the tools of their trade creates a sense of vulnerability while also emphasizing the importance of the physical movements involved in playing an instrument.

Sam Taylor-Johnson (London, 1967) filmed the orchestra in several takes, splitting the musicians into groups. By projecting these separate films onto multiple screens, the viewer has the sense that he is surrounded by the orchestra. The artwork foregrounds the relationship between sound and image, between the music and the musicians and conductor, by implicating the viewer, who is the link between these two fractured parts.

Since the 1990s, the photographs and video installations of British artist Sam Taylor-Johnson have explored the rawest human emotions, isolating and presenting them in fragmented ways by either deconstructing the narrative or, as in her work *Sigh*, altering our perception of image and sound. To compose the score, Anne Dudley drew inspiration from Sam Taylor-Johnson's photographic series *Ghosts* (2008), which was based on Emily Brontë's classic Victorian novel *Wuthering Heights*, and specifically Haworth Moor in Yorkshire, where the Brontë sisters were raised and a landscape which itself became another character in their novels. *Sigh* shows the BBC musicians performing a piece of music that evokes those barren and solitary moors, a piece played without instruments and with a natural yet seemingly dramatized gestures.

Sam Taylor-Johnson

Sam Taylor-Johnson (London, 1967), makes photographs and films that examine, through highly charged scenarios, our shared social and psychological conditions. Her work examines the split between

being and appearance, often placing her human subjects—either singly or in groups—in situations where the line between interior and external sense of self is in conflict. Her languid and silent film portrait of David Beckham, for example, which was shot in a single take, offers a serene alternative to this most intensively photographed celebrity. In *Prelude in Air* (2005) Taylor-Johnson filmed a musician playing a piece of cello music by Bach, but the cello itself has been erased. Likewise, in *Breach (Girl and Eunuch)* (2001), a girl is portrayed sitting on the floor in the throes of grief, but the sound of her tears has been removed. In the celebrated film *Still Life* (2001), an impossibly beautiful bowl of fruit decays at an accelerated pace, creating a visceral memento mori. In her film *The Last Century* (2005), what appears to be a static image of a group of people slowly reveals itself to be a real, filmed take, timed to the length of a burning cigarette.

Taylor-Johnson has also explored notions of weight and gravity in elegiac, poised photographs and films such as *Ascension* (2003) and a series of self-portraits (*Self-Portraits Suspended I–VIII*) that depict the artist floating in mid-air without the aid of any visible support, a motif she returned to, portraying herself suspended by helium-filled party balloons in the series called *Escape Artist* (2008). Taylor-Johnson's first feature-length film, *Nowhere Boy* (2009), a look at the teenage years of John Lennon, premiered at the London Film Festival in October 2009. February 2015 saw the release of the artist's directorial feature, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, the highly-anticipated adaptation of the best-selling novel, and in early 2017 the Netflix series *Gypsy*, directed by her, will premiere.

Sam Taylor-Johnson has taken part in numerous solo and group exhibitions. Among the latter the Venice Biennale (2007) and the Turner Prize (1998) are worth mentioning. Major solo exhibitions include the ones held at the Kunsthalle Zürich (1997), the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebaek (1997), the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington DC (1999), at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid (2000), the Hayward Gallery in London (2002), the State Russian Museum in Saint Petersburg (2004), the MCA in Moscow (2004), the BALTIC in Gateshead (2006), the MCA in Sydney (2006), the MoCA in Cleveland (2008), the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston (2008), and the Brooklyn Museum in New York (2010). In 2011, Taylor-Johnson was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE).

Film & Video (Gallery 103)

The Film & Video Gallery is devoted to video art, video installations, and the moving image, both from the Guggenheim Museums and from other international collections. The gallery opened in March 2014 with Christian Marclay's installation *The Clock*. In June it featured Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson's *The Visitors*, and from October 2014 to March 2015, Rineke Dijkstra's video installation *The Crazyhouse (Megan, Simon, Nicky, Philip, Dee)*, *Liverpool, UK* was presented in this gallery. Between March and July, the film series *Thread Routes* produced by conceptual artist Kimsooja was on display, followed by Shahzia Sikander's *Parallax* from July to November 2015. From December 3, 2015, to April 24, 2016, the gallery hosted Singapore-born artist Ho Tzu Nyen's installation *The Cloud of Unknowing* and finally, from May 12 to August 28, Eija-Liisa Ahtila's *The Annuntiation (Marian Ilmestys)* was presented in this gallery.

Cover image:

Sam Taylor-Johnson

Sigh

2008

8 screen projection

Duration: 8 minutes 37 seconds

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For more information:

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All information about the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is available at www.guggenheim-bilbao.es (press room).

Press Images for
Sam Taylor-Johnson: Sigh
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

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For further information, please contact the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Press Department: tel. +34 944 35 90 08 and email: media@guggenheim-bilbao.es

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Sigh, 2008

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