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**SFMOMA PRESENTS U.S. PREMIERE OF BLAKE'S RECENTLY COMPLETED
WINCHESTER SERIES**

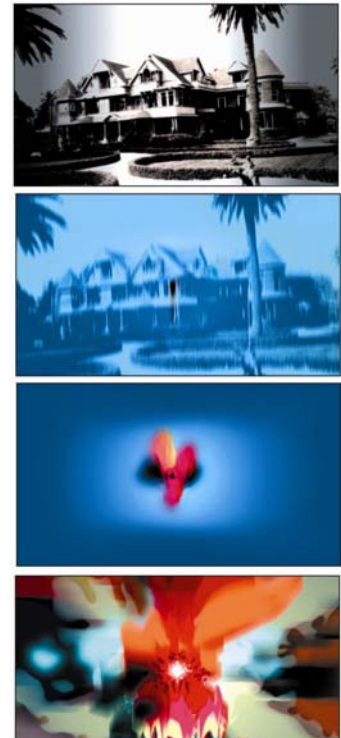
Jeremy Blake: Winchester

From February 19 through October 10, 2005, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) will present the exhibition *Jeremy Blake: Winchester*. Shown in its entirety in the United States for the first time, Blake's suite of mixed-media digital animations—including the newly completed third and final installment—combines painterly techniques and a time-based format to map the artist's fascination with the architecture and legend of the Winchester Mystery House in San Jose, California, the bizarre gothic mansion of Winchester Rifles heiress Sarah Winchester. After its world premiere at Centro de Arte Caja de Burgos in Madrid, Spain (July 22 through September 30, 2004), Blake's *Winchester* trilogy travels to SFMOMA, the only U.S. venue currently planned for the exhibition.

Organized by Benjamin Weil, SFMOMA curator of media arts, the exhibition explores the mansion as a metaphor, calling into question traditional cinematic modes of storytelling; cultural mythologies surrounding guns, violence, and the American West; and the relationship between physical and simulated reality in the digital age.

"*Winchester* represents a turning point in Blake's career, as the films include not only the well-known abstract compositions of his earlier work, but also representational imagery and recognizable footage of the Winchester mansion, heralding a shift toward formal exploration more directly derived from traditional storytelling," states Weil. "Experiencing the trilogy as a whole offers the viewer both narrative continuity and a deeper understanding of the collision between local history and Blake's aesthetic use of technology in the making of the Winchester series."

Blurring distinctions between artistic media has long been Blake's signature style. Since capturing broad attention with his opulent and complex animations included in P.S.1's *Greater New York* exhibition in 2000, Blake has continued to dissolve the barriers between painting and film through the interface of new media, essentially



Jeremy Blake, *Winchester*
(sequence), 2002; from *The
Winchester Trilogy*; DVD with
sound; 18 minute continuous loop;
courtesy the artist and Feigen
Contemporary, New York; ©
Jeremy Blake

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synthesizing three formats in a process the artist refers to as time-based painting. With often-noted resemblances to Mark Rothko's color fields and the work of Morris Louis or Clement Greenberg, Blake's films pay tribute to mid-century American abstraction and illustrate his ongoing engagement with both art historical and pop-culture references.

The Los Angeles-based artist (b. 1971) trained as a painter at Cal Arts and considers his work most deeply rooted in the legacy of conventional painting and drawing. To make his videos, Blake begins with hand-painted imagery, then uses a combination of vector-based graphics and Flash animation to bring his work into the digital realm. The final result, on DVD, is a fluid progression of layered color and mutating forms that appears to loop endlessly, often with suggestions of dreamlike narrative. Widespread acclaim for Blake's genre-breaking work led to its appearance in writer-director Paul Thomas Anderson's 2002 film *Punch-Drunk Love* and on the cover of Beck's 2002 release *Sea Change*.

Comprising three short films—*Winchester, 1906*, and *Century 21*—Blake's newly completed trilogy is inspired by his interest in the strange history of the San Jose mansion. Now a popular tourist attraction, this historical landmark was built during the late nineteenth century by the heiress to the Winchester Rifles fortune. After the untimely deaths of her young daughter and her husband, Sarah became convinced that she was cursed by the souls of people killed by Winchester firearms. Acting on the advice of a spiritualist counselor, she began building a house large enough to accommodate the good spirits who would protect her and maintained perpetual construction on the mansion in hopes that the noise and activity would frighten off evil spirits. Over the next thirty years, the widow obsessively built what would become a seven-story Victorian oddity with 160 rooms featuring architectural quirks such as trap doors, staircases leading nowhere, and doors that open onto blank walls.

Incorporating historical photographs, hundreds of the artist's own ink drawings, and sound, the first film in the series, *Winchester, 2002*, focuses on the exterior of the house. The second part, *1906, 2003*, looks at the bizarre details of the mansion's interior. The third and final installment, *Century 21, 2004*, explores experiments in surrounding architecture. The work will be presented as three adjacent projections, roughly eight- by twelve-feet in scale, screened simultaneously using an LCD projector. Viewed in this ambient fashion, the three works—each approximately twenty minutes in length with individual soundtracks—offer a new take on the traditional triptych.

The exhibition continues in an adjacent gallery with three large, digitally rendered chromogenic prints loosely derived from the Winchester projections. Evoking the scale and feeling of rectangular plasma screens, they appear to be stills from the films but are, in fact, distinct works that juxtapose reformulated imagery from the animations.

Blake's interest in the Winchester house stems from his understanding of it as an example of how one person's subjectivity can drive such a monumental structure into existence. But, more than just a tribute to Sarah Winchester's eccentricity or a simple documentation of her creation, the trilogy is meant to allow the viewer an empathic experience of her madness. On another level, the work explores the house as a tangled mass of social and historical narratives—a formal outcome that Blake's work mimics in its assimilation of so many artistic media and themes.

Winchester, 2002 (18-minute continuous loop) combines static 16mm historical photographs of the house, drawings, and laborious digital manipulation to convey a psychological portrait of the house. Accompanied by a

moody soundtrack, the piece opens with a black-and-white shot of the architectural façade. Superimposed over the house, the silhouette of a gunfighter fills the frame, alluding to the Winchester legacy. As the film unfolds, both mansion and rifleman are eclipsed by veils of saturated color and kinetic abstractions. Painterly shapes resembling gunshot wounds morph into Rorschach-like inkblots and back again into rifle-bearing specters.

1906, 2003 (21-minute continuous loop), takes much the same approach with synthesized film footage and the artist's own paintings and drawings, but it shifts its focus to the interior of the mansion and the parts of the house that suffered most from the 1906 earthquake. For this part of the series, Blake experimented with several different film and video cameras to shoot the live footage before settling on Kodak 8mm for its simultaneous "painterly and touristy" quality. The film begins and ends at the highest point of the house, creating a continuous sense of descent, and uses sounds of construction mixed with period music

Century 21, 2004 (12-minute continuous loop) opens with a zoom along the architectural geometries of the roofline. A domed building in the background comes into view—one of three Century 21 movie theaters built near the Winchester house. Blake explains: "It seems appropriate that they are situated so close to the house, since in some way both the mansion and the movie houses provide homes for spectral gunfighters, and since both were built in the name of American popular mythology." The film consists of three short sections intended to represent what is "playing" in each of the theaters.

Jeremy Blake: Winchester is accompanied by a 72-page catalogue (soft cover) including more than fifty full-color reproductions, essays by Benjamin Weil and architecture critic Mitchell Schwarzer, and statements by the artist describing his myriad motivations and rich symbolic vocabulary. Co-published by SFMOMA and Distributed Arts Publishers, the catalogue will be the most authoritative book to date on Blake's art, and will be available at the MuseumStore beginning in February 2005.

In conjunction with the exhibition, SFMOMA's Education Department will present an opening-week lecture—*Artist Talk: Jeremy Blake* on Thursday, February 17, 2005 at 7 p.m. in the Phyllis Wattis Theater—that will bring the artist to the stage to discuss his work. Tickets: \$12 general; \$8 SFMOMA members, students with ID and seniors; available at SFMOMA or through www.ticketweb.com.

Jeremy Blake: Winchester is organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Support for this exhibition has been generously provided by the James Family Foundation.

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Museum hours: Open daily (except Wednesdays) 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays until 8:45 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day): open at 10 a.m. Closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day. Koret Visitor Education Center: Open daily (except Wednesdays) 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; open late Thursdays until 8:30 p.m. Summer hours: open at 10 a.m.

Admission prices: Adults \$10; seniors \$7; students \$6. SFMOMA members and children twelve and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings, 6 to 8:45 p.m., admission is half price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by Muni, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, and Caltrain. Hourly, daily, and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415.348.0971.

Visit our Web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

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