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**SFMOMA HOSTS WEST COAST PREMIERE OF
*THE RAPE OF THE SABINE WOMEN***

From May 1 through June 27, 2008, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) is pleased to present the West Coast premiere of *The Rape of the Sabine Women* (2006, 80 min.), the acclaimed video musical by Eve Sussman and the Rufus Corporation. This feature-length work, conceived in a five-act operatic format, is based on the founding legend of Rome but reinterprets its outcome of peaceful settlement as a chaotic fall from midcentury idealism. Reframed as a 1960s period piece, this lushly produced film imagines the Romans as chic secret agents in tailored suits and skinny ties; the Sabine women as exotic butchers' daughters in a meat market; and their legendary union as an affluent, International Style idyll by the Aegean Sea. Inverting the original Roman source, this new version of the classical myth tracks not the origins of empire, but the end of utopia.



The Rape of the Sabine Women (production still), 2006;
© Eve Sussman and the Rufus Corporation; Photo:
Benedikt Partenheimer

The Rape of the Sabine Women is a process-based work developed through improvisation, and emerges from nearly 140 hours of video footage and 6,000 photographs. Shot on location in Greece and Germany with a cast of hundreds, this epic drama is loosely based on the myth of the abduction of the Sabine women, with visual inspiration from Jacques-Louis David's 1799 history painting *Intervention of the Sabine Women* and other paintings that deal with the topic. An enduring art historical subject, the Sabine women were allegedly stolen from a neighboring Latium tribe by Roman soldiers in an effort to populate their city. After being abducted and forced into marriage, the women intervened in a fierce battle between the armies of their Roman captors and their Sabine kinsmen in order to bring peace and stability to the empire. David's work captures the heroic moment of negotiation, while Sussman and the Rufus Corporation conjure a less comforting scenario.

Told completely without dialogue, the narrative unfolds through elaborate choreography by Claudie De Serpa Soares, period costumes by Karen Young, and an original score by Jonathan Bepler, who collaborated with Sussman on her *89 Seconds at Alcázar* (2004) and with Matthew Barney on his *Cremaster* cycle, among other projects. Recorded live on site during the making of the film, the soundtrack includes a bouzouki (a stringed-instrument of Greek origin) ensemble, a coughing choir, and a chorus of 800 voices.

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Rape of the Sabine Women / Eve Sussman and the Rufus Corporation

The premiere screenings on May 1 and 2 feature live performances by musicians and vocalists appearing in the work, including Geoff Gersh, Eric Hubel, Algis Antanas Kizys, Scott Moore, Katerina Oikonomopoulou, Rosa Prodromou, Bradford Reed, Cräg Rodriguez, and Savina Yannatou. The May 3 program includes a panel discussion with Eve Sussman and members of the Rufus Corporation. Weekly screenings then continue each Friday from May 9 through June 27, free of charge with regular museum admission.

The Rape of the Sabine Women debuted in Greece at the Thessaloniki International Film Festival in November 2006 and had its U.S. premiere at New York City's IFC Center in February 2007. Its West Coast premiere at SFMOMA marks the second installment of the museum's newly launched Live Art program, an initiative to transform the nature of its live public programming to fully embrace the event-driven and performance-based nature of so much of contemporary art.

Eve Sussman

Born in London in 1961 and currently based in Brooklyn, New York, Eve Sussman is a self-described "sculptor who shoots video." Her work has evolved from installations using film-like materials—such as mirrors, water, and projections—to single and multiple-channel video installations. Her ideas originate from a fascination with simple gestures and casual expressions, which she observes, captures, and stages in videos, films, installations, and photographs. Sussman has exhibited internationally at major institutions, such as the Whitney Museum in New York and The Reina Sofia in Madrid. She is the recipient of numerous grants and fellowships, including the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Grant and the Jerome Foundation Grant.

Rufus Corporation

Founded in 2003 during production of Sussman's video *89 Seconds at Alcázar*, which was unveiled in the 2004 Whitney Biennial, Rufus Corporation is a creative collaboration of artists, dancers, actors, and musicians who, under the direction of Eve Sussman, create videos, photographs, and live events. For more information, visit their website at <http://www.rufuscorporation.com>

Screening Schedule

The Rape of the Sabine Women

Eve Sussman and the Rufus Corporation, 2006, 80 min.

PROGRAM 1: OPENING SCREENING AND PERFORMANCES

Geoff Gersh, Eric Hubel, Algis Antanas Kizys, Scott Moore, Katerina Oikonomopoulou, Rosa Prodromou, Bradford Reed, Cräg Rodriguez, and Savina Yannatou.

Thursday, May 1, 8 p.m.

Friday, May 2, 8 p.m.

Phyllis Wattis Theater

\$20 general; \$15 SFMOMA members, students, and seniors.

Tickets on sale early April 2008

PROGRAM 2: SCREENING AND PANEL DISCUSSION

Eve Sussman and members of the Rufus Corporation

Saturday, May 3, 3 p.m.

Phyllis Wattis Theater

\$10 general; \$7 SFMOMA members, students, and seniors.

Tickets on sale early April 2008

PROGRAM 3: GENERAL SCREENINGS

Fridays, May 9 through June 27, 3 p.m.

Phyllis Wattis Theater

Free with museum admission

Support for Live Art at SFMOMA is provided by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Thursday evening half-price admission is sponsored by Banana Republic. Virgin America is the official airline of Thursday Nights at SFMOMA. Media support is provided by *SF Weekly*.

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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: New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas. The museum is open the Wednesday between Christmas and 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 \$12.50; seniors \$8; students \$7. SFMOMA members and children 12 and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings after 6 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 website at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is supported by a broad array of contributors who are committed to helping advance its mission as a dynamic center for modern and contemporary art. Major annual support is provided by Koret Foundation Funds, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, and Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. KidstART free admission for children 12 and under is made possible by Charles Schwab & Co. Inc. Thursday evening half-price admission is sponsored by Banana Republic.

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