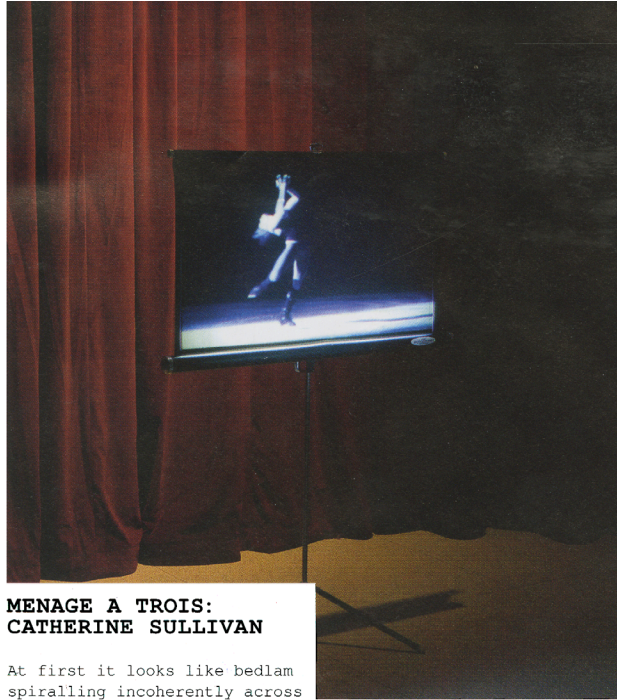


METRO PICTURES

Sherwin, Skye. "Menage A Trois: Catherine Sullivan," *ArtReview* (February 2008): 22.

ArtReview



MENAGE A TROIS: CATHERINE SULLIVAN

At first it looks like bedlam spiralling incoherently across four screens. Around a dining table, men and women caper and jape in the elaborate garb of the Victorians. They clasp their feet like monkeys and distort their faces to make animal sounds. Here is a Renaissance man, striking a pose over and over in a lunatic dance. Straw is pulled from the belly of a woman in the throes of labour, and a mermaid twitches a sackcloth tail. These are moments in *Triangle of Need* (2007), the most ambitious work to date by the artist Catherine Sullivan, which gets its New York debut at Metro Pictures this month and is also currently installed at A Foundation in Liverpool. It's strange territory indeed, and yet it is scored by familiar landmarks. Movements are repeated, characters recur even as names change and a foreboding soundtrack creates a purposeful if oppressive mood.

As with her other film/performance projects, Sullivan has worked with actors, isolating theatrical gestures and breaking them down to the status of musical notes, which

are then played, as it were, in a composition not of melody but of human behaviour. By wrenching them out of context, facial or bodily expressions, be they of rage or love, are gradually revealed as cultural constructs. Similarly, in a further section of the installation, a lone pirouetting ice skater provides a pressure point of grace and beauty, albeit an equally artificial one. But this is only one way of mapping the exotic, alien world Sullivan creates in *Triangle of Need*, which was shot partly in the Vizcaya Museum and Gardens in Miami by Nigeria-based filmmaker Kunle Afolayan, and uses not only a score, but a Neanderthal language created with composer Sean Griffin. Tackling topics as far-reaching as colonialism, racism and the civilising process, Sullivan has turned culture inside out to create a disorienting, thought-provoking and, finally, illuminating work. *Skye Sherwin*

CATHERINE SULLIVAN
7 FEBRUARY - 15 MARCH
METRO PICTURES, NEW YORK
WWW.METROPICTURESGALLERY.COM,
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Triangle of Need, 2007 (installation view, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis). Courtesy the artist, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and Metro Pictures, New York