

## ArtReview:

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DISPATCHES

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Simryn Gill, *Untitled*, 2006, installation made from 123 books, dimensions variable.

Photo: Andrew Dunkley, Tate photography. © the artist

### WOMAN OF THE WORLD:

#### SIMRYN GILL

Simryn Gill's work, which takes the form of photographs, books, sculpture and installation, addresses ideas of place, geography and history and their influence and relationship with our individual and collective identities and memories. Take her recent project for the first Singapore Biennial. She created a guide to a particular set of six vertical murals at the Tanjg Pagar railway station in Singapore, which remains to this day Malaysian territory (Singapore became independent from Malaysia in 1965). In the large hall of the station, murals depict various scenes from rural Malaysia presenting the racial segregation of the Malayan society. Gill's guide can be purchased inside the train station and contains an essay by the artist outlining the history of the station, a detailed description of the murals themselves, with black and white photographs. Not only does this investigate the difficult history and complex reality of today's Singapore - its colonial past and its tangled relationship with its neighbors - but it also proposes a respectful form of site-specific artistic engagement that ultimately is more meaningful than other often more spectacular art-in-public-space projects.

While Gill has exhibited around the globe for more than a decade her forthcoming show at the Tracy Williams Gallery will be the first solo exhibition in New York for the Singapore-born and Sydney-based artist. This exhibition will see Gill setting out to explore the peculiar relationship between Manhattan (the show's location) and Pulau Run. This Indonesian island was once a place of enormous economic importance due to the value of the spices,

and a key outpost for the infamous British East India Company, which also occupied the distant Island of Manhattan. Under constant attack from the Dutch who had a virtually monopoly on the spice trade, in 1667 they reached an agreement whereby the British remained in Manhattan, and the Dutch took over Run. It was a good deal for the Brits: While Manhattan became the capital of the Western World, Pulau Run is today largely forgotten and abandoned. The exhibition will feature a series of photographs taken on Run and other material that represents the seemingly strange link between those two otherwise completely different places.

A second piece, *Untitled* (2006) consists of over 100 books arranged on tables, which the audience can flip through. Gill has removed certain words from their pages and put them together in groups inside transparent packages to investigate how they lose their original meaning when taken out of context, and thus open up other possibilities for interpretation. The installation contains books from Gill's own library as well as books she has specially purchased for this occasion which are all arranged by themes rather than alphabetical by title or author. As with her project in Singapore, the work illustrates Gill's desire to deploy the practice of writing in the space of 'art' and highlights that most crucial, and overlooked, question of what things really mean.

--Jens Hoffmann

**SIMRYN GILL 9 NOVEMBER -  
23 DECEMBER,  
TRACY WILLIAMS GALLERY,  
NEW YORK**