

Press release

Emily Wardill | *Soft Spot*

21.05.-26.06.2021

Opening: Friday, 21 May, 2021, 11 am - 8 pm

A soft spot designates a liking, a peculiar weakness. A delicate, practically wistful affinity, it's a form of love that is neither fierce nor tragic, yet nonetheless possesses a certain vulnerability—an openness. A soft spot is a noun, perhaps it's even a space, a tender fondness for someone, something, or somewhere that you could locate within your body. We tend to have soft spots for things that are no longer there, for things we remember, and we hold this space open for their return.

Objects keep their secrets, spaces too. Emily Wardill's fourth exhibition with carlier | gebauer, entitled *Soft Spot*, gestures toward such secrets with the works *I gave my love a cherry that had no stone* (2016) and *Night For Day* (2020). In their portrayals of imagined realities, perhaps these films have a soft spot for each other, holding open space for the past to imagine the future—and vice versa.

Shot in the lobby of the Gulbenkian museum in Lisbon, a lone figure glides through the luscious surfaces and rich wooden paneling of the building's modernist architecture in *I gave my love a cherry that had no stone*. In the early moments of the film, each time the man turns to meet the camera's gaze, it suddenly pivots away, as if refusing human contact. A duet of sorts between man and machine, we see one becoming the other: at times the man's spectral presence stutters and glitches while the camera's smooth panning movements lapse into a faulty sentience. Looped on a large, tilted screen suspended from the ceiling, the film takes on a sculptural quality that destabilizes the act of viewing.

Wardill's most recent film *Night For Day* (2020) draws upon interviews with Isabel do Carmo, co-leader of the Revolutionary Brigades who fought against the fascist regime in Portugal that fell in 1974, and two young men running a machine learning start up in Lisbon. In the artist's words, the film "*think about what would happen if a communist revolutionary gave birth to a techno utopian, if gender as performativity was thought through the lens of women making the political decision to live clandestinely in Portugal for a large part of the twentieth century and if the 'Last Woman' were the fembot from The Tales of Hoffman.*"

Emily Wardill lives and works in Lisbon, Portugal. Her film *Night for Day* was recently awarded the European Media Art Festival prize. Wardill has had solo exhibitions at Secession, Vienna; Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen; Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg; La Loge, Brussels; Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen; The Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe; the Serpentine Gallery, London; FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims; De Appel, Amsterdam; MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge. Group exhibitions include the 19th Biennale of Sydney; Tate Britain, London; Tate Modern, London; MUMOK, Vienna; The Venice Biennale; MOCA, Miami; Kunsthalle Basel; Kunstverein Stuttgart; ICA, London; OCA, Oslo and the Witte de With, Rotterdam. Wardill's work has been included in numerous publications including *Afterall*, *Art in America*, *Art Review*, *Artforum*, *Flash Art*, *Frieze*, and *The New York Times*. She teaches at Malmö Art Academy.