

## Ruth Proctor

(Scunthorpe, Great Britain, 1980)

It seems possible to detect two principle tensions, closely interconnected, in the work of Ruth Proctor: an interest in geometric form, historically tied to Constructivist abstraction and the performing arts of that period, and a fascination with a cultural atmosphere linked to the theater and film world of Surrealism and Expressionism.

The theater, reconsidered through a study of Brecht and the experience of dance ensure Proctor the possibility of working with languages that never finds definitive formalization. It doesn't matter how many attempts are made, as Proctor says, no representation will be the same as another. This approach means that the work is constantly in motion, dialectically engaged with itself. This feature conveys, in Proctor's works, the artist's general attitude to art history, from which she draws themes and forms that she reinterprets and varies through mechanisms made up of emulation and irony. The title *Stolen Thunder* refers to this method; the work was part of an exhibition for which Proctor created a film, *Composition*, 2009, now in the collection. To steal somebody's thunder means to appropriate their ideas; significantly, the phrase comes from the theater world, namely an exclamation by John Dennis, who, in the early 1700s, was protesting the theft of a mechanism he had invented to create the sound of thunder on stage. Proctor's film only apparently lacks variation in execution, for her works are embellished with the formal effect created by the progressive consumption of the film during its days of projection, whereby it takes on a unified appearance.

*Composition* is a 16mm film in black and white, shot against the backdrop of an abandoned neo-classical building made of imposing fluted columns and a monumental staircase. Figurative Greek culture is evoked in the classical stances assumed by the dancers, who evoke the harmonious distribution of weight in classical statuary, but the dancer's garments and the objects they hold in their hands refer explicitly to the Constructivist imagination and to the geometry of the costumes designed by Schlemmer for his Triadic Ballet. Proctor's composition is anchored to two geometric figures, the circle and the triangle. Around their necks, the dancers wear a disc adorned with triangular motifs, and the dislocation of their bodies in the space alternates with images that show an arrangement of flat triangular sculptures that indicate different planes of depth within the field of the frame. (EV)