

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**The Museum of Modern Art****NEW VIDEO INSTALLATION BY DIANA THATER SHOWN FOR THE FIRST TIME AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**

Projects 64: Diana Thater
September 24-November 10, 1998

Video installation artist Diana Thater will present *The best animals are the flat animals* (1998), one aspect of a new multi-site work, beginning September 24 at The Museum of Modern Art. Diana Thater and Curatorial Assistant Fereshteh Daftari will discuss *The best animals are the flat animals* at a press reception immediately preceding the opening reception, on Thursday, September 24, from 5:45 to 6:30 p.m.

In the installation, Thater (b. 1962, based in Los Angeles) works with images of zebras, employing both a painter's sensitivity to light and various technical manipulations to create a perceptual adventure. *Projects 64* will be on display through November 10, 1998.

Two distinct sets of images are at the center of *The best animals are the flat animals*. The first is a large-scale projection on two facing gallery walls. In this footage, an extreme close-up of a herd of zebras seems to metamorphose into an abstract composition of vibrating and shifting shapes. This projected imagery, which appears flattened and out of register, spills through the gallery entrances into the Museum's lobby. The second primary footage is projected on a freestanding screen in the middle of the gallery: a naturalistic shot, taken outdoors, using a single, static set-up, of a zebra performing banal circus tricks. In addition, The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden's glass windows adjacent to the gallery are coated in red, blue, green, and yellow film gels, transforming the view into what appears to be a multicolored painting.

The MoMA installation is part of a larger body of work by Thater that is titled *The best animals are the flat animals--the best space is the deep space* (1998). Fragments from two of the work's other tableaux play on a monitor placed on the floor of the gallery: an Andalusian stallion seeming to emerge magically from the mist (a product of fog machines and colored lights), from *The best space is the deep space*; and a surrealist forest scene shot at night with bright lights to give the appearance of daytime, and vice-versa, at the L. A. County Arboretum, from *The best outside is the inside*.

As in Thater's earlier installations, no attempt is made to disguise the projection equipment or protect its beam from the movements of gallery visitors. As a result, the viewer, already embedded in a layered space awash with colors, technological apparatus, and animal "actors," is repeatedly cast into the work itself as a shadow or a screen.

"Stepping into the versatile environment of Diana Thater's most recent installation is not unlike landing in Alice's Wonderland," says Fereshteh Daftari, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture, who

organized the exhibition. "In this land of formal wizardry--a video space that is at once pictorial and cinematic, illusionistic and real--you stand on a slippery terrain where both the viewer and the viewed shift conditions."

As with all of Thater's works, subjects from the natural world are used to explore moving imagery. "When we talk about nature, we are talking about ourselves really. Nature is the screen where we project ourselves. Nature is the ultimate other," Thater says.

Thater's new publication, *The best animals are the flat animals--the best space is the deep space* (MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles), with introduction by Carol Reese, and essays by Diana Thater and Amelio Jones, is available through the MoMA Book Store.

The Projects series is sponsored by Peter Norton. Listed below are the venues exhibiting other tableaux from Thater's multi-part *The best animals are the flat animals--the best space is the deep space* (1998).

The best space is the deep space
Allen Memorial Art Museum of Modern Art
October 2-November 27, 1998

The best animals are the flat animals--the best space is the deep space
MAK Center for Art and Architecture
October 27, 1998-January 10, 1999

The best sense is the nonsense
The Art Gallery of York University, North York, Ontario, Canada
February 11-April 4, 1999

The best outside is the inside
The Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint-Louis, Missouri
February 18-April 18, 1999

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