

## JANET BIGGS

### Like Tears In Rain

#### New Video Work

**Vernissage: Thursday, November 16th, 6-8**

**Exhibition: November 17th - December 16th, 2006**

As early as Greek civilization, man has wondered whether all physical events are caused or determined by the sum total of all prior events. If this theory holds true, our actions themselves must be determined in an everlasting sequence of cause and effect. What then is the source of the free will possessed by living things throughout the earth?



Still from the multi-channel video installation "Like Tears In Rain"

Pondering the question of free will's role in contemporary society, new media artist Janet Biggs has produced a powerful video work that will premier at Claire Oliver Gallery, November 16 through December 16. **Like Tears In Rain** inquires of the viewer, *What will you do with your time on earth?* Our actions or lack thereof will have a lasting impact on the world around us. Exploring power, control, and obsession, Biggs proposes new relationships between aesthetics and strength, as well as action and desire.

Installed in the Main Gallery, beautiful and compelling large scale images of the Citadel's elite Summerall Guard drill team are paired with those of a champion equestrian who has been blind from early youth. Juxtaposed behind these elegant images, the viewer sees captive polar bears swimming obsessively in their small pool.

Self-evident is the will of some; they refuse to let anything deter them from their goals. So strong is the desire to belong that others will sacrifice their own free will to become part of a community. And what of those beings who's free will has been taken from them by force? Clearly the viewer feels empathy and discomfort in these images.

The Citadel, steeped in two centuries of military history, has never before allowed an artist to capture the Corps signature silent drill. Biggs has captured the obsession and passion of the beautiful cadets as they move in seamless synchronization from a high Prussian marching step to the fluid, almost slow motion, "death march". Each member of the guard relinquishes his individuality to become part of the choreography of war.

Fierce in her search for independence, the blind dressage competitor Anne-Greta orients herself in the ring by spoken cues from individuals standing strategically in the arena who verbally announce the rider's location. In Bigg's piece, the rider performs complex dance-like movements on horseback, masterfully creating a pattern in the arena from the spoken cues: "All those moments will be lost in time *like tears in rain.*"

Lee and Anana, two polar bears who have lived their lives in a contained environment swim in seemingly synchronized patterns. Although a casual viewer may see a beautiful dance, the bears are, in reality immersing themselves in endless repetition in an attempt to transcend their physical boundaries. These most aggressive predators of man have been known to stalk their trainers and zoo staff.

While at first glance one may be confused and unsettled by the intensity and divergence of Bigg's imagery, upon further contemplation the viewer recognizes the obsessive commitment involved in the choices made by the human beings and the frustration that is instinctive in all living creatures to have mastery over their own free will.

The title of Biggs' work, "Like Tears In Rain", is taken from the movie *Blade Runner*: "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe.... All those moments will be lost in time like tears in rain". Science fiction writer Philip K. Dick attempted to define what makes us human; Biggs work continues that quest. Is it society or individual will that defines us?

Janet Biggs' work has been exhibited at important museums including The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT; Katonah Museum of Art, Katonah, NY; Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, OH; and the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI. She is in the collections of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; and The Robert J. Shiffler Collection and Foundation, Dayton, OH. Biggs is the recipient of prestigious grants and awards, including a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship.

**For more information please contact Claire Oliver Gallery at 212.929.5949 / [www.ClaireOliver.com](http://www.ClaireOliver.com)**