source films. Many of the elements the original eras to emulate the broduction colour grading from camera lenses, and postpainting, special effects, vintage central to this, using backdrop making practices. The set is traditional and contemporary is a vivid retelling employing and 1940s originals, Thieves Drawing closely from the 1920s

COLLAGING HISTORY

leading roles. sidekick or heavily compromised tame, Sabu mainly played the yet despite his extraordinary He became a household name now had someone 'authentic'. the go-to actor: the studios broblematic casting. Sabu became complex film sets and engaging in in domestic studios, building exotic backdrops, often shooting looked to the colonies to provide sug American studio systems Throughout this era, the British

and Black Narcissus (1947). (1940), The Jungle Book (1942) on to roles in The Thief of Bagdad Boy (1937) at just 13. He went in the award-winning Elephant Alexander Korda cast Sabu

As a result, the famous producer filming at the Maharaja's palace. Robert J. Flaherty met Sabu while 1936, documentary filmmaker the Maharaja of Mysore, India. In (elephant rider) in the stables of tather's footsteps as a mahout at a young age, he followed in his the international stage. Orphaned was the first Indian film star on Selar Sheik Sabu, 1924-1963) Sabu Dastagir (born

romantic partner of white actors. actors of colour from playing the anti-miscegenation rule prohibited in the USA from 1934-1968. The self-censorship for major releases of industry guidelines for content rules. The Hays Code was a set Hays Code's anti-miscegenation decision against her casting to the down). Some have attributed this s sex worker (which she turned sue was offered the part of Lotus, The Good Earth (1937), Instead, Спіпезе тактіек s wite ∪-∟ап іп hoped for the leading role of the 'Mongol slave'. Years later, Wong (1924), where she played the role was in The Thief of Bagdad discrimination. Her breakthrough Wong encountered much Though her career was prolific,

11rst Chinese-American movie star. (1905-1961), was Hollywood's professionally as Anna May Wong Wong Liu Isong, known

real-life marginalisation they faced. originals, to conspire against the bridge the 1920s and 1940s Thieves unites these actors, who struggles for creative agency. connection, identifying with their with whom she feels a profound actors Sabu and Anna May Wong, (labour) trajectories of Hollywood Bang Straws (2021) reimagine the The Eternal Return (2019) and The throughout her work. Her films with actors who reappear bersonal and political allyships Williams Gamaker grows close Through intensive research,

FINDING ANNA AND SABU

Fictional Healing. actress Merle Oberon, will explore pased on Anglo-Indian Hollywood demands are met. Her next film, trom leaving the workplace until scrivists to prevent employers India, it is a tactic used by labour 'encirclement'. Originating in the film utilises Gherao, meaning structural change. The climax of

rather than negotiation to achieve action, calling for accountability of script and screen for direct Fictional Revenge, using the space the problems. Thieves is the first to share their story and point to Activism, characters regain a voice Fictional Healing. With Fictional Activism, Fictional Revenge and coining the terms Fictional a framework for this practice, reparation. She has developed and its retelling is a form of For Williams Gamaker, storytelling

action, not just the result. offensive tradition by showing the Williams Gamaker spotlights this the Sultan painting their face, nose. By including a scene of prown face paint with a prosthetic the racist makeup technique of s white actor plays the Sultan in the 1940s, in the thiet of Bagdad, Replicating the same casting in

cknde stereotyping. - an image-violence through studio tradition of blackface generations of audiences to the for actors of colour, exposing Both film industries denied roles unequal fictions as entertainment. broduced countless structurally and Hollywood studio films. They

early to mid-20th century British Western filmmaking, specifically Racist characterisations saturate

- Michelle Williams Gamaker. their agency is restored." politically astute, and, crucially, to return, they have a voice, are marginalised actors have a chance the casting process: the previously longer be overlooked. I sabotage riddled with injustices that can no old cinema classics, but they are as critical affection. I deeply love "I see this mode of filmmaking

and offer alternative endings. affention to problematic practices restage classic films to call Many of her moving image works the emotional toll of capitalism. as migration, gender identity and of race and representation as well social justice, exploring the politics a practice rooted in activism and Williams Gamaker has developed

FICTIONAL REVENGE *PICTIONAL ACTIVISM TO*

technique of brown face paint. wno applies a racist make-up death scene and a white actor be aware this film includes a Content Guidance: Please

1.30pm during late openings. bns mq08.4, mq08.1 is yelq lliw hour. An audio described version half hour, with subtitles on the half Film is played on the hour and 27 seconds Digital, colour, 27 minutes səлəіи і

ON CLASS OUR MOUNTAINS ARE PAINTED

1980s (2023), at Touchstones. Order! Rochdale Art Gallery in the at Springfield Hospital and A Tall commission for Hospital Rooms Hauser & Wirth, a major public Dream of Another World (2022) at 2022, Like There is Hope and L'an Multechapel's The London Open Fisher Gallery, Auckland (2021), include I Multiply Each Day, Gus screenings, kecent exnibitions and international film festival and has had extensive national London's Jarman Award (2020) She is joint winner of Film

winning moving image artist. -brawe ne si (nobno1, 9791.d) Michelle Williams Gamaker

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installation and performance. incorporates drawing, collage, proader practice that also revealing Williams Gamaker's prought out into the gallery space, elements of the film's set are art direction. In the exhibition, sketching storyboards and from research to script-writing, aspects of the film's production, Williams Gamaker is involved in all

those in charge. forces to overthrow the set and replace actors of colour) by joining case, the casting of white actors to erructural violence on set (in this images. They must navigate the themselves trapped in their screen else is in Technicolor, and both find plack-and-white while everything something is wrong: she is in finds Anna May Wong on set. But within a movie, in Thieves, Sabu film industry. Told as a movie the racial discrimination in the story as their own, challenging poth characters reclaim the born American actor Sabu. Now, Anna May Wong and Indianby Chinese-American actor

her film, played in the originals as claiming leading roles in the marginalised characters Williams Gamaker reimagines Michael Powell and Tim Wheelan. co-directed by Ludwig Berger, remade in colour in 1940 and directed by Raoul Walsh. It was a Douglas Fairbanks production, black-and-white film from 1924, The Thief of Bagdad is a silent, revisits The Thief of Bagdad. tale of Fictional Revenge, which and British cinema, Thieves is a mid-20th Century Hollywood laking inspiration from early to

film work titled Thieves (2023). Painted on Glass, premieres a new exhibition, Our Mountains Are Williams Gamaker's solo

experimental videos. ınstead, appearing in her own pecame a performance artist actress, but in ner early twenties a child, she wanted to be an when she was growing up. As classic movies she watched draws on and celebrates the Michelle Williams Gamaker filmmaking and screenwriting, Known for her inventive

INTRODUCTION

COLLAGING HISTORY (CONT.)

in the film were handmade. The set and props have a second life in the gallery space, echoing storage warehouses. The arrangement of the objects shows the layered history behind the making of *Thieves* and its blockbuster counterparts.

A large drawing of Anna and Sabu on a 1950s chalkboard sits alongside previous works, such as anthropological photographs and props from The Bang Straws (2021). The gallery space, like the film, becomes a collage of research, stories and visuals. For Williams Gamaker, collage has been a vehicle to edit and rewrite histories and narratives through various mediums.

The exhibition title Our Mountains Are Painted on Glass was inspired by a quote from 1940s director Michael Powell. His collaborative film with Emeric Pressburger. Black Narcissus is heralded for its stylised aesthetic and strong colour theme. He achieved this by shooting everything at a studio and not using exterior locations.

This meant relying on large matte paintings to depict the mountainous backdrop of the Himalayas. A matte is a term to describe large painted landscapes that create the illusion of an environment in films and TV. These mattes were often painted on glass. The title refers to this practice and the precarity of glass, which for Williams Gamaker represents the precarious life that artists, and the actors of colour in her films, face, Within the exhibition space, transparent reproductions of the Himalayas provide a backdrop to the viewing of the film.

At the end of the 27-minute film, the room is filled with an intense pink light, bathing the objects with the same colour treatment found in the film. The installation reveals these processes by showcasing documentary photographs, maguettes and costumes hidden amongst the set, like dioramas.

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Full film credits are available on the website.







DCA

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The works on display can be photographed. Share your pictures with us on social media.

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Large print and easy read guides are available

SLG

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ACCOMPANYING EVENTS

Michelle Williams Gamaker in conversation with May Adadol Ingawanij

Wed 17 May 2023, 7-8.15pm, Clore Studio, £6 / £4 concession

Join Michelle Williams Gamaker and curator, writer and teacher. May Adadol Ingawanij for a live conversation at the SLG. They will discuss Williams Gamaker's latest film *Thieves*, along with their shared interests in cinema, de-westernised histories and representation.

Film screening: Fictional Activism

Wed 7 Jun 2023, 7-8.30pm. Clore Studio, £6 / £4 concession

Watch three films by Michelle Williams Gamaker, House of Women (2017), The Eternal Return (2019) and The Bang Straws (2021), which form part of a series exploring Fictional Activism. The films will be introduced by film scholar and lecturer Dr Kulraj Phullar.

Also on at the SLG John Costi: Found Football Difficult

Fire Station Galleries 1 & 2, 31 Mar – 18 Jun 2023, Free

The SLG's 12th Postgraduate Artist in Residence John Costi's work is rooted in healing and transformation. Through conversation, play and assemblage, he aims to create art that brings people together and forms social connections.



Cover and overleaf: Michelle Williams Gamaker still image from Thieves (2023)

