

PRESS RELEASE**UNDER****A MULTI-SCREEN FILM INSTALLATION ON THE ART OF FREEDIVING BY MARTINA AMATI**

On view at Ambika P3, University of Westminster, London, 26 September to 11 October 2015

Private View: Friday, 25 September, 6.30-8.30pm

LONDON, 25 SEPTEMBER 2015 – In her film *Under*, artist and BAFTA award-winning filmmaker **Martina Amati** (born 1969) returns to her artistic roots to express her lifelong passion for freediving: the act of swimming underwater on a single breath of air without breathing apparatus. A mesmerizing multi-screen installation that immerses the audience in Amati's vision, *Under* aims to bring the experience of freediving into an urban landscape and give viewers the sensation of being submerged beneath the water as they gaze up at a massive screen hovering just above their heads. *Under* is supported by the Wellcome Trust.

'I am a filmmaker and a freediver,' says Amati to describe herself and her work. 'I dive to 30 meters depth – the height of a 10-story skyscraper – on a single breath of air. I have never competed. I freedive in order to find my deeper truth. I let go of everything and enter a totally new world, where I need to find my stillness in order to consume as little oxygen as possible. It is a form of meditation that stimulates my creative process. Each dive is a discovery, where I open myself to unfamiliar sensations and feelings. The water saved my life, twice, when I found myself in my darkest places. Outside the water I try, I imitate, I struggle, I pretend. Underwater I *am*. With *Under* I want to share this experience with others.'

Amati combines her fascination for the water with her art and film background in *Under*, capturing herself and British Champion Liv Philip performing beneath the water's surface. Inspired by the relationship between the physical and the spiritual that lies at the core of freediving, Amati pushes her personal limits to hold her breath underwater for longer and dive deeper to discover new 'depths'. With a team of freediving cameramen, she films each of her underwater performances on a single breath of air. In *Under* these will be projected onto large-scale screens across vast expanses of space, emphasizing the infinite, gravity-free essence of water, and evoking the experience of being suspended in time and space, submerged beneath the surface.

In 2012 Amati was awarded a **Wellcome Trust Large Arts Award**, giving her the opportunity to realise *Under*. This Wellcome Trust grant also enabled Amati to work with masters of freediving and scientists who research its effects on the human body. She has teamed up with **Professor Kevin Fong**, co-director of the Centre for Altitude, Space and Extreme Environment medicine and an honorary senior lecturer in physiology at University College London, who has worked with Amati on a documentary to explore the physiological effects of freediving to be shown in the installation.

Born in Milan and now based in London, Amati has always made film-based work and was first exhibited in Milan in a show curated by Andrea Lissoni (now Curator of Film and International Art at Tate Modern), who was drawn to Amati's distinct sensibility. For personal reasons, Amati then left Milan and concentrated on commercial filmmaking before making a number of successful dramatic short films, which won a BAFTA and BIFA among their many awards. *Under* marks her return to art, a move applauded by filmmakers and others in the creative community, who have been struck by Amati's artistic vision.

Filmmaker **Sophie Fiennes** comments: 'Martina Amati's sophisticated and emotional sense of cinema makes her work memorable and touching. She is that rare thing, a filmmaker who can tell a story through purely visual means. The sensitivity to detail, both in framing and performance is refreshingly instinctive, but there is quiet comedy too, which underscores the dramatic tension. I look forward to seeing her new work, *Under*.'

Fashion designer **Bella Freud**, who has commissioned Amati to make several films, comments: 'Martina Amati has the ability to touch you – she understands the emotional power of film. I've been struck by her ability to conjure an atmosphere so strongly that you feel an intense connection to her subject – she brings you close to the rawness of experience, as though she is lifting a veil and you're an invisible person an inch away, seeing everything, even hearing people's breath. She is naturally an artist – there's a restraint, a confidence in allowing the viewer to interpret things as they see them. She's not afraid to leave something out and allow the viewer to fill it in. That seems to me very like art.'

Acknowledgements

The Wellcome Trust is a global charitable foundation dedicated to improving health. It supports bright minds in science, the humanities and the social sciences, as well as education, public engagement and the application of research to medicine. The Trust supports the development and production of new creative art projects that involve the exploration of biomedical science and its social contexts, generating powerful, personal and visceral art.

About Ambika P3

Director: Professor Katharine Heron, Curator: Michael Mazière. Ambika P3 is the University of Westminster's space for contemporary art and architecture, presenting a public programme of solo and group exhibitions, education projects, talks and events. The Guardian dubbed Ambika P3 'one of the capital's hidden and most exciting new spaces'. Dedicated to innovation, experimentation and learning, the programme has been conceived as a laboratory and meeting place for practitioners, industry and academia. Recent exhibitions at Ambika P3 include Anthony McCall's *Vertical Works* (2011), David Hall's *End Piece...* (2012), Ilya and Emilia Kabakov's *The Happiest Man* (2013), Victor Burgin's *A Sense of Place* (2013), Elizabeth Ogilvie's *Out of Ice* (2014) and *Potential Architecture* with Apolonija Šušteršič, Alexander Brodsky, Joar Nango and Sean Griffiths (2015). Upcoming Ambika P3 commissions include Chantal Akerman (2015) and Shezad Dawood (2016).

Exhibition details

26 September – 11 October 2015

Opening times: Monday to Friday 11am-7pm Saturday-Sunday 12-6pm

Ambika P3, University of Westminster, 35 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5LS, (nearest Tube: Baker Street), admission free, www.p3exhibitions.com

For more information on Martina Amati's *Under*, see www.under-installation.com

Social media:

Instagram - UNDER_2015 Twitter - @UNDERmartina

For media enquiries, interviews and images, please contact Sarah Greenberg, Evergreen



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