

GASWORKS

PRESS RELEASE INFORMATION: For immediate release

Mouthfeel

Maryam Jafri

21 March – 18 May 2014

Preview: Thursday 20 March, 6.30 – 8.30pm



Maryam Jafri, *Mouthfeel*, 2014,
HD video with sound, courtesy of the artist

Gasworks presents *Mouthfeel*, the first solo exhibition in London by Maryam Jafri. Comprising the newly commissioned short film of the same name and a new photo-text work entitled *Product Recall: An Index of Innovation* (both 2014), the exhibition explores the politics underpinning the industrial production of food, connecting themes as diverse as “big food”, flavour enhancement technology and overconsumption.

Encompassing moving image, text, photography and performance, Jafri’s research-based practice often merges fiction and documentary to explore how historical and economic constructs manifest in everyday gestures, manners and items such as clothes, food and textiles. Her video *Avalon* (2011), for instance, speculates on the end users of fetish clothing and accessories manufactured in a factory in an unnamed Asian country to explore the peculiar ways in which affect, labour and commodities intertwine. The related photo-text series *Global Slum* (2012), on the other hand, explores the interconnections between various sites for role play, from S/M dungeons to store displays and film sets, underlining how global capitalism necessitates not-dissimilar forms of role-play and enactment. Using different strategies, these works emphasise the inherent perversity and performativity of capitalist production while also insisting on a form of artistic research in which facts are deliberately occluded.

At Gasworks the short film *Mouthfeel* combines staged and found footage to unravel the politics surrounding the mass production of processed food. The staged scenes are based on an original script by the artist and focus on the conversations of a married couple who work for the same food multinational, which is modelled on both *Nestlé* and *Monsanto*. Their exchange is inspired by theatre and television, where socio-political analysis is played out through everyday, familial dialogue with large doses of humour, hypocrisy and violence.

Set in the near future, the wife, a leading food technologist, and the husband, a senior brand manager, find themselves stuck in a chauffeur-driven stretch limo at a security checkpoint in an unspecified global city. The wife, played by Jafri, has uncovered a potential health problem with their new product, which her husband is determined to cover up. Along with excerpts of found footage that act as “commercial breaks”, these scenes address themes of convenience, good taste and the disparities between mass and artisanal forms of food production.

Also on display, *Product Recall: An Index of Innovation* combines text that bastardises business-speak with “still life” product photography of unsuccessful food products from the private archive of an anonymous former brand consultant and found objects amassed from the personal collections of other food industry figures. These combine to recount an alternative cultural history of processed food in the 20th century that focuses on products that were either recalled or failed to find widespread consumer appeal. With reference to the vernacular language, imagery and iconography of advertising and product displays, this work reveals how agribusiness and the innovations of laboratory science are implicated in the mass circulation and consumption of everyday commodities.

155 VAUXHALL STREET LONDON SE11 5RH
T. +44(0)20 7587 5202 F. +44(0)20 7582 0159 INFO@GASWORKS.ORG.UK WWW.GASWORKS.ORG.UK

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Mouthfeel is the third exhibition of [The Civilising Process](#), a yearlong programme of exhibitions and events at Gasworks inspired by German sociologist Norbert Elias' eponymous 1939 book, which looks at the development of the tastes, manners and sensibilities of Western Europeans since the Middle Ages. Between October 2013 and November 2014 Gasworks is working with invited artists, designers, curators and researchers to tackle a wide range of issues raised by this book in an attempt to understand their relevance for contemporary debates and practices. *The Civilising Process* comprises five exhibitions, a programme of interdisciplinary events, contributions to Gasworks' online platform [Pipeline](#) and a printed publication.

Mouthfeel is commissioned by Gasworks, London, and produced by Spike Film and Video, Bristol. <http://www.spikeisland.org.uk/spike-film-and-video>

Notes to Editors:

- Maryam Jafri (b.1972) is an artist based in New York and Copenhagen. She has exhibited widely in Europe, North America and elsewhere. Her recent exhibitions include: *Manifesta 9*, Shanghai Biennial, Taipei Biennial, *Global Slum*, Beirut, Cairo, (all 2012), *Backdrop*, Bielefelder Kunstverein, M kHa, Antwerp, Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit, and Deutsches Filmmuseum, Frankfurt (all 2013).
- [Gasworks](#) is a contemporary art organisation in South London with a strong reputation for discovering new local and international talent. With an ambitious programme of artists' residencies, exhibitions, events and outreach projects, Gasworks supports the research and production of new work by emerging and innovative artists. At the beginning of 2013, Gasworks began a [£1.8 million capital campaign](#) to purchase and renovate its current building in order to secure the organisation's future. Designs by award winning architects HAT Projects incorporate a redesign of the gallery space, a larger community participation space, new artists' studios and initiatives to make the building greener. Work on the new building is due to start in autumn 2014, with the reopening of the new space scheduled for 2015.
- Gasworks is part of [Triangle Network](#), an international network of artists and grass-roots art organisations with over 30 partners worldwide, that exists to promote dialogue, exchange of ideas and innovation within the contemporary visual arts. Celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2012, Triangle has worked with over 4,200 artists and developed projects in more than 60 countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe, Latin America and Australia.

Visitor information

Free admission. Opening times: Wed–Sun, 12–6pm or by appointment.

info@gasworks.org.uk / <http://gasworks.org.uk> / 020 7587 5202

Gasworks, 155 Vauxhall Street, London. SE11 5RH.

Nearest tube: Oval (Northern line) / Vauxhall (Victoria line)

Media information

For further information, images, interview requests and other press enquiries, please contact: Holly Jennison, Communications Coordinator on 020 7587 5202 or email holly@gasworks.org.uk.

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