

# Doug Ischar: Recent Films

April 30 - May 4

Whitney Biennial of American Art

945 Madison Avenue  
2nd Floor Film & Video Gallery

Hours: 11-6 W, TH, S, Su / 11-9 F  
films screen continuously throughout the day

***come lontano***

***Alone With You***

***Tristes Tarzan***



***come lontano*** (2011) is a perverse historical romance in which two lives are inter-mixed, doused with sentiment, and – hopefully – redeemed. The work revolves around an unlikely couple – Paolo Pasolini and Maria Callas. There is also a symbolic villain, Pasolini's Alfa Romeo roadster in which he famously cruised for street trade and which was used to murder and mutilate him. *come lontano's* first section is titled 'alfa.' *come lontano* is a heartfelt homage to two singular artists whose utterly different lives, personas, and politics intersected briefly in the production of one radiant film, leaving them both forever changed. The film is based largely on found materials: footage from Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1969 *Medea* (staring Maria Callas) and numerous photographic sources, i.e. books, paparazzi photographs, etc. Rare silent footage of Callas performing Luigi Cherubini's opera, *Medea*, concludes in the film's third section. Only in the final section does original footage come into play. *come lontano* is in four sections, each with its own discrete qualities. It is modeled more after Modernist musical examples than after avant-garde cinema – formally, the film is very much a study in 'composition.' The title itself is a rare musical performance indication, meaning to 'make sound as if in the distance.'

At the heart of '***Alone With You***' (2011) is the notion of impassioned avarice, i.e. the kind of motivated acquisitiveness that often drives both erotic desire and obsessive collecting. 'Alone...' is built around two main characters, a hot young pro-wrestler – the maker's object of desire – and Robert Mapplethorpe, the artist/collector *par excellence*, who serves as both alter-ego and nemesis for Ischar himself. But there are no neatly contained categories here and elements slip constantly between the various qualities of compulsion/compassion being explored. 'Alone...' is a densely 'vertical' work, its use of superimpositions and shifting frame sizes giving it an almost 'anti-cinematic' quality. The work is roughly divided into two parts with the second section re-shaping and re-employing elements from the first.

***Tristes Tarzan*** (2013) melds two 'son of tarzan' movies – one from 1920, one from 1950 - into a five-part work based on variation form. Music is – even more than usual for Ischar – the conceptual template here. Edward Elgar's 1899 "Enigma Variations" is both the musical crowning glory of the British Imperial age as well as an intimate group portrait, each variation corresponding to another of Elgar's friends. *Tristes Tarzan's* five sections are each linked to one of Ischar's intimates, namely Steve Reinke, Mark Aguhar, John Neff, Elijah Burgher and his late partner, Tom Daws. Despite the mostly male dedicatees, *Tristes Tarzan* is also Ischar's deepest engagement to date with a female presence, something in keeping with the work's dedication to his recently deceased friend and student, Mark Aguhar. The work's two central sections are built of broad emotional strokes and distinct passions while the remaining three are more lapidary in form and mercurial in mood.