

What we actually see and hear in *Untitled False Document* (2008) – part video, part 16mm film loop – is a projection of two intercut scenes accompanied by a voiceover. One scene is of a lovely young woman on the bow of a boat. She holds in her arms a number of what look like large digital prints of fruit or other organic items, and one by one she lets them fall from her grip, at which point a heavy maritime wind blows them offscreen (and presumably into the water). The second scene is a shot of an apartment interior empty except for a large flat-screen television facing the camera. On that screen we see the first scene. And as the camera slowly zooms in and out on the television, the division between the two is at turns elided and reconstituted. Meanwhile, the voiceover, a recording of an electronic voice synthesizer, tells us about the unreliability of the narrator's memory – both of his own past and of that of the work – as well as of the unreliability of the 'narrator' itself.

That unreliability is everywhere in the narration's self-consciously elliptical passages, such as "The two dimensional subject. She is another one of these images in this structure of images, just as this voice of mine is an image", for example, or in the closing lines, "Like a good truth in the form of a lie. The lie being something original because it is existing on our inside and the truth being something unoriginal because we accept to hear it again and again and again." But throughout the entire piece we can hear the echoes of so much of what we call theory: that cultural, critical, structuralist and poststructuralist, psychoanalytic and semiotic discourse that has created a whole new brand of critical and philosophical thinking over the last three decades. And what Wolfson's *Untitled False Document* really offers its audience is an object lesson in how contemporary artists work in the wake of theory, rather than at its leading or breaking edge, which is why 'unpacking' Wolfson's work in any way would be something of a masturbatory exercise.

Important as theory has been (and as certain of its avenues it continues to be), its lessons have been well learned (perhaps too well; just think of how loaded language such as 'difference' and 'revisionist history' has been adopted by the politically conservative thought against which theory originally aligned itself). At present we are tasked with historicising and synthesising theory's revolution for a new era which also requires that we scan the horizon for whatever might catch fire next. And much to our benefit, our contemporary art can help us do this. The drawback to Wolfson's contribution, then, is that it turns its back on this task and chooses to walk theory's well-trod ground as if making fresh tracks (it does the same by rehearsing strategies local to 1960s and 70s experimental film). So the only job left is to decide at which destination it arrives: that of pastiche or cliché. *Jonathan T.D. Neil*

## Jordan Wolfson

### *Untitled False Document*

Swiss Institute, New York  
10 September – 25 October



*Untitled False Document*,  
2008, film still



## COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

TITLE: Jordan Wolfson: Untitled False Document  
SOURCE: Art Rev no28 D 2008

Copyright Art Review, Ltd. USA and Canadian subscription to Art Review are handled by agents: International Media Service, 3330 Pacific Ave., Ste. 404, Virginia Beach, VA 23451, 800-428-3003. Annual subscription price \$79, Canada \$85. Our Internet address is <http://www.art-review.co.uk>