

IKON

Exhibition Guide

Sofia Hultén *Familiars*

31 January – 18 March 2007

Tower Room

Born in Stockholm in 1972, Sofia Hultén moved to Birmingham as a young child. Although she trained as a sculptor, graduating from Sheffield Hallam University in 1995, the artist now works with video, photography and objects. In 1997 she received a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) scholarship and has remained in Berlin since, exhibiting extensively across Europe.

Hultén's video works document the artist undertaking a series of seemingly futile or absurd tasks such as repeatedly destroying and repairing objects, finding hiding places within an office and disguising herself amongst street furniture. Her artworks involve a preoccupation with the relationship between human beings and the object world. For Ikon, Hultén has created *Familiars*, a new piece in which, for the first time, members of her family become subjects in her work. Working with her mother and brother has allowed the artist to explore the possibility of collaboration, a significant development for Hultén. Screened on several monitors around Ikon's building, *Familiars* is a series of domestic settings in which everyday items take on a new role. Mundane objects such as remote-controlled cars and duvets assume another identity, becoming tools designed to unnerve an unknown, unseen and unsuspecting party. In one scene we see a collection of 'sticky eyeballs', a favourite with children, being thrown at a Venetian blind. The eyeballs roll down the blind, tapping out a percussive soundtrack as they travel over the slats, altering the light in a mesmerising journey downwards. In another scenario, we observe Hultén's mother changing the formation of cushions on a sofa into a menacing but comical creature.

Hultén's work is at once rigorously produced and modestly homemade – a combination of meticulousness and makeshift ingenuity. It is engaging through its familiarity and suspense. Her characters are purposeful in their waiting and the artist invites us to wait with them, filling in time with a kind of activity that inspires imaginative thought. Instead of narrative closures, we enjoy the open endings.