

Martine Syms

Knot Eye

17 September – 07 November 2026

62 Kingly Street, London



The work of Martine Syms (b. 1988, Los Angeles) engages the fluid definitions of reality and fiction of our contemporary world. In *Knot Eye*, her exhibition at Sadie Coles HQ, Kingly Street, Syms slips between genres, modes of representation and narrative-threads, with two new films and a concept store.

The exhibition presents *RW-LO*, 2026, which will have its theatrical premiere at the New York Film Festival in September. In the 22-minute docu-fantasy, set in the Garden District of New Orleans in the year 2000, Syms blends reenactments with home movies from the life of Brent David Freaney, a lifelong pop girlie, who was once, as vintage camcorder footage reveals, a Deep South teenager obsessed with outspoken Real World New Orleans castmate Melissa Howard. *RW-LO* is a nostalgic — and surprising — inquiry into what happens when people start being celebrities, and they stop being real.

The exhibition also premieres her film *Ex Voto*, 2026, a three-handed ensemble set in a New York apartment. A wrap party has ended. The Director and her two leads, The Actor and The It Boy, are drunk and high and don't want to go home yet. The energy is intimate and charged and none of them know what happens next. The Director tries to explain all 11 dimensions and when she can't, pulls up the first YouTube video. GOD HITS. We stay with The Director as she leaves this plane of reality. When The Directors returns The Actor reenacts her trip.

At the front of the gallery is the latest iteration of Dominica Publishing, that functions simultaneously as an artwork and concept store. Dominica Publishing, Syms overarching conceptual endeavour, is a practice of making ideas public and making publics around those ideas. It's a way to play with form, format, desire, magic, mystery, and pop. As Syms notes, 'I was a shop girl. Some people were servers. These jobs teach you everything there is to know about humanity.'

RW-LO is commissioned by The Vega Foundation with additional production support from the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Sadie Coles HQ, and Sprüth Magers.

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Martine Syms (b. 1988, Los Angeles) obtained an MFA from Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson (2017) and a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2007). Syms has exhibited internationally with recent solo exhibitions including *Collection in Focus: Martine Syms*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2026); *Soliloquy*, Saint Louis Art Museum, St Louis (2026); *Total*, Lafayette Foundation, Paris (2024); *Present Goo*, Sadie Coles HQ, London (2023); *Ugly Plymouths*, Carré d'Art – Musée d'Art Contemporain, Nîmes (2023); *SHE MAD S1:E4*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (MCA), Chicago (2022); *Grio College*, Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-On-Hudson (2022); *She Mad: Season One*, Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen (2021); *Neural Swamp*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2021, touring to Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia in 2022); *Aphrodite's Beasts*, Fridericianum, Kassel (2021); *SOFT*, Sadie Coles HQ, London (2021); *SHE MAD: S1:E4*, part of Glasgow International, Tramway, Glasgow (2021, touring to Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), Chicago, (2022); *Ugly Plymouths*, Sadie Coles HQ (offsite), London, and 5239 Melrose Avenue, presented by Bridget Donahue and Sadie Coles HQ, Los Angeles (2020); *Boon*, Secession, Vienna (2019); and *Shame Space*, Institute of Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond (2019). In 2022, Syms released her widely acclaimed first feature-film *The African Desperate*. Syms has been recognised with numerous awards, including the Guggenheim Fellowship (2023); United States Artists Fellowship (2020); Future Fields Commission in Time-Based Media (2020); and Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Chicago (2018).