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## **Performing in the Theatre of The Auction House**

by Gabriela Salgado

In 1996, Alicia Herrero began working on her series Art & Capital, a work in progress built in chapters that examine the constructions and de-constructions of value and legitimation in the visual arts.

One chapter of the series was the project Chat, commissioned by the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam in 2001. In Chat, Herrero gave voice to objects selected from both the museum's design and craft collection and from the city residents' personal collections of domestic kitchenware. The conversation, activated through sound devises between enlarged plastic mock-ups of the objects, became the stage for a witty analysis of human relations, power and class achieved with humour and elegance.

Auction Drawings is the latest incarnation of the Art & Capital, project. On this occasion, Alicia Herrero infiltrates the exclusive world of art auctions with performances that document by means of life drawings its theatrical operations. Utilising the format of the court drawing sessions, Herrero sets out to register the moments of glory of the auctioned objects of desire as in a celebrity TV show, thus exposing and documenting with forensic precision the representational aspect of the mise en scène that transforms objects in the altar of the art market.

As Boris Groys has recently written, the contemporary art world establishes value in the fussy relationship between art's image and the critique of that same image. In doing so it clearly enlarges its power, as it does not leave room for dissent. [1] Alicia Herrero's Auction Drawings attempt to examine the circuits independently from both the Modernist belief in the symbolic value and intangible power of the art object to elevate humanity and the pressures that post- capitalist global economies place on the products of human imagination.

[1] Groys, Boris, Art Power, MIT Press, London 2008.

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