Gold Standard is a two channel video work based on a scene from Arthur Penn's movie The Miracle Worker (the story of the deaf/blind child Helen Keller and her teacher Annie Sullivan). The scene depicts a prolonged struggle between the two characters wherein the wildly resistant Helen Keller is forced to eat with a spoon instead of her hands. The film's leading actresses both won Oscars for their portrayals, and subsequently, the biography of Helen Keller has expanded to include the cultural phenomena of its dramatization. Helen Keller is an American icon for her own accomplishments, but also because ~ Miracle Worker set the gold standard for the actor's virtuosity.

I have restaged the above scene drawing an analogy between the actor's compulsion to perform, to transform himself, and the outward manifestations of hysteria and melancholia-transformative conditions which relate to the need to escape. The Helen Kellers depicted in the video are hysteric and melancholic: violently seeking flight from an oppressor, or simply resigned to the fact that escape is physically impossible. The work is very much influenced by the writing of Elias Canetti who regards transformation as a form of resistance to "power"-the forces which seek to restrict, confine, and ultimately consume anything weak. For Canetti, manifestations of power are directly connected to the intake of food. Transformation and different modes of flight are the means to escape being eaten. The basic gest of the piece is comedic, laughter is a contraction of the muscles of the diaphragm, the same muscles used for gulping down food.

- Catherine Sullivan (2001)