

knowing you, knowing me

On Complicity with Images

Coproduced with steirischer herbst

Opening: September 23, 2006, 11.45 am

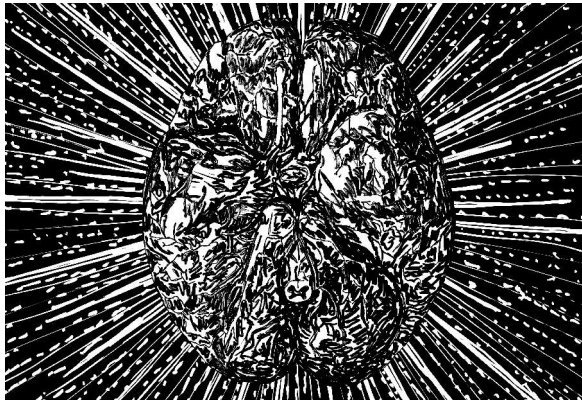
Duration: September 24 – November 26, 2006

Artists:

**Thomas Feuerstein (A), Andrea Geyer / Sharon Hayes (D/USA), G.R.A.M. (A), Rainer Oldendorf (D),
Marco Poloni (CH), Mark Raidpere (EST)**

Introductory texts on the participating artists

Thomas Feuerstein

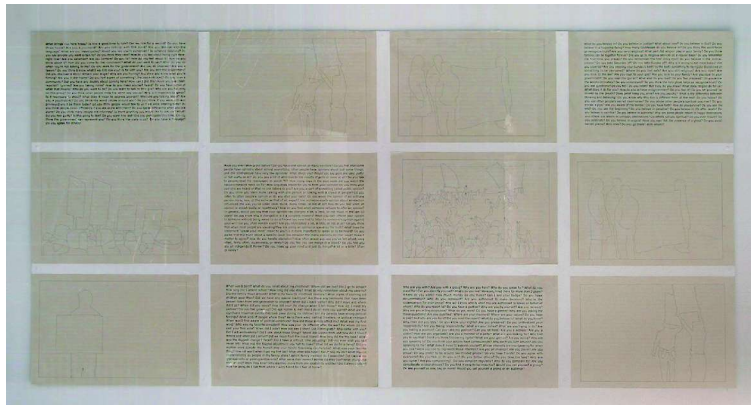


Thomas Feuerstein, Brain: o.T., 2006. From the series: Amnesie International, 2006.
Courtesy: Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, Innsbruck.

Characteristically of Thomas Feuerstein's artistic method of conceptual narration, the graphical series "Amnesie International" explores socio-political and technological narratives, drawing on a hybrid language of forms ranging from sketches to posters and photographs to algorithmic computer graphics. On the basis of imperative images that are implanted in us by the media and that evoke the anticipatory obedience of common sense, the first part of "Amnesie International" spotlights logics of economy. Adaptating Herbert Spencer's social Darwinist phrase *survival of the fittest*, we are subject to the law of *survival of the hippest*. The second part of the series goes on to scrutinise the question of co-evolution of the self and images that cognitively and emotionally control perception, behaviour and practical action from ideological and biopolitical perspectives. Social, machinic and genetic control aimed at optimising a future human race is taken as the starting point for two computer works which look at the example of Adolphe Quêtelet's *Social Physics* and Francis Galton's *Eugenics*. The series concludes with an Internet work that subjects images loaded through Google to a kind of amnesia, to decay and deletion. "Amnesie International" becomes a double liberation from the shackles of images, leading ultimately to the societal state of "Commonstealth". The last utopia is the proverbial one: the non-place as the longed-for possibility of omniabsence, a life beyond the tyranny of images.

Andrea Geyer / Sharon Hayes

Andrea Geyer's works all focus on the (city) space as a mesh of social and political interactions. Her point of departure is contexts of communication characterised by complicated translations, that keep meanings and norms accessible and negotiable. Her projects deal with the roles played by the ethnic, gender- and class-specific implications of these constant rewritings of cultural meanings, with the aid of which a consensus about cultural values and public spheres gets created. Conflicts concerning this consensus arise in social crises: in this respect, migration and war often feature as the "contexts" of Andrea Geyer's projects.



Andrea Geyer / Sharon Hayes, In times like these only criminals remain silent, 2005.

The title "In times like these only criminals remain silent", a project created in co-operation with Sharon Hayes, goes back to a political poster from New York at the time of the Vietnam War, protesting against the blessing of US forces by the Archbishop of New York, which the artists found on the Internet. A total of five posters, folded to form a newspaper that visitors can take with them and that circulate in public space, show graphically reworked scenes of demonstrations on the front, with a number of questions on various "issues" formulated on the back: faith, political behaviour, social contacts, childhood, identity, etc. "Do you have a message?" "Can we talk for a second?"

In this project, Andrea Geyer and Sharon Hayes address public space as a constellation of social relationships and cultural differences. With their interventions they insist on the appropriation of this space, while at the same time uncovering the yet patriarchal structures of the kind of social understanding maintained by visual and discursive stereotypes. "In times like these only criminals remain silent" is a project that spotlights the fragile construction of these opinions, setting out to uncover the rifts between experience, communication, constructed meaning and political reality.

G.R.A.M.

The Graz-based artists' group G.R.A.M. repeatedly works within the framework of aesthetic and semantic constructions of the mass media. Voyeurism, sensationalism, banality, cheap thrills, lifestyle, pop culture and its medial rituals constitute an important background of their works. The "Paparazzi" series (started in 1997) also operates at the interface between media, everyday life and fiction, between simulation and disavowal, between cliché, stereotype and the impossibility of constructing such a thing as reality in the face of these factors. The pictures feign an interest in revelation, they display seemingly interesting moments or an everyday life that is – subsequently? – exaggerated by the – supposed – extraordinariness of the protagonists: so, do these pictures owe their existence to a real "event" or do they elevate an incidental occurrence to the status of event?

Against this backdrop, the "Paparazzi" pictures are not copies of their prototypes in the media, rather they pose the question as to the connection between image and reality itself. This is not about a criticism of conditions of representation, but rather about making these conditions of representation the object of representation themselves. The game of illusion

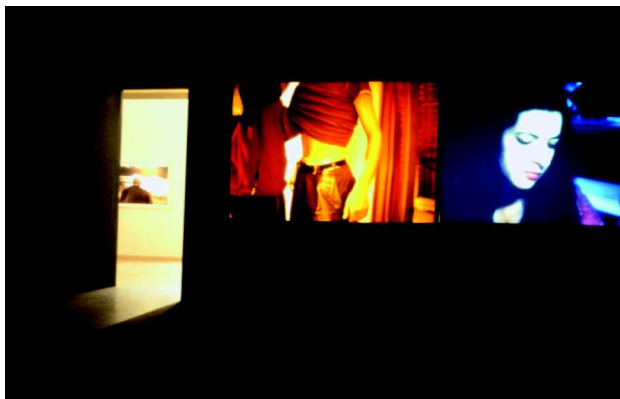
and sensation, voyeurism and taboo, focuses on the constantly changing boundaries of what is private and what is public, image and reality, and the forms in which these boundaries circulate, are overstepped or defended in society. Ultimately, what emerges again is that photography still constitutes a strange access to reality, both creating and dissolving it.



G.R.A.M., from the series: Paparazzi, 1997 – 2006. Courtesy: Galerie & Edition Artelier, Graz.

Rainer Oldendorf

"Marco 1 – 5" is a film project in progress that consists of various film sequences shot between 1995 and 1997 featuring different protagonists in various places in different countries, moving through the film in different languages. The second part of the double projection presents a total of 81 slides projected in parallel. The varying length of the film event on the one hand and the endless loop of slides on the other create ever-changing new image constellations, with ever new threads of narrative converging or diverging.



Rainer Oldendorf, Marco 1 – 5, double projection: slide show, video or 16 mm film.
Installation: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, June 2000.

The dialogues of the protagonists in "Marco 1 bis 5", the various settings, and the plots taking place in them are borrowed from different (feature) films. By uniting film quotations and fragments – taken in part from such prominent films as Rainer Werner Fassbinder's "Deutschland im Herbst" (Germany in Autumn), 1978 – to create a (not always stringent) filmic collage, the viewers get into situations in which they are confronted with something that they think they know about, but may not be able to tell where this knowledge comes from. By smuggling in a different image-time and narrative form through the slides, the process of reading the film is additionally diffused. With his film, Oldendorf brings back memories of things seen, known or experienced, calling on the viewers to verify where this knowledge comes from and what they can or could do with it.

Marco Poloni

Marco Poloni's installations (...) present something that always induces us to jump to conclusions. His observations refer to the real world and to the way we interpret it – vicariously, through various media-based transfers. Viewers find themselves in the position of investigators, explorers or test persons in search of the truth, who – as a result of their blind spots, prejudices and translations – always end up in their own way. For although Poloni obviously manipulates and misleads the viewers' perception, at the same time he throws these misunderstandings, mix-ups and misjudgements back to the viewers as constitutive elements of cognition. (...) By way of deconstruction, Poloni investigates the conditions in which we interpret images in a certain way and carry them over to reality. In doing so, he always leaves viewers oscillating to and fro between deception and disappointment, reality and illusion, logical consistency and paradox. (...)



Marco Poloni, from: *Permutit – Scenes from an Unmade Film*, 2005.

"Permutit – Scenes from an Unmade Film" is the most recent of a total of three works conceived as photographic storyboards. The pictorial arrangements each consist of fifty to sixty individual photos, hung in a row, in which the rhythm of the photographs is organised on the basis of possible film scenes. The pictorial languages that Poloni draws on here range between the classical forms of architectural photography, the documentary, enacted photography, and particularly the aesthetics of observation, dominated by blurring, cutting-off people, and an invisible camera lying in ambush. In all three works it is everyday, anonymous and inconspicuous people that become the focus of the observant camera – and thus, inevitably, are rendered suspicious. (...) It is this implicative observing view that causes us to become suspicious of the people in Poloni's photographs – and thus puts us on the track of a story that we can only be taken in by. The pictures themselves furnish no proof for our suppositions, instead leave us speculating on the basis of prejudices and stereotypes.

Aus: Iris Dressler, "Marco Poloni. If you see something, say something!", *Camera Austria* 91/2005.

Mark Raidpere

With his video work "Shifting Focus" (2005), Mark Raidpere reveals that the "public sphere" is increasingly being colonised by the "private sphere" (Zygmunt Bauman), for example in the mass-media proliferation of talk shows, boundless interest in the portrayal of private affairs, and increasing public confession of intimate details. Coupled with an obsession with immediacy, Raidpere's work also focuses on the question of whether the individual has already internalised the "power" of pictures to such an extent that it is starting to identify with the mechanisms of representation.

"Shifting Focus" is one of the artist's dialogue works created in recent years that deal with family relationships. However, his work – that emphatically references the private sphere on the surface – also always contains an analysis of social and political processes that are seen to be crucial for his own socialisation or, on the other hand, for the formation of his own identity – without, that is, denying or masking the breaks in self-perception: what we believe to be individual turns out to be something that has not only always been there and, in this respect, something that has been appropriated, but is always also contingent. The performance-like nature of his self-projection in "Shifting Focus" is a good example of this: In the nine-minute confession scene, a moment of ostensible contrition is repeatedly interrupted by nervous, suppressed laughter; by

constantly looking back at the camera, the artist seems to want to make sure of his self and his effect in this setting – thus underlining the aspect of posing that is characteristic/evident for this work as a whole. The role of the mother in this ostensibly dramatic scene remains unclear; as a result of her motionlessness compared to the (mock) emotional agitation of her confessing son, she seems to assume the role of an indifferent audience rather than that of attentive or sympathetic mother. In this context, the artificial light arching over the scene serves as final proof that this is an enactment, a television-worthy performance that would seem to claim authenticity.



Mark Raidpere, Videostill from: 10 Men, 2003.

What is interesting is that Raidpere himself, before he began working and exhibiting as a visual artist, worked and still works as a successful model and fashion photographer, and knows exactly how to satisfy the entertainment industry with his commissioned works. The fact that he uses his knowledge of the industry's needs to pillory the culture of needs that has grown out of and with it for himself and his art puts his artistic work in a subtly tension-laden interplay of adaptation, over-identification and critical disavowal.

Further information:

Margit Neuhold, T. +43 / (0) 316 / 81 55 500, F. 81 55 509, E-mail: exhibitions@camera-austria.at