

So wie die Dinge liegen

As matters stand

Exhibition

in the framework of „Scene: Schweiz“,
37. Internationale Kulturtage der Stadt Dortmund 2004 mit der Schweiz

1 May – 4 July 2004

PhoenixHalle, Dortmund

Artists

Stefan Altenburger

Cédric Bobay

etc. publications

(Nicolas Bourquin, Sven Ehmann, Krystian Woznicki)

Christoph Büchel

Fatma Charfi

collectif_fact

Eric Hattan

Andreas Hofer

Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler

Steeve Iuncker

Dagmar Keller / Martin Wittwer

Franticek Klossner

Chantal Michel

Frédéric Moser / Philippe Schwinger

Marco Poloni

Christian-Robert Tissot

and others

A project by

hardware medien kunst verein + medien_kunst_netz dortmund

in co-operation with

Pro Helvetia, Kulturbüro Stadt Dortmund,

Ministerium für Städtebau und Wohnen, Kultur und Sport des Landes NRW

curated by

Hans D. Christ, Iris Dressler

A project by

hardware medien kunst verein, Dortmund

In the framework of

Scene: Schweiz,

37. Internationale Kulturtag der Stadt Dortmund mit der Schweiz

Venue

PhoenixHalle (former Reserveteillager)
Hochofenstraße / Corner Rombergstraße
Dortmund-Hörde

Press / Information

hardware medien kunst verein

T/F: +49 (0)231 - 88 20 240

post@hardware-projekte.de, www.hardware-projekte.de

Press Conferenc: Friday, 30 April, 11 am

Opening: Saturday, 1 May, 7 pm

Guided tour with artists: Sunday, 2 Mai, 1 pm

Time: 1 May – 4 July 2004

Tue + Thu - Sun: 11 am - 8 pm; Wed: 11 am - 5 pm

Film and Lecture Programme: 4 - 6 June 2004

Programme Electronic Pop Music

7, 14, 21, 28 May

Organizor

medien_kunst_netz dortmund

> hardware medien kunst verein > Museum am Ostwall > Kulturbüro Stadt Dortmund

> Universität Dortmund

in Co-operation with

dortmund-project + LEG

Curated by

Iris Dressler, Hans D. Christ (exhibition)

Katrin Mundt (film and lecture programme)

Partner

Programme Electronic Pop Music: genesungswerk, sternschaltung, mex, Pro Helvetia

Supported by

Kulturbüro Stadt Dortmund

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Introduction

hardware medien kunst verein will be presenting the exhibition **“So wie die Dinge liegen/ As Matters Stand”** from **1 May to 4 July**; the exhibition was conceived by Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler as part of “Scene: Schweiz”, the 37th International Culture Days of Dortmund with Switzerland.

“So wie die Dinge liegen” comprises works of photography and video from some twenty Swiss artists, all of whom explore the spatial concepts of the modern-day subject, i.e. its emplacement in the world, in a variety of different ways. The artists scrutinise constructs of national territories, urban models, architecture, and private interiors, along with the fictitious pictorial and illusory spaces of the self. The analyses focus on the self-images and ideologies reflected in these spaces. With the instruments of modern image technologies, the artists create their own, displaced concepts of space and spaces of narrative, within which things are never as they appear at first sight.

The exhibition is supplemented by a three-day **film and lecture programme** compiled by Katrin Mundt that will focus on the concepts and contradictions of national territories and identities from 4 to 6 June.

Parallel to the exhibition, the Dortmund based labels “genesungswerk”, “sternschaltung” and the “mex” association will be organising concerts and performances centred on **electronic pop music** on the four Fridays in May.

An exhibition **catalogue** is planned.

The **venue for the exhibition** is the new PhoenixHalle in Dortmund, that opened in October 2003 with the very successful exhibition “games. Computer games by artists”. The 2200 sq. m hall – and former spare parts warehouse – at the disused Phoenix West blast furnace works has been used to showcase international media art projects since 2003. The extensive supporting programme for “So wie die Dinge liegen” will also take place here.

Concept

“As Things Stand” presents works exploring various concepts of space – and their “order of things”: the national and urban topographies of a society with global aspirations, its architectures and private interiors, but equally the pictorial and illusory spaces of the modern subject. It is about the – real and imaginary – environments that the self has created to entrench itself in the world and in which it is constantly reflecting its self-images, its narratives, its memory, its desire and its relationship to things.

Within these conditions of reflection of subject and space, the artists enact tilts, breaks and blind spots. To this end, they intervene in the linear narrative spaces and grammars of modern image media – photography, film, video, computer animation – in order to organise asymmetric conditions within these fields. They create open narratives that lead to a host of interpretations and conclusions that dislocate the homogeneity of the self and its environment, cause and effect, time and space. Within these pictorial and narrative spaces, things are never quite as they seem.

The strategies and fields of reference with which the artists approach the different concepts of space and narrative spaces of the individual differ greatly. The works deal with the 3D worlds of computer animations, the illusory spaces of cinema and stage, historical events, and fictitious stories. The focus is on scenes of private and public self-enactment, the places of identification of political representation, scenes of “crime”, the “corporate identity” of states, and the physical and psychological condition of the self.

Works (choice)

The video works “Promenade” by **Stefan Altenburger** and “Circus” by **collectif_fact** deal with urban concepts of space, as generated in the virtual worlds of three-dimensional computer animations. In both cases, the familiar parameters of space, order and orientation – used by the viewer to navigate around the virtual cities – are neutralised, thus displacing the illusion of linear movement.

Altenburger uses the settings of the computer game “Silent Hill” --- devoid of all characters – abandoning his lone hero in this environment. Aimlessly he moves as if along a Moebius strip, through the abandoned night-time city, forced to turn back by various obstacles, passing by the same places again and again.

The camera trip generated by **collectif_fact** through a virtual environment is based on digital photos of a real square in Geneva. The pictures were resolved into several layers in the computer and reorganised with a 3D program in such a way that the various image elements and layers now obey their own logic of motion. The viewer navigates through a fragmented urban landscape, within which all points of reference drift apart.

In different ways, **Andreas Hofer** and the artist duo **Dagmar Keller/Martin Wittwer** deconstruct the illusory spaces of photography and cinema. With the aid of his digitally manipulated architectural photos arranged in a tableau (“Flüchtige Räume” / fleeting spaces), Hofer enacts a hybrid, profoundly vexing “trompe l’œil” oscillating between real and engineered space, illusion and disillusion, inside and outside. In their video installation “MORE TO COME”, in contrast, Keller/Wittwer create the perfect illusion of a moving landscape, at the same time reversing its construction.

Most of the video and photo works shown at the exhibition enact open narrative spaces that operate with – but at the same time undermine – the classical narrative structures of the image media. Although they offer characters, situations, events and their causal connections – indeed setting them as “traps” – there is no way of interpreting any clear-cut, linear, self-contained story.

In the video installation “Detached Building” by **Teresa Hubbard/Alexander Birchler**, the camera travels to and fro in one constant movement along the inside and outside of a tin shed surrounded by a neglected garden. Inside the shed, the camera moves over empty beer bottles and various household effects, finally coming upon a group of teenage boys rehearsing a rock song. All of the young musicians are totally absorbed. Despite the warm light

immersing the shed, there is a dreary atmosphere. In the night-time scene outside, a teenage girl is throwing stones at a building in the background. As in other video works by Hubbard/Birchler, we see a “void” emerge at the thresholds between inside and outside, a visual pause, within which time and space become shifted, breaking apart the linearity of the narrative flow. On the camera’s “way back”, the girl has suddenly disappeared, and the shed too is empty. Then the loop starts from the beginning. In “Detached Building”, not only time and space are constantly drifting apart, these ruptures also reflect the inclusions and exclusions in gender relations.

The story developed by the artist duo **Frédéric Moser/Philippe Schwinger** in the video installation “Acting Facts” also unfolds primarily outside the pictorial space. The starting point is a historical event: the massacre perpetrated by US soldiers on hundreds of Vietnamese civilians in My Lai during the Vietnam war. On the basis of eye-witness reports, this incident is interpreted and acted out by an actor set against the neutral backdrop of a pine forest. In what is a powerful role play, he switches characters, acting the commander as well as his subordinates, unfolding the dramatic scene from various viewpoints in our minds. Another imaginary space inserts itself between the picture space and the viewer: Thanks to countless photographic and film documentaries and Hollywood movies, the Vietnam war has long become inscribed in the collective media memory.

“Capitulation Project”, another video installation by Moser/Schwinger, also deals with the My Lai massacre. In this case, the artists refer to a play that focused on the affair (among other things) in the nineteen-seventies: in the form of an open performance, in which the actors operated in constantly changing roles and the audience actively participated on stage. For their video installation, Moser/Schwinger have reconstructed excerpts from the play in a free interpretation. At different levels, they thwart various narrative spaces in “Capitulation Project”: from the real, historical scene of the events, to the stage and film and, finally, exhibition space – for here we see a stage element related to the film.

The scene of **Chantal Michel**’s photo series is the desolate spaces of a disused hotel into which the artist has forced an entry to enact herself in front of the camera. She is wearing long, classy clothes and elegant shoes, whose purity and intactness contrasts starkly with the setting. At the same time, the artist assumes unusual positions: she sits on a chair that is standing on a table, stands on a mantelpiece, or peeks out from under a sofa. In each scene, the artist appears in different coloured clothes that seem to resemble the colour of various objects set up nearby – as if in a subtle attempt at camouflage. In a double movement, the figure is assimilated – and at the same time repulsed – by her setting. For all her presence and entrenchment in the space, she remains an alien apparition. This unresolved relationship, in turn, invites us to indulge in a host of speculations on the events.

Commissioned by a well-known magazine, the artist and press photographer **Steeve Iunker** took photos of a number of situations during the Cannes film festival. The locations, figures and sceneries of his b/w pictures leave no doubt that this is a glamorous event. However, there are no stars. That is to say, glamour and fashionable lifestyle are not created by VIP self-enactment, but rather by “fringe figures” such as bodyguards, two aristocratic dogs or random passers-by.

In the cinematically arranged 64-frame series of photos “AKA (ALSO KNOWN AS)” by **Marco Poloni**, we follow a figure on its way around the various public spaces of an indeterminate western city. It behaves quite inconspicuously, so much so that it is some times hard to make out. Although we never really get to see the figure in its entirety, usually only its silhouette, we can clearly identify it as a male person from an oriental culture. For all its inconspicuousness and the scarcity of information we receive about it, we quickly perceive the person as a suspicious subject. One reason surely is the concealed viewing position of the camera. But above all, this “reading” is shaped by the subtle forms of psychological warfare that have entered the media since 9-11.

The identity of subject and space is enacted nowhere as consummately as in the image worlds of political marketing. Here, the setting of the respective protagonist serves the sole purpose of direct reflection of his values and claims to power. The two video works by **Christoph Büchel**, “An Oval Office Tour With President George W. Bush” and “La Suisse Existe”, are exemplary of these image strategies. In both cases we see found footage left unprocessed by the artist. One video is a White House production that shows George W. Bush in person taking us on a tour of the Oval Office. The architecture, furniture, paintings, sculptures and photographs that he wants to make more accessible to us constitute the matrix, as it were, of an ideologically charged story, at the beginning and end of which we see the president’s power and self-image. The second video is a recording of the televised New Year speech of the Swiss Federal President at the time, Adolf Ogi, at the turn of the millennium. He is standing outside a snow-covered tunnel in his home town – the Lötschbergtunnel, deeply symbolic, as he explains – taking it as an epitome of such Swiss virtues as love of one’s home and cosmopolitanism. However, this representative act of blending natural environment, technology, national awareness and political identity unintentionally falls apart.

In the installation and reader entitled „Swiss etc.“ – both developed in the context of the exhibition – **etc. publication** (Nicolas Bourquin, Sven Ehmann and Krystian Woznicki) focuses on the model of Switzerland. They explore Switzerland as a special economic zone in comparison with such states as Malaysia and Uruguay. They also reflect on the political, social and economic self-images of this Alpine state with regard to their contradictions.

In her slide projection, the Tunisian born artist **Fatma Charfi** who lives in Bern also drafts out a fractured relationship to “Switzerland” as a brand. The self-portrait shows the artist with a serious look on her face, veiled with black crepe. The crepe is covered with little black and red paper figures, “Abroucs”, as they are known; the red figures are wearing a white cross, i.e. representing the Swiss national flag.

Franticek Klossner conducts a drastic deformation of the self – on the immediate façade of the self, as it were: the face. His video installation “Mess up your mind” consists of eight projections depicting portraits of various people. Their faces have been filmed with a high-speed camera developed for military purposes. This camera takes in excess of 3000 pictures per second, so that the movements of the portraitees are considerably delayed, their faces distorted to the point of monstrosity.

In **Eric Hattan**’s video works, that he filmed on his countless walks or from a moving car, the view settles on totally unspectacular places, situations and events: they follow the rising moon, observe building sites, the traffic, or carelessly discarded objects carried off by the wind. Only detached from their everyday context do these “inessentials” obtain the status of something special, whose significance, however, remains unresolved.

Christian Robert-Tissot presents a neon work that focuses on an inner condition that is only too familiar to the modern subject, but which is hardly every associated with the “White Cube”, the enclave of rapt inward contemplation: the neon tubes form the word “stress”, blinking green at regular intervals.

Language (sentences and statements) is the domain of **Cédric Bobay**, who will be developing a new work for the exhibition that examines the setting of the exhibition site: the disused Phoenix West blast furnace works.