

## What is *For Us*, the video from Raphaela Vogel's installation of the same name, telling us?

It begins with a cat eating colorful printed paper. It is an advertisement, and the cat was filmed in Bangkok. It is an anti-exotic cat, for it subverts the expectation that one might find a Siamese cat in Thailand. Instead, it is a universal, skeptical, laconic street cat. It knows all about people and other animals. It doesn't put much stock in promises. Or does it? Instead of waiting—in vain, of course—for the advertisement to fulfill its promise and still the cat's hunger, it simply eats the ad. Which is, perhaps, the principle by which many live.

But if promises are all there is to eat, then what does the stadium choir mean when it demands or declares "For us!?" In a soccer stadium, fans carry out choreographed activities, sing choruses, and chant slogans—often in response to official proclamations made by the stadium's announcer. For example, when the names of the opposing team's players are enumerated, the chorus responds with stereotypical insults; when their own team is called, 20,000 people shout "soccer god" after each name. And when the new score is announced after a goal, the chorus roars, "For us!"

"For us" is a communist demand, a demand for expropriation of the expropriators, but also the opposite, the cry of a group that does not want to share. In soccer in particular, both of these interpretations merge. The camera, a flying drone, rises above Berlin's Kleistpark, an architectural ensemble reminiscent of a stadium. To the east are the Königskolonnaden, which were originally erected on Königsstrasse near Alexanderplatz in 1777. They were planned by Carl von Gontard and decorated with sculptures by Heinrich Bettkober, Friedrich Elias Mayer the Elder, Schulz von Potsdam, and Friedrich Elias Mayer the Younger. In 1910, the colonnades were moved to the entrance of what is now Kleistpark in Schöneberg. Originally a botanical garden, the area was to be opened to development after Schöneberg was incorporated into Berlin. Part of the garden was converted into a cycling track. Soon after its opening, however, it was the scene of the worst accident in the history of German cycling (a pace-maker's motorcycle went off the track and exploded among the spectators, killing nine people), after which the track was closed down again. The Königskolonnaden were now to form the entrance to a park. In 1930, Bruno Paul erected the famous "Kathreiner Hochhaus" to one side of them. The city had granted permission for the building's construction on the condition that a second builder would have to be found to erect another large building to the south of the colonnades. Plans for such a construction were indeed drawn up, though they were not realized until 1938. The building then became the administrative center for the Nazi Reichsautobahn projects.

To the south are the Medienhaus of the University of the Arts and the exhibition venue "Haus am Kleistpark," which is housed in what had originally been the botanical garden's administration and exhibition building. To the west stands the old Prussian courthouse. Today it is once again a district court, but after 1945 it served as the seat of the Allied Control Council and the seat of the Four Power Authority of the old (West) Berlin—among other things, the last Four Power Agreement was signed here in 1971. Finally, to the north is the Sophie Scholl School and the short side of the so-called Pallasium, also known as the "Sozialpalast" (Social Palace), which was built here in 1971 on top of an indestructible above-ground bunker. (It had originally been planned as the first part of a uniform development on the west side of Potsdamer Strasse, which was to extend to the Tiergarten. A cultural reappraisal of the old buildings that were to be destroyed for this purpose in the early 70ies ultimately halted those plans, however. Considered an eyesore as well as a crime hotspot, the Pallasium soon fell out of favor, though it is now beloved again by hipster Brutalism-enthusiasts). Across the street, the second part of this social housing complex stands on the site of the old Sportpalast, which also hosted countless bike races (known as the Six Day Races). It is also where Jimi

Hendrix and the *Mothers of Invention* played, the *Living Theatre* and Otto Muehl performed, and Goebbels called for total war.

The historically portentous ensemble is presented in the video *For Us* as a circle, as a parliament, as an agora. Within this framework, historical and current voices of the most diverse calibers speak to us through circular movements, bicycle races, an environment that is political and historical in the truest sense of the word, and demand for us something that seems deceptively safe. Though “us,” like every personal pronoun, is a shifter and can mean anyone and everyone, including Nazis, whose demagogues and autobahns operated from here—but also Jimi Hendrix. Though now the triumphantly swelling anthem of the BVB, the soccer club Borussia Dortmund, seems to bring clarity to those voices. But the camera rises above precisely those two buildings (the Kathreiner Hochhaus and the administration building) that until recently were used by BVG, Berlin’s public transport company, which, like BVB, uses a black-and-yellow logo—confusingly similar in every respect. BVG’s yellow and black flags flutter in the wind (or are they BVB’s?), and the exploration of the circular agora ends with a kiss between two people.

The next circle is the Mediterranean. This time, the round consists not of historical buildings and their history, which meet in the public space of the circular form, but animals that the artist meets in southern Europe and North Africa. The camel continues the kiss. Peacocks perform patiently. In the process, the 360-degree camera once more encapsulates the images in a perceptual tunnel. The invisible, merely conceivable or imaginable circle of the Mediterranean, the juxtaposition of north and south, of visibility and impenetrability, exhibitionism (of the peacocks) and opacity (of the camels) is now joined by another circle, the circular section of an image, almost a dramatization of subjectivity and its imprisonment in an individual perspective. At the same time, this subjective attitude looks at the reciprocal gaze of the Mediterranean animals. And this is multiplied quite considerably in the case of the peacocks, which, as is known, have more than one pair of eyes. Here, gazes of neighboring settlements and life forms meet, which, due to the great separations as structural moments of a world globalized only in an economic sense, have become strangers or even enemies to each other around the Mediterranean. Which has itself become the setting for a flow of refugees that the northern side confronts with merciless surveillance—with perspectives that could easily come from drones.

During this lengthy Mediterranean meditation, the musical aspect abandons anything demanding, moving from a Schubert paraphrase—overlaid with lyrics by a hurt and withdrawn ex-boyfriend—through a keyboard improvisation in the style of 70s kraut- and prog-rock, only to regain momentum towards its end. But before that end is reached, allegorical hints creep in between the images of the Mediterranean cradle of the so-called West (“Hellas”), Godard’s cinematic Mediterranean voyages (“*Film Socialisme*,” shot on the *Costa Concordia*, which sank spectacularly shortly afterwards), and the current struggles against the Frontex regime, while allusions to the sound sensitivity of so-called ASMR soundtracks are made and integrated into the music. There follows a return to the initial theme, as is always the case after lengthy prog-rock improvisations—but only on the musical level. Visually we now see how the Mediterranean Sea was created, by discharge from above—someone peed it.

The open space of the park (which was put to all manner of uses before contributing, through the arrangement of buildings around it, to allowing something like a sense of commonality, an “us” to emerge—in constitutive contention) and the irrigated desert (from which the Mediterranean emerges) are centers and therefore media of connection and separation. To look is always to be looked at, “us” includes and excludes. Kissing, peeing, flying and surf overcome the separations, free territories do not want to be filled. But they can only remain free so long as their emptiness is confronted with form. No animal is illegal.

Rollo Du Chateau