

Brice Dellsperger

Jalousies

26 May – 25 August 2024

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Brice Dellsperger's video works are informed by his love of cinema, which he uses as material to manipulate, reinterpret, recreate and subvert. He plays with artificialities, imperfections, disturbances, loops and doppelgänger to undermine cinematographic conventions and upset the relationships between author and viewer, subject and object, desire and portrayal, film and montage.

When the French artist began his 40-part short-film series *Body Double* in 1995, the artistic appropriation and reinterpretation of journalistic and moving images was a much-discussed strategy for reflecting on media images and their technical reproducibility. At this time Brice Dellsperger started to use re-enactment as an artistic means, recreating particular scenes in order to play with identities and relationships. In the *Body Double* series which mostly takes its source material from 1970s and 80s thrillers, he uses this method to bring in a queer perspective, to experience and reinterpret the action with his own body (or particular bodies from his artistic milieu) and to analyse the narrative shifts that originate from bodies as signifiers. Brice Dellsperger's appropriation of narrative cinematic forms through meticulous reconstruction also intersects with the idea of queer re-enactment as a gesture of empowerment, which should be read as both humorous and resistive: embodiment as disclosure of the patriarchal logic of Hollywood narratives, a queer evasion of normative logics and institutional certainties in favour of a camp, underground, often low-budget aesthetic in the tradition of queer filmmakers such as John Waters (b.1946), Jack Smith (1932–1989) or Kenneth Anger (1927–2023). The theme of the doppelgänger or the apparently alike has run through Dellsperger's videos from the start: double roles, doublings

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of real and image space, reflections, double casting and ghost images – onto which doubt is cast, through deliberate displacement, as to the doubling and the apparent identity of identities.

The exhibition *Jalousies* (in the French double meaning of shutter and jealousy) presents two newly commissioned video works alongside earlier works by the artist.

Eye Bags (1995) is in a sense Dellsperger's first *Body Double* video work, based on a scene in Brian de Palma's equally named thriller *Body Double* (1984) in which the male protagonist observes and follows a woman during her shopping. Shot from two cameras hidden in handbags, the two channel video work documents a duo drag performance by the artist and his friend Valérie Cachat at Nice Étoile, a Mall in the French city of Nice.

Retrospectively, the video work can also be read as a historical document giving a sense for social changes in reaction to drag and the 30 years span covered by Brice Dellsperger's work from its early beginnings up until today.

Body Double 39 (2024) was shot in the exhibition space of Dortmunder Kunstverein in December 2023, and can now be seen as large three-channel video installation. The 3 x 4 minute sequence alludes to David Cronenberg's psychological thriller *Dead Ringers* (1988): The twin brothers Elliot and Beverly (Jeremy Irons in a double role in the original) work as gynaecologists in a fertility clinic in Toronto. Despite their very different temperaments, they regularly exchange roles both professionally and romantically. In *Body Double 39*, the twins' fragile balance is endangered and develops into a drama through the appearance of Cary. In Dellsperger's interpretation, the brothers act with mirror masks (Alessandro de Marinis, Brice Dellsperger) while the role of Cary is enacted by three different performers on each of the three screens (Jean Biche, Francois Chaignaud, GinGin Mezzanotte). The video installation is a many-faceted interweaving of real space and image space, while the three changing protagonists enable a structural analysis of the scene and relationship dynamics through slight differences in their portrayal and a variety of three different edits. *Body Double 39* stages the scene like a silent movie with subtitles only, changing the soundtrack into *Seeland* (1975) by the Krautrock band NEU! which acoustically inhabits the spatial installation.

Body Double 40 (2024) originates in a scene from Brian de

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Palma's mystery thriller *Blow Out* (1981). The original conversation between Jack (John Travolta) and Sally (Nancy Allen) is reenacted by the artist himself – a homage to Brice Dellsperger's early *Body Double* films, in which he was often performing all roles himself. His transformative take on this scene is to represent both figures as female, turning the conversation about make-up into a talk between girlfriends. This change produces an equality between the two figures which is lacking in the heteronormative gender tension of the original scene, but on the other hand lays bear an imbalance of power with a more nuanced psychological depth.

The exhibition is framed by a selection of Dellsperger's **gouache paintings** (2017-2023, courtesy Air de Paris). They show scenes from Hollywood films, pop culture and music videos: Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, trans performer Venus Xtravaganza or the museum scene from Brian de Palma's *Dressed to Kill*. They illustrate the influences within which Dellsperger's work operates, and to which he gives a queer slant. As a visual frame of reference they complement the exhibition *Jalousies* and its particular jamming of cinematic shutters.

Text and Curation by Rebekka Seubert

Brice Dellsperger was born in Cannes in 1972 and lives in Paris. His work has been exhibited internationally and is part of important museum collections such as the MoMA collection in New York, the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Götz Collection in Munich. The artist is represented by Air de Paris Gallery (FR). Jalousies is the artist's first comprehensive institutional solo exhibition in Germany.

Along the exhibition, Dortmunder Kunstverein has released the artist book *Brice Dellsperger – Body Double* (2024), designed by Jonas Herfurth (TenTen Team).

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