

**BONYLAB**  
**Elisa Diaferia & Juri Simoncini**

05.10.24 - 16.11.24  
Husslehof, Frankfurt Am Main

For their new solo show BONYLAB, the artist duo Juri Simoncini and Elisa Diaferia focus their research on the world of film production. Coming at it from an angle that favors the implicit, preliminary disciplines behind filmmaking, they consider the medium as a container of translation processes. From an inquiry approach that's therefore primarily linguistic, they look into the narrative, sensorial and transactional implications that regulate the relation between drawing, sound, written word and movement.

The movie is intended here, rather than a medium per se to make use of, as a structure, a framework to observe the tension points in the assembly line of worldbuilding, where linguistic negotiations are continuously entertained. Through the diversified and multidirectional processing of the same content, stories are fragmented into a suspended, anxious state of existence. This space, where the blind spots of communication emerge, is the object of this show.

Drawing freely from the classic sci-fi short story "The Preserving Machine" by Philip K. Dick, the duo developed an original script that constitutes the starting point of the whole project. Dick's text interestingly explores the role of music in culture, a promethean idea of hero, fascinating images of metamorphosis and themes of moral responsibility. Moreover, the story features a mysterious machine, a character in its own right, that is offered as a non specific, abstract presence, and nevertheless embodies the logic and moral functioning of the entire text. With this aspect raising questions about accessibility in the context of storytelling, the artists expanded on it, carrying on a long held interest in machinic imagery.

In their text, focusing on themes of guilt, transformation and sonic perception, the machine is treated as an acousmètre: it remains behind the threshold of a door and perceived just through the sound it emits and, visually, through the products of its activation.

Overall, the script combines the sci-fi, crime and musical genres, and the project represents a theatrical endeavor to create a landscape where a refracted spacial experience of the story is possible. In doing so, the artists expose and linger on the specificities of the movie apparatus. The division of work in a chain of tasks assigned to interdependent specialists in continuous dialogue, makes of film production a particularly choral machine, which calls for the creation of codes aimed at maximizing efficiency of communication between crews. These codes become an interesting area of survey, as even within a set of conventions they escape standardization, and shape themselves organically and in unique manners according to the sets of parties involved. An unstable grammatical window is created, one that holds the tensions within operatic pragmatism and abstract, poetic channeling; as singular graphic, written or oral forms of instruction take shape. It's a fluid space between intent and delivery, a workplace where communicative transactions are constantly necessary yet dependent on the volubility of arbitrary encoding choices.

Looking at these aspects, the artists have chosen to focus in the first place on the dialogue between recorded sound and drawing, intended as the main generative force behind the narrative tension in the show, questioning their possibilities of interaction once removed from a cinematic fruition. Taking up the roles of the "storyboard" and the "score", two pieces will then hold the center of the stage.

A drawing based installation, hanging from the ceiling, constitutes the visual representation of the story in the form of drawn sequences, highlighting the essential friction point of the storyboard medium. On one hand, the practical requirements of efficiency that it needs to meet are manifested in the form of notation systems and graphic devices aimed at conveying instructions and information in an assumed functionalist way. On the other, these very devices hold inescapable aesthetic peculiarities that put it in conversation with other forms of visual storytelling such as comic strips and graphic novels, while also revealing its implicit relationship with labor.

As a counterpart, a layered sound piece will regularly activate the scenic space of the show like a condensed, intermittent musical. Intended as the all-encompassing sonic component of the

story, this track is realized through a process of collecting ambient sound, recording scripted dialogue and producing original music, providing the listener with an horizontal landscaping that gives voice to the characters and their surroundings at the same time.

Mixing rap strategies, opera structures and Broadway tropes with cinematic Foley techniques, it results in a capricious and fragmented structure that proves elusive, shedding light on selected narrative moments while also remaining dependent on the potential live editing operated by the visitor.

Like the drawings, the tracks offer only a partial insight into the exact unraveling of the story, as the practice of worldbuilding itself is as much their object as it is the actual script.

The show is completed with movie and stage props retrieved from local production studios, to be manipulated into a larger sculptural context within which the story can come to be: a set where complexity and accessibility can coexist, where “simple elements” can amplify and at the same time specify the discourse. All across it, written word and moving image become limited resources and yet a hovering presence. With its final spatial resolution, then, the narration can investigate and reflect on the relationship between elements as voice and body, apparatus and diegesis, telling and showing, mythology and landscape.

Elisa Diaferia and Juri Simoncini are an Italian artist duo active between Germany and Italy. Their research, straddling sculpture and digital practices, is grounded on an interest in the limits and possibilities of language and storytelling. A logic of refraction and redistribution of information bits is the constructive principle for hyper-layered, clue-bearing installations that observe the potential of a critical mass to contain meaning. In their practice, a case of study is often ‘rewritten’ through an injective research approach, making of it a tool for fantasy and speculation, and allowing stories to become unstable. With a sculptural attitude to sound, and a musical one to form, they bridge languages with a focus on machinic imagery, as a revealing space for the phenomenological structure of things. Appropriating codes and communicative formats, they explore the way that cosmologies come to be, worlds are built and myths are born. Their work has been shown across Europe in Italy, Germany, The UK and Switzerland, including recent solo shows such as *The best night goggles ever*, at saasfee\*satellit, Frankfurt am Main. In 2024, as a duo, they’ve been awarded the Portikus Prize.