

Hall 1 (1st floor).

Keren Cytter.

Video-installation: "Repulsion", "Dreamtalk" and "Mfpig".

Curator: Octavio Zaya.

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© Octavio Zaya (Independent organiser and art critic, New York).

Whether it's about a writer who produces experimental shorts or films, or an artist who takes on the attributes that characterize cinema and television, Keren Cytter's work has awakened great international interest among museums, alternative centres and galleries, both because of the form and the content; because of the formulas and procedures she uses to interweave one with another, and the way in which she dissolves one into the other. Each of the three pieces that Keren Cytter presents in this first exhibition in Spain –*Repulsion*, *Dreamtalk* and *Mfpig*– brings us closer to the terms and parameters which her work has come to capture the attention of such prestigious and demanding artistic institutions.

Halfway between the styles, rules and aesthetics of the French Nouvelle Vague, the films of Dogma and video-art, Cytter's work passes through narratives that are indistinctly debated and resolved between documentary cinema, melodrama and sitcoms. From scripts by the same artist, we take part in an interpersonal display of relationships that centre on desire and memories, sex and love, cruelty and fear, envy, hate and jealousy. Almost a display of curiosities centring on identity, consciousness, and character; this microcosm of contradictions favours the tragic and comical, the superficial and profound, the subtlety and the banality of the everyday and the indifference and the yearning. "The humour comes out of embarrassment and the serious parts come out of stress," says Cytter. But the artist doesn't control either. In any case, what she proposes is to provide the work a stable structure, that it has some sense, whatever it may be.

That structure and this sense always support the script, which Keren Cytter projects in scenes that correspond with what is being called kitchen sink aesthetic, homemade aesthetic. To put it another way, the intersubjective representation of the social relationships and realities she presents us always develop from a constant textual or cinematic challenge, which consider reality and fiction as interchangeable elements of experimentation, between the imperfection of reality which she presents and the almost amateur cinematic production on the one hand, and the textual and fictional systemization on the other. In any case, one is mistaken with the other and even the very script becomes part of the everyday scene of these almost homemade films. If on the one hand the situation seems artificial, on the other it supports a crude realism. The scenes, mostly in cheap flats, hardly decorated, of messy bedrooms or, in many cases, a kitchen, are simply sufficient for the action. But this contrasts with sophisticated plots and dialogues and even implausible situations that superimpose and contrast, sometimes they go in circle and even repeat, to illustrate incomprehension. Isolation

and distancing which many times is the origin of difficulties and misunderstandings in personal relationships. In one of her films, a character states that, “It was early that day, but late in the script”, and in another short, a girl says: “I think, I don’t know, I think it was my voice getting over from another scene”.

Between the comic and the strange, the artificial and the real, ***Dreamtalk (2005)*** presents us a couple and a friend in a strange structure of bound desire: The friend is in love with his friend’s girlfriend, but she is only interested in her boyfriend and the boyfriend is only interested in a girl that appears on a reality programme on television that sets out the dilemma of choosing between the *winner* and the *loser*. This short, filmed entirely in a kitchen –as with many of Cytter’s shorts– seems to be structured as if it were a soap opera episode. The dialogue seems intense, but sometimes it seems as if it were from memory, as if it were recited, and sometimes the characters seem to continue talking but they do not move their lips, as if they continued with their thoughts. They all talk to each other, but nobody seems to be listening. In the end, the voices interweave and come together to create a sort of intense unidentifiable and distant rhythm.

Mfpig (2006) focuses on the relationship between a group of friends, and does not take place in a single place but in several spaces: the artist studio, a bar, the mother’s house, a couple’s home, etc. The structure seems to take place from the point where the main character/artist’s syphilis is discovered, but it intertwines with the calm and apparently stable life of the couple with a child, whose husband has decided to commit suicide and leave the character/artist with his wife and child. The story seems as unexpected as the book that appears to be the main reason for the relationship between the couple and the main character, but the poetic plausibility of the relationship between them confuses us until it goes beyond that malleable barrier between reality and fiction.

Repulsion (2006) is made up by three shorts based on the homonymous film that Roman Polanski produced in 1965 (in Polanski’s legendary work, Catherine Deneuve, who plays the lead role, works in a London beauty salon and lives with her sister. While her sister is on holiday in Italy, Catherine kills a suitor and throws him into a bathtub full of water. The incident seems to distract her and she forgets to pay the rent. When the property owner appears to collect the rent and tries to sleep with her, she kills him as well and rolls him up in a carpet. When the sister returns she finds the two corpses and Catherine unconscious under the bed.) After seeing the Polanski film, Keren Cytter decided to “produce three shorts that focused on the main character and the two secondary characters. The interaction between the three characters would create tension that would lead to a cruel death at the end of each short. The character would change roles –the murderer of a film would be the victim in the second and the witness in the third, and vice versa–. This way the three shorts serve as three layers in a film without a plot. These shorts do not have any specific story, and the actions of the characters are always arbitrary.” As a group, the three shorts reflect feelings of repulsiveness, alienation and claustrophobia. For Cytter, all these feelings centre on the same character that slowly leads to the character’s end.

As in this masterful little work, Keren does not know what direction her work is headed in at this moment, nor if its development is linear. What does seem evident is that her works go in all directions, and although they seem like dead-end alleys, she has managed to create a very original work on reality and language.

Keren Cytter was born in Israel in 1977, she studied painting in the Avni de Tel- Aviv Institute, and worked as an art reporter at an Israeli newspaper before moving to Amsterdam in 2002 with a scholarship for Ateliers, where she undertook and developed her experimental video aesthetic. Her work has been exhibited in numerous museums, European institutions and biennial exhibitions. Among her individual exhibitions, those that stand out are those she has done in the Kunsthalle in Zurich; Frankfurter Kunstverein, in Frankfurt; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, in Berlin; and at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporánea in Bergamo, Italia. Her work has also participated in other exhibitions presented at the Stedelijk Museum, and the Appel in Amsterdam; at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, in Dublin, and at the biennials in Moscow, Lyon and Herzliya, Israel. Keren Cytter received the prestigious Balice Art Prize for her presentation at Art Statements in the 2006 edition of Art Basel. Cytter is a writer who has published two novels, *Yesterday's Sunset* and *The man who climbed up the stairs of life and found out they were cinema seats*.