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Keren Cytter
Video Art Manual, 2011
14'43" digital HD video, Edition: 5 + 2 AP

In "Video Art Manual" Keren Cytter undermines the relationship between actors, setting and camera as typical for her handling of the medium film. Thematically the approximately 15 minutes feature is about the history of video art. Instead of offering a historical analysis of the medium and its development in the last forty years Cytter focuses on the conditions of how contemporary video art will be produced, installed and consumed. By doing this her video work can literally be seen as a manual to her own work.

<http://vimeo.com/28508769>

2

Keren Cytter
Der Spiegel, 2007
4 min 30 sec, digital video, color/sound

Keren Cytter is a storyteller. Her work analyzes the construction of mainstream films, and the narrative devices and editing tricks they include. To this end, Cytter draws on numerous mediums, ranging from film noir to "mocumentaries" to pure cinéma vérité.

In Der Spiegel (The Mirror), her characters allude to the cinematic mechanism's tricks by commenting on the subtitles, or by greeting each other in a manner that can only be achieved in the editing process. Cytter's short stories combine commonplace events with mysterious and absurd elements, which create an equilibrium between comedy, tragedy and grotesque. Her films document her environment, apartment, friends and family, who operate in a kind of dream world populated with egocentric goals, deepseated frustration, personal ambitions and intimate desires. Cytter deconstructs traditional narrative structures by disrupting the compatibility between image and sound, thus turning attention to the cinematic medium itself. The surprising reality revealed by the narratives becomes increasingly more arbitrary.

<http://vimeo.com/26918700>

3

Keren Cytter
Untitled, 2009
16 min, digital video, color/sound

First Presented in „Making Worlds“ curated by Daniel Birnbaum at the Venice Biennale 2009 53rd International Art Exhibition. 7th June - 22nd November 2009.

The film Untitled (2009), produced for Venice Biennial, is based on the true story of a boy who shot the mistress of his father out of jealousy. For the making of the film, Cytter worked with both professional (Bernhard Schütz, Carolin Peters) and amateur actors. Inspired by the film Opening Night (1977) by John Cassavetes, Untitled was filmed in front of live audiences at the Hebbel Theatre in Berlin. The main character is a woman who is about to act on stage and at this very moment starts to think about her own life and her own identity—both the real and the "acted" one. In light of the theatre stage and the presence of an audience, the ambiguity of reality and fiction gains a particularly strong emphasis. By help of specific camera settings, Cytter focuses on the psychological moments of the story—the feelings of hatred, fear and anxiety are especially in high gear. In certain moments, the different perspectives of the camera create the impression as if we ourselves are moving with the actors. Sometimes, observation itself is shown to us quite plainly - particularly when the live audience becomes our mirror.

<http://vimeo.com/27144391>

5

Keren Cytter

The Hottest Day of the Year, 2010,
12'45", digital video, color/sound, Edition: 5 + 2AP

Keren Cytter's video *The Hottest Day of the Year* refers to the tradition of the romantic anthropological documentary. The artist was inspired by Chris Marker's monumental film *Sans Soleil* (1983) and the works by Vietnamese theoretician and filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha (*1952). In their documentaries and travel-reports, both directors were concerned with colonialism. With an essayistic style, they intermingle real and fictional elements with philosophical and sociological comments. Marker as well as Minh-ha investigate the medium of film itself - a self-referential point of view Keren Cytter also often employs.

The first part of Keren Cytter's "documentary" tells the story of the imaginary Anne-Marie Baptist, born 1917 in France. A male narrator - the grand-child of the main character, as we learn later on - recounts: During the Second World War, Anne-Marie escaped Paris and traveled to South Africa to work as a nurse. While on a search for a mythical place where the two (really existing) African tribes Khoikhoi and San had fought each other, Anne-Marie Baptist contracted Malaria and died in the year 1950. The male voice is sporadically exchanged with a female French-speaking narrator reciting from Anne-Marie's fictional travel journal. Cytter also displays old black and white photographs or links the invented story to real historical dates, thus providing the "documentary" with an atmosphere of authenticity.

After approximately 10 minutes, the second part of the film begins. Only now Cytter blends in the title of the video and the production company. A female soldier is supposed to be enregistered in an office of the Israel Defence Force. Tal Hefter's background music changes into a locally well-known song about Israel's landscape. The waiting soldier pages through a National Geographic Magazine; this can be understood as a linkage to the first part of the video. While one of the women suffers from a horrible migraine on this hottest day of the year, the second female soldier proceeds with the enregistration process of the aspirant. When asked for her profile - meaning an estimation of the physicality of the soldier between 21 and 97 - the aspirant answers "82", the year of the Lebanon war. Contrary to the laymen acting in the African part of the film, two trained actors and one director play the female soldiers. All of them are actually too old to be in the army.

The viewer is confused by the second part of the film, more so because it begins with the fade-in of the title in the middle of the video. This chapter is connected to the first one per association. The mythical location Anne-Marie Baptist searched for in Africa was cursed a long time ago: at this place, all actions lose their meaning. This is Cytter's justification for telling a completely different story at the end of the video.

With *The Hottest Day of the Year* the artist proves once again her great talent for narration as well as for cinematic refinement. By means of emphatic dialogs and monologs, Keren Cytter - who is not only the author of her own screen-plays but also of several novels - really does carry the viewer off into another world.

<http://vimeo.com/24776719>

9

Keren Cytter

Vengeance - Episode I, II and III, 2012
7 Episodes, 15 min approx. each, HD video, work in progress

In her new work, Keren Cytter, who recently moved to New York, comes to terms with her own currently changing life situation. In particular, she takes up the US TV-format of the

“daily soap” and processes classic themes of drama in personal relationships: love, envy, betrayal, and vengeance.

In contrast to older Cytter works such as *The Date Series* (2004), these new video episodes are less existential in nature and seem almost comical. What is also new about the exhibited videos is their elaborate production. While previous works were often characterized by an intimate interior, Cytter stages these new episodes in the rich settings of Staten Island and New Jersey. The scenes were filmed at 15 different places, including restaurants, hotels, parks, apartments, and streets. A total of 50 actors, most of them professionals, fulfill their social functions with blank faces. They provide a projection space for the beliefs and stereotypes of each viewer.

Cytter takes up the concept of “friendenemies”, which has become popular in American soaps: two women, previously friends, get caught up in a perfidious contest in their daily office life, turning them into bitter rivals. In this conflict, both women are like puppets; driven only by the pressure of competition and the obsession with perfection. Not only the characters seem interchangeable, the story also stays intentionally superficial to grant the viewer a low-threshold access into the events. As opposed to previous Cytter videos, the trivial dialogs of the series are not supplied with subtitles. The artist reviews impressions and clichés of the US American society, which have become part of our collective memory - not least by daily soaps such as *Dallas* or *The Denver Clan*. Cytter examines cut and dried patterns deeply rooted in pop-cultural visual memory and analyzes the influence of mass media on behavior patterns and prejudices in contemporary society.

Keren Cytter also reflects on the medium of “video” itself, by using the outdated method of rear projection. The change of scene by means of different images projected onto the rear wall of the performers’ space brings together several factors of Cytter’s oeuvre. Presenting theatrical moments in a stage-like setting can be regarded as one of the leading elements in the artist’s effort to mix reality and fiction. Sentences displayed on a canvas behind the actors seem like comments on scenes from silent-movies. The nostalgic slowness of the images is accompanied by Steve Kaufmann’s soundtrack. With chopped-off, slightly dis-harmonious piano chords and the driving sound of chimes, the experienced jazz musician creates a feeling of tension. At the same time, improvised melodious saxophone music conjures up the atmosphere of a dimly lit New York bar. By creating references between the fragmented scenes of the videos, Keren Cytter achieves an inner connection and lets the viewer hope for a sequel.

<https://vimeo.com/49780410> (Episode1)

<https://vimeo.com/50132443> (Episode2)

<https://vimeo.com/50160887> (Episode3)