

Keren Cytter
Cross.Flowers.Rolox.

Throughout her prolific and expansive artistic practice—which spans the creation of videos, novels, and theatrical and dance productions—Keren Cytter considers the ways in which real life informs fiction and fiction seeps into reality. Known primarily for her experimental narrative videos featuring characters dramatically embroiled in complicated relationships, Cytter draws liberally from the history of film, theater, and literature, often specifically referencing classic works or particular genres. Cytter’s works, however, are uniquely her own in both form and content, characterized by a postmodern exhumation, investigation, and asynchronous assembly of cinematic tropes and inspired by current events, the artist’s own surroundings, and personal experiences.

Focusing her lens on divulging the seamless magic of mainstream cinema, Cytter deliberately highlights the artificiality of film’s conventions and exposes its patent constructedness. To those ends, she purposely takes a lo-fi, quasi-amateur approach by eschewing the studio in favor of shooting on location and employing nonprofessional actors who deliver their overly poetic and highly literary dialogue (all written by the artist) in a deadpan monotone and sometimes spoken directly into the camera. To further complicate her jumbled screenplay, she combines subtitles and voiceovers in different languages, detaches sounds from their corresponding images and actions, and inserts repetitions and aberrations. In this disoriented mix of plot, character, and narrative, Cytter uncovers how mainstream cinema has trained the viewer’s perception to rely on certain structures and nuances to convey content and establish time. By decomposing these elements and reassembling them asynchronously, Cytter throws everything off balance and reminds the viewer that he or she is always the key player in the consumption and interpretation of images, and specifically, in understanding her investigative artistic practice.

Cross.Flowers.Rolox. (2009) is mostly typical of Cytter’s signature approach, yet features some departures. The three-channel video work, a rarity for the artist, is a sequentially projected installation based on three unrelated uncanny incidents reported on the internet in early 2009: a woman calmly serves tea after being shot in the head twice, a man survives two jumps from a multi-story building, and a man is stabbed with a knife eleven times in five seconds on the street. Using a cast of trained actors (a recent departure) and set to a soundtrack composed by Thomas Myrmel and inspired by 1960s television crime dramas, the stories are fractured and reassembled into a surreal and poetic tale about relationships and emotional damage. Cytter charges the viewer with connecting, or perhaps concocting, the threads between the three separate storylines which are woven between projections, and therefore through time and space. These re-enacted events exist somewhere between documentary and fiction, similar to another hybrid form—the docu-drama, relying on the stylistic tendencies of both genres to deconstruct media clichés of violence and death and suggest the ever-present influence of media culture on our lives. Cytter’s is a particular brand of realism that allows for as much fantasy as it does critical reflection.

Keren Cytter was born in Tel Aviv, Israel in 1977. She studied at The Avni Institute in Tel Aviv and at de Ateliers in Amsterdam before moving to Berlin, where she currently lives. Cytter's work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at venues including the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Tate Modern Turbine Hall, London; X Initiative, New York; Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam; Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; and Kunsthalle Zürich. Her work has been included in such prestigious group exhibitions as *Making Worlds*, the 53rd Venice Biennale, Italy; *The Generational: Younger than Jesus*, New Museum, New York; and *Television Delivers People*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. This is her first solo presentation in the United States outside of New York and Los Angeles.

Caption:

Keren Cytter

Cross.Flowers.Rolex. (still), 2009

3-channel digital video installation with sound, 15 min. 11 sec.

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