

One Way Street - discussion at KX Gallery, Hamburg

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KX Gallery

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Hamburg, Germany

Sunday 16th December 2007

ONE WAY STREET - Public Discussion

To accompany the exhibition ONE WAY STREET, curated by Amanda Beech, Jaspar Joseph-Lester, and Matthew Poole, hosted by the KX Gallery, Hamburg, a gallery discussion was organised and introduced by KX Gallery Director Goesta Dierks.

The exhibition included video works by: Amanda Beech, Pierre Bismuth, Jaspar Joseph-Lester, and Roman Vasseur. The works were situated within an elaborate architectural structure that was woven through the architecture of the gallery.

For further information on the KX Gallery programme, please [click here](#).

{tab= Introduction by Matthew Poole}

Before we begin I would like to thank a number of individuals and organisations without whom this exhibition would not have been possible. These include, of course KX and its Director Goesta Dierks, the UK Arts & Humanities Research Council, Sheffield Hallam University, The University of Essex, and

University of the Arts London, all of which have contributed to the funding of this exhibition and the event today.

Behind me, scrolling through on the screen are some images of sculptures, designs, architectural installations and buildings, as well as some art works that have acted as points of reference for us in thinking about how we wanted the exhibition to operate.

The exhibition is part of a long-term research project, entitled "Curating Video" between Dr. Amanda Beech (Director of MA Critical Writing Curatorial Practice, Chelsea and Wimbledon Colleges of Art, UAL, London, UK), Dr. Jaspar Joseph-Lester (Leader of MA Contemporary Art Curating, Sheffield Hallam University, UK), and myself Matthew Poole (Director of MA Gallery Studies and Critical Curating, University of Essex, UK).

The project will continue with a symposium entitled "Curating Video" to be held in London at Chelsea College of Art & Design on February 22nd, 2008.

The title of the show takes its cue from Walter Benjamin's 1928 text of the same name.

Benjamin's text intermingles a series of disjointed narrative spaces, scenarios, theories and memories that effectively collapse the monumental, ideological space of architecture and the spectacle of cinema.

Architecture is now temporal and unfixed from time; a set of cinematic fictional encounters, and fleeting 'cinematic' images become dark spectral scenes that loom as monuments.

Within this world of phantasmagoria the site for experiencing what we determine to be 'reality' is constituted by violence, power and pleasure.

Benjamin – Arcades – open/closed inside/outside spaces – spaces of conflagrations of memory & action

Freidrich Kiesler: on the 1925 City in Space model:

"The spectator must be able to lose himself in an imaginary, endless space even though the screen implies the opposite".

3. KEY ISSUES:

- explores how particular video works take on the authority that we have understood to be the domain of architecture.
- in that they produce a sense of the common, the public and sociality.
- but also how they create and reconfigure public and communal space.

Taking these two related aspects as its foundation, the curation of this exhibition aims to think through video as a facet of architecture. To achieve this, the four video works are presented within specially designed structures of suspended screens that fragment the space of the gallery, both disrupting and directing views and movements through the space.

The Artworks:

The video works in the exhibition extend this experience of narrative and space through establishing themselves as 'real fictions'. They take on sensorial and forceful qualities, moving us to agreement, immersing us, and producing what we understand to be our commonality. As a total domain of experience, the exhibition draws upon the notions of cinematic space as an architectural field and explores how our social lives can be understood as a cinematic territory.

Amanda Beech's "State Line", 2007, filmed at the Cal Neva Lodge Lake Tahoe, infamous for its Mafioso and Kennedy family connections, embodies the violence of liberalist individualism, where mobile subjectivities articulate the force and the site of law.

Pierre Bismuth's "Respect the Dead" 2001-2002 consists of feature films edited so that the film sequences are cut immediately after the first death occurs on screen.

Jaspar Joseph-Lester's "Spirit" 2007, focuses on a small housing community in Dornach, Switzerland. The hub of the community is the Goeteaum, designed and built by Rudolph Steiner – 1908-1925. Through the video the relation between spaces of work, home and leisure are experienced through a single vernacular of unusual architectural forms.

Roman Vasseur's "Black Propaganda at Melancholy Ranch" reports and dramatises a remote event in a desert setting where a light plane breeches the uninhabited landscape and bombards the terrain with leaflets simultaneously reporting and threatening a language bomb.

Research Interests:

Before I hand over to Amanda and Jaspar, who will talk in more detail about some of the questions and issues that the theme of this exhibition proposes and explores, I wanted to just very briefly introduce some of these ideas, and to explain a little bit about the other elements of the larger research project we have been working on together for the past 3 years, which has included a previous exhibition, EPISODE, which toured to London, Leeds and Miami in 2006, and which has led us to this point with ONE WAY STREET.

We will be publishing a book that will document the whole project, from EPISODE to ONE WAY STREET, as well as containing critical essays, following the close of the tour of the exhibition.

This project has brought our individual research interests together, which have coalesced and developed through the three years that the project has been running for.

I'll let Amanda and Jaspar tell you about their research interests shortly.

My own research interests as a curator and lecturer include investigating the relationship between ethics, politics and aesthetics, and specifically questions relating to authorship and authenticity in the rhetoric and performativity of exhibitions. That is to look at ethical questions in discussions regarding the pleasure and persuasive force that exhibition displays are able to deliver.

These questions have, for me, particular focus on contemporary art production, where the exhibition paradigm is based on creating powerful experiences rather than operating as a hermeneutic mechanism, as opposed to the interpretative model of exhibition organisation in museums for instance.

So to put it simply, in my work as a curator, I am interested in looking at what exhibitions 'do', rather than what they 'mean'.

The core of the research project, and one of the central themes of this exhibition, and the EPISODE exhibition, has been to explore the significance of experiences of force and pleasure in lens-based images and architectural space.

We began with wanting to interrogate the nature of narrative as immanent to lens-based media, and to explore how architecture also delivers a similar experience of narrative. This narrative is one of piecing together disparate fragments of experience, which is analogous to the editing process of video and film-making.

Thus, as we describe in the press release, through the highly 'constructed' nature of both film/video and architectural space and the resultant experiential affect of both when fused, as they are here in ONE WAY STREET, we are interested in exploring a collapse of our categorising of the images as fact or fiction.

Rather than present a dialectical model that would aim to help define a distinction between these two qualities we have chosen to explore how these kinds of images and the highly fragmented architecture immerses us in what Walter Benjamin might term a state of ambivalence. That is ambi-valence [to be equally torn in two positive directions vigorously. In this case, in the Benjaminian sense, between distraction and criticality]. That is not to imply, by the use of the term 'ambivalence', any disinterest or uncertainty, but instead to explore our experiences of fact and fiction as coterminous, or coextensive – that is that they share the same scope, the same borders., and to investigate our investment in this. Thus you will see in the video works presented a range of filmic languages, ranging from the vernaculars of documentary realism to the dizzying extremes of MTV style fast-cut editing put to electronic music.

We have been interested in regarding these works as non-representational in the context of this exhibition. They deliver to us the force and pleasure of immersion as a state of experience, rather than proposing any content as symbolic or indexical sign.

It is in this way that we as the audience share the state of experience with the art works – the art works are experienced as action through sense perception. Therefore, you are enveloped [[literally] by the exhibition. Your movements around the gallery have been carefully considered, and as such the choreography of your presence within the exhibition is included in the exhibition's construction.

Thus, as you'll see again in the press release, we describe how the violence of these experience problematises, yet at the same time invigorates, questions of how to create or generate meaning – a fundamental question for constructive critiques of liberal democracy.