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engagé

document/aire

Francis Ford Coppola

Mulholland Drive

Lars von Trier

Claude Lanzmann

THE ESSAY AS ARTISTIC PRACTICE

Geneva University of Art and Design

Seminar
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* Their project could not be finalised and presented in this publication.

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The aim of this seminar was to question, with the students, the existence of cultural identities in the field of art; to what extent can we speak of cultural identities today? Are they geopolitical constructions, social structures or ethnic questions? To tackle these issues, we looked at artistic practices which use a different aesthetic language. We had to consider the following question: how is a cultural imaginary established?

To construct a practical working method appropriate for the essay and to map out an individual area of work for each student, we asked them to produce a semantic representation diagram in which they could place their cultural and artistic references. They were to set out these connections in a radial (non-linear) manner in order to develop a reflective approach to the logic through which they create associations. These cognitive mind maps were structured without formal constraints. The elements were presented intuitively, depending on the importance of each concept, and were joined together in a subjective way. The chosen form of the diagram makes it possible to configure the links between the different areas of work, references and interest. This graphic formulation was also employed to create a work process for the duration of the seminar entitled *The Essay as Artistic Practice.* Each diagram unites the most important points of the individual memory through words representing the different cultural and artistic references.

Developing an associative logic appropriate to models of thought, the organic structuring of ideas became a working tool for the creation of a specific artistic project. On the basis of their diagram, the students had to choose three main references to design a future work project.

In order to expand our consideration of the question of cultural identities, we chose as a starting point the form of the essay which, by definition, works on multiplicity in a fragmentary fashion. We also invited contributors whose field of work is associated with this type of process. To comprehend the structure of the essay, we studied the different areas in which the introspection of an individual can take shape, for example, in the social and political space or in artistic and film practices.

Coming from a literary context whose premises date back to the 16th century, through writers such as Michel de Montaigne, the essay has influenced the approach to the viewpoint in western culture, by also questioning the relationship to otherness. In describing their most intimate thoughts, authors demonstrate their relation to the world and, based on an understanding of what essentially constitutes it, they consequently form part of a given cultural context. In the contemporary artistic field, the video essay as defined by Ursula Biemann, relates documentary work and subjective and experimental expression, by ascribing equal importance to the informative dimension and to the aesthetic language. Through a self-reflexive

approach, the critical form of the essay examines the issues present in the social space, by revealing latent ideas and thoughts, as well as the tensions between fact and fiction.

In order to appreciate the characteristics of this contemporary field of art, we also invited artists and theorists who tackle such questions through their work. Valeria Wagner, who teaches Comparative Literature at the University of Geneva, studied the relationships between the ideological representation that underlies cultural unity and the place of the individual within a specific social context. Professor of sociology and media theory at the Offenbach am Main Academy of Art and Design, Marc Ries analysed the different forms and functions of interviews, both in the domain of sociology as well as in scientific investigation and artistic research. Professor in the Intermedia section of the Academy of Visual Arts in Leipzig, Alba D'Urbano considered representations of identity through questions linked to gender, social and cultural history and new technologies. Artist and theorist, Ursula Biemann presented the process of reflection in her artistic work, also considering the need for contemporary artists to establish a critical position with regard to the information provided on global geopolitical contexts in the media. Professor and coordinator of the art/media/ option of HEAD–Geneva, Frank Westermeyer presented the video work which he carries out in cooperation with Sylvie Boisseau, as well as the project displayed in the exhibition *Dislocación*.

Closely associating theoretical ideas and practical work processes, the seminar was organised into different periods, alternating group discussions and individual follow-up with each student. The students attended the lectures given by the different artists and theorists and then developed individual working methods with Ingrid Wildi Merino. The students thus constructed a project using different technical means in order to establish an individual means of expression. The present publication is based on the content of the lectures and on the work processes created by the students in the course of the seminar.

CULTURAL
IDENTITIES ?

This talk will begin with the fundamental references concerning culture and identity, critical discourses that are mainly rooted in cultural studies. Subsequently, the issues associated with the notion of cultural identity will be considered in detail by looking at some key moments in the history of philosophy and aesthetics. This will make it possible to highlight two central paradigms of the reception of works of art – contemplation and 'attention within inattention' – as well as the manner in which they establish or shift subjectivities[1].

Cultural identities : issues

Today, the idea of cultural identity is questionable and raises in turn a series of questions. The idea that identity could have ONE culture and that culture could have ONE identity clearly does not correspond to our contemporary experience. The notion of cultural identity even seems outdated in a historical context marked by migration, ethnic diversity, the delocalisation of cultural production (globalisation and commodification of culture), the proliferation of cultural codes, the multicultural composition of individual pasts and presents, the complex operations of commercial culture, etc. Yet this ideal of a correspondence between unified identity and culture continues to be invoked : this is why it is important to remember, on the one hand, that these notions have a history and, on the other, that this ideal has never been based on facts, at least not completely.

The idea of cultural identity is linked to a model of culture and identity derived from 19th century nationalisms which is largely obsolete today. This model presupposes the correlation between territory, language and culture and bases the notion of national identity on an ideal of cultural homogeneity which dissimulates the constituent heterogeneity of nations. As has often been pointed out, the 19th century nationalist views, which aimed to create a national imaginary of organic unity, 'hid' or 'compensated for' a whole series of new and deep divisions within this same imaginary and in the socio-political reality of Europe : industrial revolution, emergence of new social classes, lack of identification with power, Freud and the unconscious, Marx and the invisible forces of capitalism. With regard to these multiple divisions, culture is often seen as a tool : to educate and 'save' citizens from industrial barbarity or to sublimate impulses and 'humanise' workers, or on the contrary, to conceal and better serve the processes of exploitation and de-humanisation linked to the dominant economic system.

The state-nations employed – and still employ – identificatory strategies to compensate for inequalities and internal differences in order to create the impression of an organic, natural unity. This is why it is freely admitted today that national identity is a political construction that encourages identification between dissimilar elements and which relies particularly on culture to create stereotypes, myths and collective practices supposed to represent the key links between a people and their country.

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1 - This second part of the talk is not included here.

In this nationalist model, culture is understood in both its 'popular' and 'elitist' aspects. Popular culture includes, for example, folk dances, typical food, clothing, certain types of music, that are not linked to the humanist heritage; 'high culture' is represented by works of art that belong to a universal model. These two aspects of culture are complementary and evoke socio-economic formations that are distinct, but integrated or harmonised into a cultural identity supposed to unite a people over and above any differences and to distinguish it, notably, from other peoples and nations.

The 'cultural turning point' and cultural studies

In the 20th century, both identity and culture became pivotal but ambiguous categories of western thought, notably in the course of what has been called, by analogy to the 'linguistic turning point', the cultural turning point. Although, like all turning points, this was not connected to a single event and has no definite ending, a decisive moment occurred in England, at the University of Birmingham, associated with three people whose names are linked to humanist studies and, in particular, to literary studies : Richard Hoggart, who wrote *The Uses of Literacy,* where the techniques of literary analysis are applied to a new kind of work, that produced by and concerning the working class; Raymond Williams, with a literary and Marxist background, who wrote *Culture and Society,* a key work in cultural studies; and Edward P. Thompson, historian, who studied the working classes (notably writing *The Making of the English Working Class*)[2].

Generally, cultural studies begin by questioning the restricted meaning of 'culture' as in 'elitist culture, high culture' and by the assertion of the values, practices and social codes which circulate among the less 'well-read' social classes. The idea being that culture is not only that which is associated with the humanist, educated and 'aristocratic' heritage, but also includes all forms of the production and circulation of meaning through which a group ensures internal coherence, or still better, builds ties of solidarity, thus creating the 'shared world' of a community. The term culture thus finds itself 'anthropologised' and 'democratised'. By transferring it to a different social class, it is extended and comes to define, as it does today, all the practices and processes of the production of meanings and identifications.

When the semantic boundaries of the term 'culture' are extended, the way of viewing the functioning or the operations of culture also changes. Raymond Williams, in particular, has contested the 'utilitarist' vision of artistic production in two ways. Firstly, he proposes the inseparability and the mutual determination of the infra- and supra-structures – the economic basis of society, the system of production and the institutions and organisations which form part of culture and which are determined by a wider production context. That is, culture is no longer seen as the means to extend the

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2 - Additional information on these 'founding fathers' is given in the article by Armand Mattelart and Erik Neveu, "Cultural Studies' Stories : La domestication d'une pensée savage ?" (http : //www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/reso_0751-7971_1996_num_14_80_3799), consulted 13 August 2011.

domination of one class over another or as the way to salvation, but rather as all of the production and reproduction of meaning and significant processes, in constant interaction and mutual determination with other types of production and reproduction. The subjects and social groups here become the 'fields' or sites where material and symbolic systems of production and reproduction intersect.

This last point is important because it places the subject and subjectivity at the centre of cultural studies, on the same level as works of art or cultural objects. According to Raymond Williams, subjectivity – the way in which social, economic and political relationships are seen, produced and experienced – is formalised in 'structures of feeling', ways of 'feeling' and experiencing that are determined by a collective imaginary and its standards, but which at the same time have their own significant and productive potential. The idea here is that experience is not only the 'passive' result of the 'objective conditions of existence'; it is not 'determined' by these conditions alone, but also by the subjects themselves (in interaction).

The notion of culture therefore widens: it is no longer seen as the exclusive output of the social classes in power; it is no longer exclusively understood in terms of national heritage, and lastly, it is no longer mainly defined on the basis of objects and places of production, but also includes the processes of the subjective reception and appropriation of works and practices.

This extended notion of culture proved important for the beginning of gender studies and postcolonial studies. On one hand, it became apparent that culture underlies the construction of masculine and feminine genders, in which the structures of social domination through the control of reproduction, the social role attributed to men and women, etc., are played out and confirmed. On the other hand, the deconstruction of the Eurocentrism of the very notion of culture made it possible to understand how the structures of power and the domination inherited from colonialism are perpetuated.

It was notably Stuart Hall, a transitional figure in cultural studies, who introduced the issues of race, ethnicity and colonial history[3]. Hall distinguishes – and tries to surmount – two trends within cultural studies: the 'culturalist' and the 'structuralist' positions. The culturalist approach emphasises the creative potential of the subject in the production of meaning (meaning is not predetermined; anyone can transform and reassign it) and in its relationship to institutions. The structuralist approach, on the other hand, attributes the determining power to 'structures'; the subject is placed in a structurally and ideologically determined position, even to the very 'structures of feeling' that appear the most characteristic of and intimate to the individual.

3 - See, for example, *Identities and Cultures* by Stuart Hall.

However, the tension between these two paradigms only serves to highlight the fact that subjects are at the same time creative AND subject to constraints; that they always act within structures traversed by power relations. This tension, moreover, is not only 'external' to the subject, but is verified in its own constitution. With regard to this, Judith Butler, one of the major theorists of gender studies, argues in her work *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection* that, insofar as we are subjects, we are subject to power and it is this submission which gives us rights, recognition, identity and even freedom. This is why subjects 'think' themselves free but 'want' to be subjugated; and their liberty depends on their psychic submission to power. Subjectivity – the ways, structures and manners of interacting, feeling, seeing and producing meaning individually – is thus marked by this two-fold movement of dependence on and refusal of power.

To sum up, cultural studies consider the relationship between the 'subjective' and 'objective' instants of culture, its material and symbolic dimensions, as well as the relation between the structures, institutions and the subjectivity which direct the practices of social actors. In Rossanna Reguillo's view, cultural studies investigate the power within and of culture, of significant practices. On different levels, cultural practices are the expression and the action of the structural constraints of power, of the creative forces of the subject and of practices in which the material and the symbolic do not necessarily corroborate. Let us also add, by way of simplification, that in the domain of culture, the different ways and means of seeing the world are played out: versions of what is right, beautiful, normal, representative, etc. Played out in it above all is the possibility of differentiating the versions of the possible and the real from the discourse of the authorities in power or the 'flow' of power. Cultural production therefore does not only reproduce dogma; it is also the place where social imaginaries can be transformed, where the very structure of subjectivity can be affected.

Diagram labels (left page):

The Organ

Sleater Kinney

féminisme

gender

RIOT GRRRLS

Kathleen Hanna

Electrelane

Bikini Kill

Beth Dito

Le Tigre

The Gossip

Leipzig —— **Berlin**

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The Vibrators*

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Ray Cokes

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Bertolt Brecht

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LITTÉRATURE

APRÈS GUERRE

Ingeborg Bachmann

Max Frisch

Günter Grass

Homo Faber

Stiller

Nelly Sachs

Thomas Bernhard

Elfriede Jelinek

Alte Meister

Das Kalkwerk

Gehen

Auslöschung

Fritz Lang

Ulrich Seidl

Orson Welles

Michael Haneke

Luis Buñuel

CINÉMA

David Lynch

Lost Highway

Mulholland Drive

Stanley Kubrick

Festen

Francis Ford Coppola

Dogma 95

Lars von Trier

* Concerts

Right page:

"… we cannot repeat often enough how important it is to meticulously prepare for a job interview. Choosing the right material, being aware of your body language, mastering verbal and non-verbal communication… In short, you have to understand the multidimensionality of your image."*

*Students' Careers. National Recruitment Magazine

This is role play, but it is a serious game with an underlying existential necessity. There is the aim of pleasing the other, the aim of being selected. What is, therefore, the role of authenticity? And what is that played by performance? What we present of ourselves during such an interview includes not only the skills related to the post but also our ability to perform. In front of the camera, I have tried to be aware of my (multidimensional) image and to prepare myself for an interview. We all know our own shortcomings that we therefore try to avoid (not always successfully). The camera becomes a mirror. I look at myself, I control myself, I try, I fail…

Extracts from the video:

"This …this is my best shirt. I bought it specially for this. I've got one or two others…"

"How do we want to present ourselves? We want to be …serious, taken seriously…of course…and then as a rule think out things beforehand like: how to sit down…"

"Don't ever bite your nails… never – I read or heard it somewhere – never fold your arms, because that's a closed posture, or rather withdrawn…"

"And look the person straight in the eye. As much as you can … and that… that's not easy…"

"I mustn't forget to look them in the eye and not say "um" too many times. And after that…"

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ANNETT RAATZ
S'équiper pour briller à l'entretien d'embauche
(Preparing to shine at the job interview)
2011, video stills (looped), DV PAL, colour, 9'12"

The project *Band Names* dates back to 2007, when I began to compile a list of the names of music groups. These names were chosen for their strangeness, for their remoteness from the world of music. Since the 1960s, there has in fact been a certain tradition in the music industry to select a name for an artist as far removed as possible from the world of music. Since the 1980s, the image seems to be more important than the music in this industry. Communication obliges; groups sell themselves first through being seen in newspapers, magazines, videos and on the Internet.

The words chosen to make up the name of a group are therefore principally visual, sometimes even referring back to the particular musical style which inspires the group, with the trend since the mid-2000s being an eternal return to the great musical decades of the end of the 20th century. The search for timelessness or ultra-referential specificity characterise the two main tendencies for band names, just as they qualify their music.
In the first category, we can cite, for example: Health, Girl Names, Women, Houses, Happy Birthday, Social Studies, Our Daughter's Wedding, Thirteen at Midnight, A Place to Bury Strangers, Au Revoir Simone, Le Corps Mince de Françoise and Good Shoes.

In terms of specific references, there are all those of the neo 80s music revival at the end of the 2000s: Minitel Rose, Casiokids, Cassettes Kids, 80's Stallone and other, completely esoteric ones like Rolo Tomassi which refers to a character in the film *L.A. Confidential* by Curtis Hanson which came out in 1997, an adaptation of a novel by James Elroy.

I was inspired by this twofold relationship of timelessness and dated references, this quest for an image through words, to produce a video in which all of these names scroll by one by one, in a neo 80s aesthetic of an old video titler with only one typography available, combined with different coloured backgrounds. The names appear one after the other in a loop to form a sort of cyclic poem resembling the Exquisite Corpse. The text flickers like on an old, worn-out video cassette to illustrate this tension between text and image, between textual and audiovisual literacy, between two ways of structuring our relationship to reality. Before the text, now the image, and above, the music.

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JONATHAN GOLDSTEIN
Band Names
2011, vidéo, 6'

HOME VIDEO

A PLACE TO BURY STRANGERS

The talk by Valeria Wagner analysed how modern cultural representations have transformed and redefined the issues concerned with the construction of subjectivity through the combination of multiple approaches. On the basis of these questions, she then considered the place of art objects within cultures and specific political contexts. Among the recent technical possibilities of the modern world, the cinema has given rise to new issues concerning forms of reception and the relationship between attention and diversion. The opening up of the subject's awareness to superimposed levels of reality makes it possible to moves the focus onto peripheral situations. In the aim of considering these questions with regard to the essay genre, we will first define its formal characteristics in relation to specific works.

The etymology of the word 'essay' derives from '*exigere*' and '*exagere*', meaning 'to weigh', 'to try', 'to examine', that is, the analysis of a situation which also brings into play the progress of the thought which apprehends it. The essay does not intend to be the exhaustive study of a subject; the associations are free, transgressing certain formal standards. In literature, the written essay has been in existence since the 16th century. In cinema, the first uses of the word 'essay' date back to the 1920s, a term employed by filmmakers such as Sergueï Eisenstein. In the 1940s, Hans Richter, then in exile in Basle and about to be deported to Germany, wrote an essay entitled *Eine neue Form des Dokumentarfilms* (*The Film Essay, a new form of documentary film*). In this text, he describes how to convey thoughts and ideas. In contrast with the documentary film which presents facts and information, the essay seeks to define a singular and subjective area, articulating the complexity of thinking wrought with paradoxes, thus incorporating contradiction. These issues were updated in the 1960s by directors such as Jean-Luc Godard and Chris Marker who questioned the point of view from which to account for stratified reality, as well as the possibilities for making a formulation correspond to a practice. Through dialectical editing, the subjectivity of these filmmakers was shown from various angles, through the different roles simultaneously played out: witness, actor and chronicler. These divisions created the possibility of critical distance, produced by considering how to organise heterogeneous elements.

Putting a practice to the test

Proceeding from a lived experience, the essay brings a relation to the world into play. It implies the idea of an attempt, of a shifting approach. Fragmentary, the essay genre is defined as research whose body of knowledge is incomplete, a questioning in which that which is still uncertain or undetermined is examined. The very process of recording, the construction of the work and the singularity of a position are considered. The essay weaves a form of non-linear thinking between facts, memory and fiction. To maintain a critical distance, the position of the author of an essay is constantly

changing, as it is a question of analysing a commentary in the process of being produced. The practice of the essay is self-reflective, reconsidering a way of doing and its means of implementation.

An initial starting point to analyse what signifies a thought in action in parallel with the image in movement defined on the basis of the technical means available is given in Jean-Luc Godard's film entitled *Lettre à Freddy Buache*. *A propos d'un court-métrage sur la ville de Lausanne* (*Letter to Freddy Buache. Regarding a short film on the city of Lausanne*, 1982). This essay is presented in the form of a spoken letter to Freddy Buache, then Director of the Cinemathèque Suisse (Swiss Film Archive). At the same time as addressing him, the author also expresses his thoughts which structure the scenario of the film. On the basis of a commission from the city of Lausanne on the occasion of its 500th anniversary, the filmmaker develops an original approach to the city based on categories other than those usually employed by tourism promoters. At the same time as the film project is presented, its reception and in particular the reactions of the person commissioning it are expressed; the director is reproached for having made a film 'by' and not 'on'. The fact of being able to identify the person responsible for the formulation and to define the relationships between a subject and a cultural context raise a problem, bringing into question the idea of idealised representation. The conflict between these points of view as well as the co-existence of the times of doing and of seeing, ask the question of the status of what we see. This ambiguous and hybrid object describes the city on the basis of spatial markers (the top, the middle, the bottom), of a chromatic approach (green and blue city depending on the areas of land, water and sky and the grey of the urban concrete) and of formal criteria: colours, lines, light, thus producing a new image of the city: "It interests me to look at things a little scientifically, to try to find in all these crowd movements, some rhythm, the beginnings of fiction. Because the city, is fiction. The green, the sky, the forest, is the novel, water is the novel. That is the necessity of fiction."

Defining a position and identifying the person responsible for a formulation: the political issues of work process visibility

In her work since 1970, Martha Rosler has studied social and political questions. Before then, during the 1960s, she had exhibited in galleries, following her painting studies at the Brooklyn Museum Art School. However, the context of the Vietnam War gave rise to political movements with which she became involved, causing her to consider the importance of the occupation of public space.

Between 1971 and 1975, she studied at UC San Diego where feminist movements were developing. In her artistic work, she analyses everyday situations, expounding problems of identity associated with forms of oppression

and resistance. She seeks to reveal the traces of an invisible work process. By frequently placing herself in a learning situation, she demonstrates the systems of objectivation and the social and cultural constructions in which the individual is trapped.

Between 1974 and 1977, she made several videos concerned with the economic and cultural issues of the food chain and domestic space: *A Budding Gourmet* (1974), *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) and *Losing: A Conservation with the Parents* (1977). The popular style of cookery programmes was used as a model to express questions about the role of women in the public space and the activities attributed to them. *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) is an incantatory list of kitchen utensils presented in alphabetical order. Her staged gestures are a reinterpretation of certain methods proposed by the playwright Bertolt Brecht to de-familiarise an ordinary context. The aggressive dimension of kitchen tools is emphasised by a fork brandished menacingly in the air, a reaction linked to the violence of the instrumentalisation of women.

A Budding Gourmet (1974) shows refined choices in food linked to the education and cultural practices of a dominant social and economic class. The quality of the ingredients is not sufficient; you have to know how to cut, cook and associate the foods. While the narrative relates, against a background of classical music, how individuals are constructed through the development of their creativity, magazine images are contrasted with ones of contemporary events. At the same time, the artist appears seated at a table, in a sparse setting, with her face in shadow. The questions of weight also reflect the preoccupations of overabundance particular to the West.

Intertextuality

The essay also reconsiders the off-screen of history. In the video by Dan Graham entitled *Rock My Religion* (1984), the text is devised as a lecture read out by the artist with accompanying slides and music. His analysis of rock music links together Puritanism and the working classes' attempts at emancipation, the hippy movement and the disengagement which followed the political positioning of the 1960s, as well as the supposedly subversive forms of rock within the music industry. He observes changes in belief and superstitions since the end of the 18th century, starting with the founding of the Shaker religion, created in England by a woman worker called Ann Lee who believed in the strict equality of the sexes in the sight of God. The world of work, the status of women and the emergence of rock music are the central questions of this critical reflection. Through certain icons of rock (Jim Morrison, Bob Dylan, Patti Smith, etc.), the artist retraces the history of America. The contrast between the words of Ann Lee and those of the singer Patti Smith makes it possible to retrace

the genealogical sequences between the ritual dances and the processes of the mythification of a star, producing analogous forms of alienation in which popular beliefs are transformed into consumer products. Through editing which assembles (for its video part) collages of texts, extracts of films, performances and television archives, Dan Graham deconstructs the political, social and economic issues of the slogans of rock culture and of its industry.

In conclusion, the essay is a labyrinth of affiliations which redefine the relations between the screen and the off-screen, the visible and the invisible. Seeking to question the writing of history as carried out by the mass media, artists and filmmakers express, through editing, a different view on collective archives. This is also present in the work of Harun Farocki. Following his studies at the Deutscher Film- und Fersehakademie Berlin/ DFFB (German Film and Television Academy), he made several documentary films for television at the start of the 1970s. In his films of the 1980s, language holds a central place; Farocki then tackled the essay form, while still making films, producing theoretical and critical writing and teaching. He wrote and edited the magazine *Filmkritik* between 1974 and 1984. In his film essays, he considers authorless images, raising the question of identifying the person responsible for the formulation.

Schnittstelle (*Interface*, 1995) presents the workspace and the editing of images from different sources. The viewing and the arrangement of multiple confrontations problematise the relationship between a model and its reproduction, as well as the possibilities, through an experimental approach, of critically comprehending the representations of work as well as the censorship carried out by the news media.

Through becoming interested in the concept of history and our way of writing, preserving and transmitting it, I gradually connected with earlier research associated with the errors and chance introduced in and by scientific research, the things which remain hazy, undetermined, but that we can still apprehend objectively.

This initial work then moved onto the question of knowledge in general, our way of classifying and transmitting it. Different research into this theme made me turn towards the encyclopaedic practice, which is an historical approach to the organisation of knowledge, but which also has its own significant history. It is this practice that I wished to question, both methodologically and conceptually: technically through the method employed, resembling an absurd game of question and answer on an encyclopaedic practice, and conceptually by bringing it into our contemporary world and comparing it with the data accessible by Internet and particularly on Wikipedia.

I wanted to try to set up a dialogue between a meaningful historical approach and its reading through the uses of new technologies. Being translated into a video installation presenting a game of questions and answers in which the spectator navigates between two groups of three videos, the first linked to the encyclopaedia and the second to Wikipedia, where the questions and answers blend, are superimposed, this work constitutes a starting point that needs to be specified further in order to create a space in which the spectator can have increased access to this questioning and to the flaws that I have tried to exploit.

JOSEPH FAVRE
Untitled
2011, video installation

Having seen several performances of contemporary ballet, I became very interested in dance and its interpretations. I decided to photograph people in their daily occupations, their work or their hobbies and to seek movements which could refer back to dance and to the performances I had seen.

I photographed a masseur at work, alpinists climbing walls in a gym, workers carrying out their tasks and simply people in the street relaxing or just walking. However, it was only when selecting the photos of the climbers that I realised exactly what I wanted to capture. Their bodies were often in suspension, held by the rope attached to their partner lower down. The climbers relaxed their hands and legs, and after a break, continued their ascent. These pauses intrigued me, for they were not representative of the activity of climbing or of someone making an enormous effort. During these moments, I discovered the positions and contortions of the body which, from certain angles, reminded me almost of the paintings of Francis Bacon and of certain extravagant dance gestures.

For the project carried out during this seminar, photographs of these people performing their activities were taken and placed side by side. I wanted to create a composition with their movements and gestures. I therefore presented them in an elongated format to recreate the effect of dance and the continuity of a movement. I tried to select the people on the photos to bring out certain resemblances between them. This helps to view them as both unique and forming part of a fluid dance movement. I attempted to develop short narratives with each series of photographs and to compare the different activities to highlight similarities between the moments of rest.

MYKYTA KRYVOSHEIEV Untitled
2011, photographs

WE, YOU, THEY

Since Sylvie Boisseau and I first began working together, social identity has been at the centre of our artistic production and is, in our view, the only real one, in comparison with personal identity which pertains more to the novel. In 2005 and 2008 we created the video installations *Join a world of 150 Million French Speakers* and *Chinese is a plus* which present, in particular, affirmations of collective identity.

Even if our notion of identity is probably related to the fact that we work as a duo and that we come from two cross-border countries (France/Germany), we are convinced that the action that constitutes a community is more one of differentiation than of unification. Leibniz defines it in the following way: identical is that which is indiscernible. The process leading to the acquisition of an identity might be described as that issuing from a process of successive distinctions until the identity is attained. Identity is developed through differentiation; an identity is based precisely on its difference to another identity.

On the community level, it appears to us very difficult to emphasise only that which the members have in common or which is identical and to ignore the fact that any community first tries to differentiate itself from other communities in order to strengthen its identity. The expression of the *raison d'être* of a community is not sufficient in itself. Each community is based on its opposition to an exteriority. Our work examines the intention found in the description of self and of others, that is, the expected effect in relation to affirmations about oneself and others.

In *Chinese is a plus*, participants in a Mandarin language class in Stuttgart give us their image of China and their own affinity with China. These German people share with us their visions and experiences, along with children whose parents migrated to Germany. Although the film is not only about China and although all the people speak Chinese, the spectator learns more about each of the protagonists than about China. The imagined or confirmed cultural attributes thus represent a sort of exchange value that each one attempts to add to their credit.

Join a world of 150 Million French Speakers of 2005 presents the participants of the *Groupe du Mercredi*, a weekly meeting of French-speaking inhabitants of Chicago. The title, written like an invitation, is taken from the brochures of the *Alliance française*. The *Francophonie* movement promoted by General de Gaulle developed after the independence of the French colonies. However, where Francophonie is concerned, this part of history and the resulting power struggle are obscured. Instead, the existence of a community of 150 million people is affirmed. The video *Join a world of 150 Million French Speakers* transforms this rather hasty affirmation into a question, by allowing the faces to dialogue without the French language.

Sylvie Boisseau & Frank Westermeyer

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1 - Sylvie Boisseau was initially invited, but was unfortunately unavailable on the day of the lecture.

My works deal with the question of our perception of space and of time, of the relationship between these two notions. The question I asked myself was "Is it sometimes possible to differentiate between space and time?" There is another way of seeing time which is that of our experiences, whether physical or cultural. For example, in art, the cinema makes us lose our sense of time for the duration of the film and 'cinematic' time also influences our real time, that is, our time outside the cinema.

It is very easy to mislead our perception by playing with the forms of certain images because our brain wants to compose or recompose in order to understand the images that we see. By 'compose', I mean that the brain tries to arrange the images in a certain way in order to interpret and understand them. This subject has interested me for the past year. I found this theme by chance while carrying out editing tests for some video work. Moreover, it is clear that editing is a powerful means of disturbing our perception of space and time. For example, ellipsis leaves us in the dark as to the duration of a period of time.

In the series of photos realised for this seminar, each image represents in theory a frozen moment in time, whereas the use of the videographic format and framing makes us think of an action, of continuous time. The work plays on the brain's ability to concatenate images in sequences to imply continuous time.

SEONG JUN PARK
Untitled
2011, photographs

"When they lived at home, we didn't
see them very much, we heard
them a lot, the father shouted at
the children a lot, screamed even,
we heard them fighting a lot."

It's a story of a family.
"One day the Water Board knocked
on the door. They wanted to know where
the neighbours were. I told them
I hadn't seen them for months."

It's a story of abandonment.
"The trainers were outside, the toys
were outside, everything was outside
so I thought they'd end up coming
back."

It's an everyday story.
"So the house is still theirs but we
don't know where they are. They've
disappeared off the face of the earth.
And I've still got the key."

It's a story.
The neighbour's, no doubt.

PAULINE CAZORLA
Disappearing act
2010 – 2011, video stills, project in progress

The interview as a basic cultural technique

This communication will focus on the origins, development and current forms of interview practices, as well as their potential as communicative and aesthetic formats. The format basically denotes structures of exchange through question and answer, with respect to the importance of the interview as the gaining, distribution and control of knowledge, as well as for its inherent interactive and intersubjective powers. The hypothesis to be explored is that underlying this structure are three forces that affect the process of the will and the desire to know, the acquisition and characteristics of knowledge and the (re-) presentation of knowledge. The issues to be identified are the forces for truth, judgement, and curiosity. The corresponding interviewing processes and methods are: maieutics, eristics, and dialectics.

Structure, process, and distribution / (re-)presentation are completed by another component, the audience, around which the interview is centred. Depending on the form, process, method and aim, we hypothetically distinguish five types of interviews: the dialogue, the exploration, the investigation, the discourse and the document/monument.

Structure, method and intersubjectivity go hand-in-hand with certain aesthetic qualities, which jointly create the format. The actual interview, although its prominent phenomenon is language, has diverse sensual forms of which certainly the audible voice plays a crucial role. Above all, it is complemented by visual impressions of face and body-language, as well as tactile phenomena. Thus, analysis of the situated interview has to pay attention to the body positions – of both subjects and objects alike – and therefore to spatiality.

• Fundamental to the outlining of the maieutic impulse are exemplary Platonic dialogues. The dialogues of *Kratylos* and *Theaitetos* meet the linguistic, gnostic, and methodical character of the dialogical interview. Leading questions for the analysis will examine the pragmatics of language and signs, the role of intersubjectivity of knowledge as process (dialogue with the characteristics of elenktik, aporia, and protreptik) and the emergence of insight (gnosis), the linguistic, visual, vocal and corporeal formatting of knowledge, as well as the role and service of language both as it is subject to the dialogue and as it is performed in the written dialogue.

• As for eristics, the historical disputes of Augustine against the Manicheans will be exemplary for the explicit policies of the interview leading directly to conviction and confession. The early anti-Manichean documents and their intermediate status of literature and historical document give a lively example of the power of speech and the role-models of the interview. Eristics consciously uses the power inherent in language. By outlining the

dissentious dialectic and sceptic elements which lead to victory over the other, a model can be established for the analysis of current types of eristic interviews, such as inquisition.

• As for the dialectic technique and its perpetual querying of things, that opens up the horizon of the methodical and theoretical interview, we follow Hans Blumenberg's study and the suspense between curiosity, the will to know and the concern for salvation that, according to Blumenberg, is the cradle of modern conversational techniques.

We can distinguish five types of interviews:

• First, the dialogical principle follows the method of doxa and expertise which are afterwards brought into circulation and exchange. We have to ask how far this knowledge is object-oriented, what role the intersubjective performance plays through which partial knowledge is exchanged, transformed and brought into circulation. Further, to what extent does the dialogue theoretically and practically aim at agreement on and establishment of knowledge and erudition? Moreover, by which communicative strategies can the dialogue represent truth and reality? Additionally, one could ask whether the dialogic practice enhances the constructiveness of reality? Do objectivity/truth and reality completely become the product of intersubjective agreement?

• Secondly, exploration based on curiosity became the main instrument of empirically-oriented science. Explorative methods claim to be founded on sources, data and facts, to work by induction and experiment, to produce objectivity and to be focused on the object, quite often (though not exclusively) a 'mute object' (as, for example, in the sciences). The nature of the indexes and traces that the explorative interview follows, as well as the ones it leaves behind, have to be considered with respect to their phenomenality, function, and structure. We plan to look into the process by which these principles and structures are transferred into semiotic systems, as well as the process by which curiosity is transformed into questions to guarantee the readability and visibility of first-hand obscure and submerged phenomena. What roles do experience, hypotheses, and the material reality of the interview play and how do they interact? How is the knowledge presented and distributed and to what extent are question and answer, experiment, error and repetition preserved and perpetuated? In what way are the methodical objectivity and the strive for insight gained from experience and judgement co-productive?
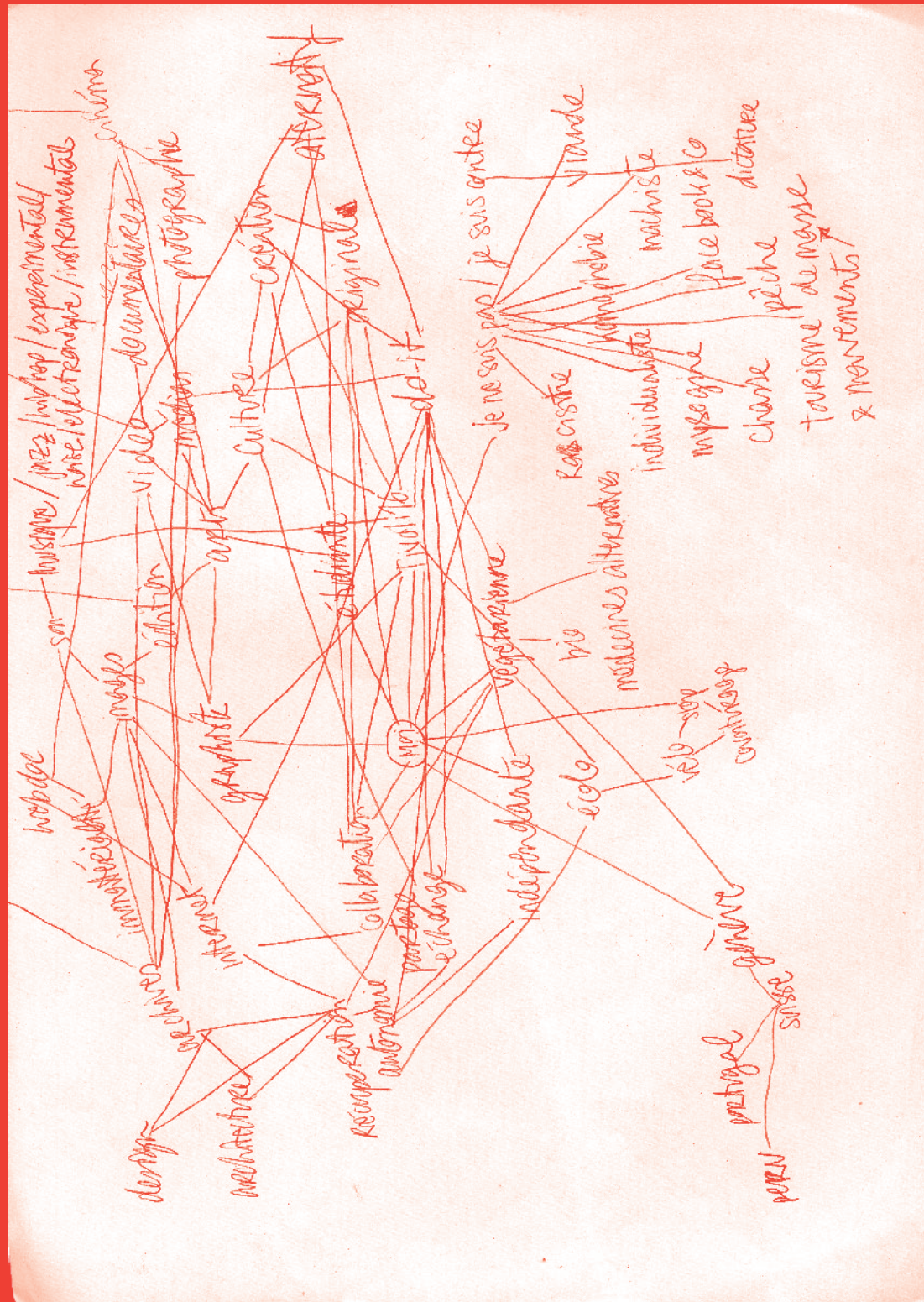
• Thirdly, the investigation comes in the form of constructivism and interrogation. The investigative interview is driven by the revealing of hidden, veiled and concealed knowledge. On the one hand, investigation strives to uncover structures, to access covert information, to enlighten the

public about invisible relations and to lead to rational judgement (cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*). We have to ask whether the investigative interview is consciously constructing correlations in order to meet its thetic character? An example of this is interrogation leading to an investigative judgement, even to avowal.

• Furthermore, the discourse that shapes communication (with regard to Jürgen Habermas) and appears to be the 'unconstrained constraint of better reason' emerges as 'the motif of the cooperative quest for truth' against the background of the ideal 'intersubjective position of speech' (cf. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action,* 1981). With reference to Michel Foucault, the interview can also be understood as being 'the apparatus producing discourse' (*The History of Sexuality I. The Will to Knowledge*).

Although the interview is actually a technique for the construction and representation of power relations, could it not be that it also articulates an eminent desire to participate in the production of these discursive processes? Above all, the question is whether the format of the portfolio, the auto-interview, has not become more than a technique of the self, whether it could have become the one central, stabilizing power within 'the cognitive / emotional capitalism'?

• Lastly, in the course of oral history, the interview has become an archive or monument. When interviewing 'witnesses' or actors, we have to account for those elements of a 'positive architecture of knowledge' (Foucault), of an awareness of history which does not rely solely on traces or documents of events and is not only looking for a superordinate truth of these events, but focuses primarily on individuals who are able to narrate their own *(hi-)story* within the universal history. These individuals gain a voice via the interview and historical 'facts' are splintered and multiplied by the multi-perspective individual voices.

In my photographic work, I seek only
to capture an ephemeral moment of
absence. The constraint of the silver
film prevents me from taking photo
after photo and I have to be more
attentive to the subject in order to
find the indefinable expression
and the desired ephemeral moment.
I wait until my models are unaware of
the lens to photograph them and
subtly allow the spectator to enter
the world of portrait photography.

SONIA GARCÊS
Untitled
2010 - 2011, photographs, project in progress

I chose to work on the Tupperware
company within the framework
of the seminar and, more precisely,
on the meetings organised to promote
and sell Tupperware products.
I focused on people, women in
particular, but also on the system
and operating methods peculiar to this
company. This method of functioning,
created in order to attract both
sellers and clients, used very
precise codes as well as rituals.
These created social links within the
company and were signs of belonging.
Thus, by participating in the *séances*,
and by repeating the gestures, the
individual became part of a group,
recognising and being recognised
by others. My video images show these
distinctive signs, these rituals
and how the women participated.
Tupperware conveyed an image with
which these women could identify.
I also questioned this image of women
and the family and the connotations
of identity that it represents.

NORA TEYLOUNI
Untitled
2010 – 2011, video still, project in progress

I begin my lecture with an explanation of the compact and composite word I decided to use as title: the strange word 'Whoami'. Whoami is a unix (operative system) computer command that offers the users within the system, information about his or her identity in case he/she forgot in which identity he/she logged into the system. Who am I? An answer to this question might be furnished by the reading of a book I published with the same title, which explores the question of identity in contemporary society in reference to my artistic work.

The definition of identity in Wikipedia is the following: "In philosophy, identity, from Latin: *identitas* ('sameness') is the exact sameness of things. According to Leibniz's law, two things sharing every attribute are not only similar, but are the same thing. The concept of sameness has given rise to the general concept of identity, as in *personal identity* and *social identity*."[1]

If we delve into the research we can discover more about identity and about the role that culture plays in shaping it: "There are modern questions of culture that are transferred into questions of identity. [...] In recent decades, a new form of identification has emerged. This new form of identification breaks down the understanding of the individual as a coherent whole subject to a collection of various cultural identifiers."[2] The cultural identifiers that define the complex personality of each individual include a variety of aspects: gender, race, history, nationality, language, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, etc. These physical, geographical and social factors that formed our character in the course of our life are considered in these theories so decisive that they define them as different identities; they speak of 'multiple identity'.

During the last decades in west European countries and in other regions of the world, we can observe the phenomena of a massive movement of population and migration, with an economical or political background, that determine in the host nations a series of connected problems related to the clash of different cultures. Some critics argue that the preservation of the different cultural identities, based upon difference, is a divisive force in society. There is a spectrum of possibilities as to how the different cultural identities can meet, different degrees of participation and integration in the host society that in the course of the time generate new 'hybrid identities'. I take part personally in this phenomena and consider my actual identity as an example of a hybrid personality, which ever since I experienced my first cultural shock when I relocated to Germany in the 80s, has evolved into something else, becoming a cultural identity, that is familiar and alien at the same time to the original culture and to that of the hosts.

Born in Tivoli in 1955, I studied Philosophy at the University in Rome in the 70s. Parallel to my studies I was involved in the political young generation movements, which were active in the country at that time, especially in the feminist movement and in the field of new independent radio. In Italy before 1976, radio and television were under state monopoly; the liberalization of the frequencies gave the green light for the creation of a large number of small radio and television channels throughout the country and led to an enormous transformation. On one hand, it permitted alternative political groups to experiment with media, to develop other forms of cultural interchange, but on the other hand, it generated the possibility for some financial entities interested in the economic use of media, like those led by Berlusconi, to create an incredible imperial power in the communications field, which in the course of time changed the face of the country in a very negative way. I worked for a period with a group of women on a weekly feminist programme called *Sagoma Deformata* on the independent *Radio Gulliver*. The interest I developed in the phenomena concerned with audio and video perception and the collective creative experiences I made at that time led me to take the decision to study art, besides the fact that I began with other artists to realize some intermedia performances and actions in public spaces. Some years later, to further my knowledge of media communication, I decided to move to Berlin and study Visual Communication at the University of the Arts.

In a foreign country with a new incomprehensible language, I began to reflect on culture, language and writing and I developed some artworks around these themes. When I started to study visual communication, I began to compare the relationship between writing and new media, I had the impression that 'writing' was losing its function as a principal medium to transmit and to conserve human collective knowledge and that electronic / digital images and sounds were replacing it in this function. While researching the limits of the meaning of words, where they lose their signification and become signs, I carried out a project entitled *Prometeo* whose central part consists of a drawing sequence, based on the transformation of a sentence. The content of this text is an excerpt from the tragedy *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus. I chose the passage concerning the story of Io, a young woman, transformed into a cow by Hera as a punishment. The unceasing bites of a horsefly drive her to constant roaming, to an endless flight. In the story of Io, I saw a metaphor for my life, for women's lives. In a later work entitled *Berlin – Cultural Capital of Europe,* I transposed the focus of the reflection from the narrative textual description to the media representation of the female body and identity. The overwhelming force of media images, the sexual background information that is subliminally sent directly to our senses, and the use of images of the body to communicate impulses were the focal point of the project. In order to realize this work, I collected the third page of the Berlin tabloid *BZ* for an entire year, where a half-naked pin-up girl is shown every day; I set them in polyester and then mounted them on a folding screen and exhibited them at the Academy of Arts in 1989. Using photocopies of the originals, I then constructed the installation *Un Anno* with a video sculpture and 301 collages with portraits of the pin-ups.

1 - Article "Identity", http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Identity_(philosophy), consulted 13 August 2011.
2 - Article "Cultural identity", http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_identity, consulted 13 August 2011.

A portrait, or the two-dimensional representation of the face of a person, is often used for identification. The picture, which has been created in a moment, crystallizes, as forms change over the course of time, and takes shape in another matter. It may be made of pigments or glue-watercolour or silver bromide crystals, it may be static or composed of endlessly moving pixels, it may be projected on a screen or painted or engraved or printed on some material - the picture, associated with a number, a signature, and/or a code on a magnetic bar, seems to give proof of our existence. The apparent correspondence between the picture and the temporary coincidence of matter, actions, thoughts and signs, which we call 'ego', forms the foundation of our existence for a rather long time. The conviction to know our own identity and the identity of others would not be possible without the objectivity of the picture. 'I am representable, therefore I am'. *Touch me*, a work I developed later, is an interactive video/computer installation, a sort of magic mirror in which the picture reveals itself like a thin intangible skin. The attempt to grasp the identity of others by touching the picture sets off a process through which this image disappears and the viewers are confronted with their own picture. Visitors are welcomed by pictures of my video portrait, which are shown on the monitor. The camera takes shots of the visitors while they are looking at the pictures on the monitor. If they touch some parts of the face on the monitor, these parts dissolve, and within the portrait, the face of the viewer will become partly or fully visible. In this process, which is started by the viewers when they touch the screen, a bridge is created which forms a link between the two identities. As with an identity-kit, many non-existing and composed 'egos' are created in which the observing and the observed persons merge into one. In order to develop this artwork, I decided to use my own face, whereas in the project *Hautnah* realized in the mid-90s, I focused attention on the rest of my body and so opened up a new associative field of reflection. *Hautnah* or *The Artist's Skin* emphasizes the body's outermost border, the external shell: the skin that filters, regulates and sometimes determines the whole network of relationships and exchange with the outer world, defines the contours of the image that is reproduced on the other person's retina.

Playing with the thought of slipping out of my own skin for just a moment and offering it to someone else, brought me to this idea: to make a suit out of my own two-dimensional picture, which offers another person the opportunity to go through the world hidden within the '*Artist's Skin*'. In order to make clothing of my own skin, I put photographs of my body into the computer digitally and then processed them, formed them, and cut them so that they fitted into the dress-pattern of a suit. *Il sarto immortale*, (The immortal tailor) a further development of the project, deals with the relationship between bodies, external appearance, and technology, with a special emphasis on the topic of sewing and the various operations it involves. The contradictory relationship between an abstract, measurable

canon of perfection and beauty and the impossibility of representing a real, individual and concrete being has a long tradition in the history of art and this relationship is shown here with reference to the fashion world. The idea behind this project is connected to the production of the first 'skin suit'; the design of additional pieces of clothing (jacket, blouse, T-shirt, skirt, etc.) creates a fashion collection in which the covering with two-dimensional pictures of the body and the three-dimensional form of the clothing call forth a kind of fragmented overall picture of the body and of cross identities. The project was developed in a series of events, performances, and installations, which are part of a whole sequence. In the last development with the title *Colour*, I made references to the advertising world, especially to the advertising campaign of Benetton. In this case, I decided to offer my 'white' skin to women of different ethnic origin, coming from other regions of the world, in order to create mixed racial identities through analogue and digital techniques.

In a time of multiple and hybrid identities, bots and avatars in virtual reality and in an era of intensive migration and cultural confrontation on the 'real' earth, the question of identity is decisive. During the 90s, I tried to confront this important topic using my own face, my own body, my own biography, my own position as an artist and as a woman. In the last decade, in projects I made together with my colleague Tina Bara, I transposed the interest more explicitly to historical and social processes and how they influence individual existence and shape identity. In projects such as *Siegerehrungen* or *Cover Girl* we delve into these topics focusing on the radical changes that have happened in Germany since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

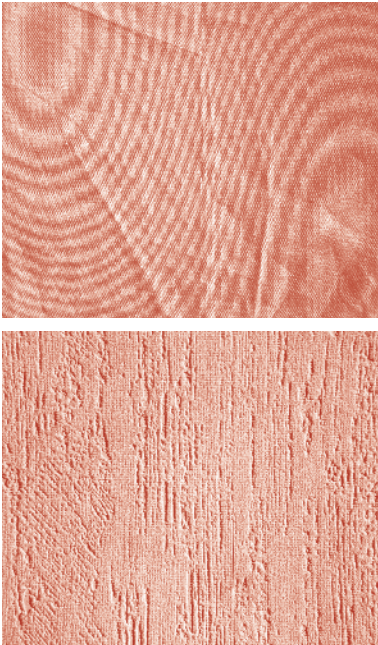At the start of my project, I tackled
the notions of scale and ambiguity
in the natural and urban space.
My aim was to establish equivocal
links between the past and the present
by using photomontage and image
retouching techniques to enable
me to reconstruct, re-create and
deconstruct an environment.

In the end, I concentrated on the
notion of scale by drawing a parallel
with my experience of macro-photography.
I then decided to play on the relation
to the dimensions of my surroundings
by focussing my lens on a tiny surface
area of the elements and objects
in my room, that of a wall, wallpaper,
my duvet cover, my pillow, a lampshade,
my umbrella or my hand.

Enlarged, these macro-photographs
presented the surface details as
immense expanses. Relief comparable
to those of topographical plans
appeared, thus expressing an ambiguity
of perception and comprehension
of a notion of scale that I wished
to share with the viewer.

VINCENT BAILLY MAITRE
La surface en détail par le biais de l'échelle
(Surfaces in detail through scale)
2010 – 2011, drawings and photographs

Excerpts from "Performing Borders : The Transnational Video" in *Stuff it : The Video Essay in the Digital Age,* 2003, Institut für Theorie der Gestaltung und Kunst Zürich, Voldemeer AG Zürich, Zürich (editor, Ursula Biemann), p.83.

Not unlike transnationalism, the essay practices dislocation, it moves across national boundaries and continents and ties together disparate places through a particular logic. In the essay, it is the voice-over narration that ties the pieces together in a string of reflections that follow a subjective logic. The narration in the essay, the authorial voice, is clearly situated in that it acknowledges a very personal view, a female migrant position, a white workers position, a queer black position etc., and this distinguishes it from a documentarian voice or a scientific voice. The narration is situated in terms of identification but it is not located in a geographic sense. It is the translocal voice of a mobile, travelling subject that does not belong to the place it describes but knows enough about it to unravel its layers of meaning. But the mere gathering of information and facts is hardly of interest, for the essay does not believe in the representability of truth. The essayist intention lies rather in the reflection on the world and the social order, and it does so by arranging the material into a particular field of connections. In other words, the essayist approach is not about documenting realities but about organizing complexities.

This very quality makes the audio-visual essay a suitable genre for my investigation of a subject matter like globalization. In this debate, many issues concerning economy, identity, spatiality, technology and politics converge and are placed in a complicated relationship to one another. The attempt to draw these layers together leads inevitably to the creation of an imaginary space, a sort of theoretical platform on which these reflections can take place and be in dialogue with each other. In every work, essayists install this kind of space. We can think of it as an imaginary topography, on which all kinds of thoughts and events taking place in various sites and non-sites experience a spatial order.

Performing the Border addresses questions regarding international labour division, migration and the sexualisation of female bodies in the global economy; it traces the spatial inscription of gender relations into a post-industrial setting; it discusses the connection between the racialized body and high technology; it reveals the urban pathology in the public sphere and describes the construction of borders both in a metaphorical and a material sense. All these relations that characterize the underlying order of this border town speak of global forces that are much bigger than the place itself. This lousy little border town is the unassuming non-place across which many multidirectional strings of meaning can be narrated. Some of the relations are more visible than others. In fact, many processes are increasingly abstract and unrepresentable and could not be captured by documentary practices alone. I am particularly interested in the spatial idea

of this field of connections and associations created in the artistic form of the essay, which extends the meaning of a particular place beyond its documentable reality, and to think about the politics of this videographic space. In *Performing the Border*, the essayist geography and the transnational geography converge. And they both become apparent as artificial constructs.

This triptych represents work on the deconstruction of the image. That is, that the frame used makes it possible to redefine the limits of an image within a still life. Reality is not conveyed here by verisimilitude but by the signalising of artifice. Consequently, the illusion is no longer mental but physical, through the marked presence of the frame which inverses the hierarchical relation between the presented image and the border. The de-construction makes it possible to see the different stages in the construction of the latter.

YVES BARBLAN
Untitled
2010 – 2011, photographs / installation

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PRESENTATION OF THE CONTRIBUTORS

Ursula Biemann
Ursula Biemann is an artist, theorist and exhibition curator. Her investigations deal with questions linked to migration in the context of globalisation, the exclusions associated with geographical, economic and political boundaries as well as technology and gender. Among her writings, *Stuff it - The video essay in the digital age* (2003) is concerned the video essay. She is a researcher at the Institute for the Theory of Art and Design at HGK Zurich. In 2009, she was awarded the Meret Oppenheim Prize.
http : //www.geobodies.org
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Alba D'Urbano
Following on from her studies in philosophy, visual arts and visual communication, Alba D'Urbano produces her own artistic work and directs the Intermedia option at the Academy of Visual Art in Leipzig, where she has also presented numerous exhibitions on political and social questions. In parallel with her individual projects, artistic projects carried out jointly with Tina Bara deal in particular with the human body as the matrix of social appartenance.
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Geneviève Loup
Art historian, Geneviève Loup teaches the history of experimental film and video art at HEAD – Geneva and at the canton of Valais art school in Sierre. She has worked with Ingrid Wildi Merino within the art/media/ option of HEAD – Geneva. Until August 2011, she was, with Jean-Michel Baconnier, the co-programmer of the Media Library of the Contemporary Art Fund of the City of Geneva (FMAC).
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Marc Ries
PhD student in philosophy, Marc Ries is developing a field of studies relating to the mass media. He teaches sociology and media theory at the Institute for Theory of the Academy of Art and Design in Offenbach am Main. In parallel with his writings, some of which deal with the spatial presentation of techniques, he has produced several exhibitions including *Talk Talk. Das Interview als künstlerische Praxis* presented at Leipzig, Graz and Salzburg.
http : //www.marcries.net
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Valeria Wagner
Valeria Wagner teaches on the Hispanic Studies and Comparative Literature programmes of the University of Geneva, where she was awarded a PhD in English language and literature. Her research concerns the articulation between literary forms, the political imaginary and interculturality, the documentary and its questioning of reality and of history and the development of inter-American studies.
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Frank Westermeyer
Frank Westermeyer is an artist

and video artist who has been working with Sylvie Boisseau since 1996. In 2009, they were awarded a bursary by the Stiftung Kunstfonds in Bonn and were residents at the Akademie Schloss Solitude in 2008/09 and at the Künstlerhäuser, Worpswede. Their work has been shown in individual exhibitions in Vtape, Toronto; at the Kunstmuseum and the PROGR in Bern; Hong Kong Space; the Centre pour l'Image Contemporaine, Geneva; ACC, Weimer and in group exhibitions such as *Dislocación* at the Kunstmuseum in Bern and the Museo Salvador Allende in Santiago, Chile. Frank Westermeyer is Professor at HEAD – Geneva and has been Head of the art/media/ option since 2006.
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Ingrid Wildi Merino
Ingrid Wildi Merino is a visual artist and teacher at HEAD – Geneva. Author and curator of the exhibition project *Dislocación* realised for the 200th anniversary of Chilean independence in Santiago in 2010. In addition, she teaches on the Master's degree programme in Stagecraft and Visual Culture of the postgraduate programme of Alcalá University in association with the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Casa Encendida, Matadero and the British Council. She lives and works in Biel and Geneva.
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