

CONNECT. Art Between Media and Reality

An exhibition with media art from the Sitemapping programme by the Swiss Federal Office of Culture.

13 July – 11 September 2011, Shedhalle, Zurich, Switzerland.

www.shedhalle.ch

Artists: Stefan Baltensberger, Maia Gusberti, Felix Stephan Huber, Esther Hunziker, Mathias Jud / Christoph Wachter, Anja Kaufmann, knowbotic research, Marcus Mäder, Norient (Thomas Burkhalter / Michael Spahr), Max Rheiner, Myriam Thyès, Ubermorgen.com

Curators: Anke Hoffmann, Yvonne Volkart

Excerpt from the essay by Anke Hoffmann and Yvonne Volkart in the exhibition catalog:

Art, media, reality

Connect. Art between Media and Reality refers to the present-day attention this being permanently connected gets and at the same time is a plea for an art investigating our world and intervening in it with its specific means and methods, taking part in generating it. The title of the exhibition is somewhat ironic, or to be precise, obscure: In fact, there is no art without media, and what we call reality at the same time always is medially construed, too. Art, media, and reality are mutually dependent, this is what makes the relations between them such an intriguing topic. We noticed that many of the projects submitted to Sitemapping during the past years investigate the complex inequalities and inconsistencies techno-capitalism and its smart technologies produce. With these works, media art in Switzerland follows an international trend in the art scene and media art scene that is characterised by an intensive reflection of our "network- and cognitive capitalism". Media artists apply themselves to the representation of the world and world affairs using their individual artistic approaches. They investigate the conditions of the production of the explanation of the world by the media or the structural phenomena of mass communication reflecting on and questioning the media, thus rendering visible the mechanisms of exclusion involved. We, the curators of Shedhalle, one of the few institutions in Switzerland supporting engaged art, were interested in this topic. We chose 13 projects emphasising exemplarily the engagement of media art, advancing media aesthetics and relating the question of the subjectification to the new media and technologies. All projects have in common that they do not deny or simplify the inconsistencies and complexity of powerful dependence but try to transform them by hybrid media strategies and thus make them an experience. The aim of our project is to acknowledge the diversity of the approaches as well as their pertinent and political aspects and to show that despite certain (techno-)medial and cultural particularities they have a lot in common with the traditional art field. In the following, we would like to present the most important topics and strategies involved: locative media and mapping, the use of narration, (re-) enactment, the de-construction of computer games, coding the I (codework and augmented reality), cultural remix, and participation.

(...)

Re-Enactment- history and hybrid media

During the past years one could notice an increase in the attention given to history, the same can be said of some of the projects presented in this exhibition. The question how to represent historical developments today or make them a new or different experience led to various hybrid forms of representation that can be circumscribed by the term 'enactments'. Myriam Thyès' video installation *Malta as Metaphor*, which superimposes Malta's past with today's history draws on the historical panorama of war. Especially the original octagonal version showing four double projections presents an immersive character allowing the audience to become bodily immersed in history. The scenario reminds us of virtual reality installations of the 1990s without using their elaborate technology. Thyès' work - the content of which deals with leaps in time and space - also deals with this topic on a formal-technical level, and thus can add a further level of reflection to the topic of globalised Malta.

(...)



Malta As Metaphor, Shedhalle, Zurich, 2011. Photo: Joerg Weule

Myriam Thyes: Malta as Metaphor

Video Pal, 20:45, 4/8 channel installation, 2008

The sea, spread quietly, with old warships, frigates, and galleys passing by or sinking, the Grim Reaper dancing on the beach, with heavy church music in the background. Gigantically enlarged, the ships take up the foreground until their ropes turn into barbwire and the wire mesh fences of deportation jails and the outer borders of Europe. Again and again, the video art installation 'Malta as Metaphor' features such cross-fades indissolubly intertwining pictures of the old Malta with present day Malta, intertwining the past with the presence. After a short stand still, the next scene, e.g. a refugee camp. By these cross fades and immersions, Myriam Thyes shows the island in the Mediterranean that is highly appreciated by tourists as a place that, for centuries, has been characterised by violence and death, isolation and restricted circulation. While Malta, today, tries to deal with the arrival of innumerable boat people from Africa and, at the same time, welcomes venturers from the west, the Knights Hospitaller, and the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem respectively, from the 16th to the 18th century, as some kind of Mediterranean police tried to defend the coasts of the western Mediterranean as well as Christianity against the Ottoman Empire and Islam. This is shown by the remnants of martial artefacts like military strongpoints, fortresses, canons, artefacts still nurtured and celebrated by Catholic practices that sometimes strike almost as military – their processions, rituals and dark pictures. The simultaneity of circulating cars, empty hotel blocks, and the deceased members of the Knights of St. John traditionally presented as 'live skeletons' can be experienced as mythical. 'Malta as Metaphor' stands for the 'fortress' Europe, a fortress built not solely, not just during the past decades.

(Anke Hoffmann and Yvonne Volkart in the catalog)