MOSER & SCHWINGER

GALERIE JOCELYN WOLFF
43, RUE DE LA COMMUNE DE PARIS
93230 PARIS
T + 33 1 42 03 05 65
F + 33 1 42 03 05 46
WWW. GALERIEWOLFF.COM

Good space! Communities, or the Promise of Happiness

Villa Merkel, Esslingen am Neckar, Germany, June 2 - September 1, 2019

Press release:

Communities, or the Promise of Happiness focuses on the formation of communities from perspectives of contemporary art. Social diversity arises, not in the shape of disconnected, mono-cultural islands, but instead through contact, through exchange, through cooperation. The cohesion of societies is characterised by a unifying element, whether this is shared values or concepts of identity, whether it consists of norms or of rules. But also inherent to mutual connection is always an aspect of delimitation and exclusion. The question as to what constitutes the sense of "we" is loaded with explosive power also with regard to politics.

"Good Space – Communities, or the Promise of Happiness" is not a project based on sociology; instead it is structured as a playfully sensory and experientially intensive exhibition essay. With the artistic positions and attitudes on display, it aims at selective, deeply probing investigations of social phenomena. For example, there is a focus on instances of fascination with the architectural creations of fictitious communities in remote areas, free from the impositions of urban order. Or we navigate along power structures with an eye to the grave and pervasive consequences of colonialism for native societies. Coming into play are configurations of space-time in which technology and spirituality intersect. The idea that our life is free, self-determined and filled with possibilities of self-determination is put to question with regard to its supposedly universal promise of happiness. We encounter calls for an unconditional respect for the rights of animals, whereby the underlying relationship between people and animals comes to the fore and light is shed on the connection between culture and nature: for example, in an inspection of plant communities down to the last detail. We come to witness scenes of paradoxical relationship; we examine residential concepts in the context of buildings designed according to the dictates of Brutalism; our attention is directed to the fact that films engender vivid communal experiences not just in the screening room; or we accompany the tiny, isolated community of the crew on a submarine.

The exhibition essay conceives of itself as the call for a cooperative stance characterised by curiosity, respect and mutual esteem, one which constantly redefines needs and negotiates differences.

The sites of the presentation are the Villa Merkel, the former residence of an industrialist which was built in the nineteenth century and today houses the gallery of the city, the Merkelpark which surrounds this villa, and also a section of the nearby EAW Halls, once the home of the Royal Württemberg Railway Workshops. In addition, these particular venues make it possible to experience spaces which are linked to the industrial history of the city as well as of southwestern Germany in its entirety. They are part of a cultural space which today continues to be marked by variously motivated arrivals of immigrants and by the coexistence of highly diverse communities.

Double bodies

In their two-channel video work Double Bodies, Frédéric Moser & Philippe Schwinger present the fates of their protagonists Isa and Tom. In the same desolate mountain landscape, both of them seem to be tangled up in their own story, which they discuss with the viewer. Tough-minded Isa buries the money she has earned in the ground because she doesn't trust banks. Tom, on the other hand, lost everything after separating from his wife, to whom he dictates into his mobile phone messages that will never reach her. Both are imprisoned in a world in which dystopia and utopia apparently overlap, in which power and helplessness, reason and arbitrariness, intimacy and universality coexist and explicitly address the issues involved in cohabitation. But neither one succeeds in finding possible paths of liberation out of this paradoxical world.



Exhibition view:
Double bodies, 2018

Kow, Berlin, Germany, 2018



Film stills:
Double bodies, 2018





A Topsy-Turvy Rising deals with two disciples who recently lost their leader. It is inspired by Hölderlin´s fragmented play about the death of Empedocles, in which the hero, the philosopher from Agrigento, refuses the royal crown and casts himself into Etna for the sake of democracy and revolution – death as the necessity for a rebirth of society. The work focuses on those remaining individuals who are now solely responsible for realizing the plans of their leader. With the vision of an egalitarian community, they endeavor together to remember his last words.

Film stills:
A Topsy-Turvy Rising, 2018







Frédéric Moser & Philippe Schwinger

KOW, Berlin, Germany
February 10 - March 17, 2018

This exhibition checks in on subjectivity in the postmodern era: challenged to remodel itself, its material existence as much as its ideas, it confronts powers both old and new that put their stamps upon it. It encounters the construction of political bodies and representations that have lately taken on something like the feudalist and antidemocratic cast of yore. Where power seeks to maintain continuity, it incorporates a human community's collective body into a symbolically exalted subject: Long Live the King!

Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger's films and sculptures respond to the contemporary refeudalization of post-democratic societies. Their new work builds on earlier video installations in which theatrical and sculptural reenactments of events from the past forged new discursive figures that shed light on political developments in the present. Take "Unexpected Rules", created in 2004 for the Bienal de São Paulo, a restaging of the Clinton-Lewinsky affair that took inspiration from the work of Ignacio Matte Blanco. Blanco took the mathematician Newton da Costa's paraconsistent logic and applied it to psychoanalysis to describe the irrational as a form of rationality at a different level. This let Moser and Schwinger assemble the antagonistic emotions, strategies, and interests of the people involved in the political scandal around Lewinsky in a cinematic stage play that threw the paradoxical constellations of power and intrigue, sex and global media into sharp relief and revealed how their contradictory positions were utterly rationally plausible.

The point of departure for their new exhibition is a paradoxical set of events, a peculiar figure that for centuries informed the political organization of the West. In the late Middle Ages, theologians seeking to legitimize the king's unlimited power over his subjects fabricated the feudalist fiction of his double body. They declared that his natural and mortal shell was at once also an immortal, sacred, and collective body capable of incorporating the entire people - an eternal institution become flesh and blood. This fiction eventually gave rise to absolutism; it survives today in nationalist formulas like the "body of the people," but also in ideas of national sovereignty that are woven, for example, into EU regulations. Making the paradoxical double existence of physical reality and metaphysics in the king's two bodies seem reasonable required an entire apparatus of aesthetic representations that glorified the ruler as the embodiment of the nation-as-subject. But things became tricky when the king died: his ideal body needed to be kept unblemished even in death to safeguard the continuity of the collective body and its organs of state. That is why, beginning in the fourteenth century, stonemasons created lavishly designed catafalques: raised platforms on which the body laid out in the coffin was presented to the public, embedded in the symbolism of an everlasting aristocratic world order by the grace of God.

Lincoln´s funeral
(text from KOW press release)

One catafalque that has become famous is Abraham Lincoln´s. It is still used when eminent American public servants lie in state in the Capitol in Washington, D.C., before burial, demonstrating the reproduction of this symbolic order in the age of democracy. Lincoln´s catafalque inspired the textile creation that is the dominant object in Moser and Schwinger´s exhibition in the gallery`s upper space. Heavy dark fabrics reproduce the stereotypical forms of the exclusive staging of dead representatives of the people as limbs of an imaginary body politic (Lincoln´s Funeral, 2018). The object´s second side translates this imaginary dimension into the idiom of modernism, reviving Abstract Expressionism´s aesthetic of the sublime. Vertical black and white bands extend through the work and into eternity. Set in the here and now, the aesthetic object touches upon the infinite. But then the two Swiss artists´ suspended "catafalque" is sculpturally twisted, a dysfunctional construction entangled in its own twofold formulaic rhetoric that we can walk around and relate to the dimensions of our own bodies and hence to the internalized dimensions of something larger whose parts we ourselves are?

Exhibition views and details
Lincoln´s funeral
Kow, solo show, Berlin, Germany



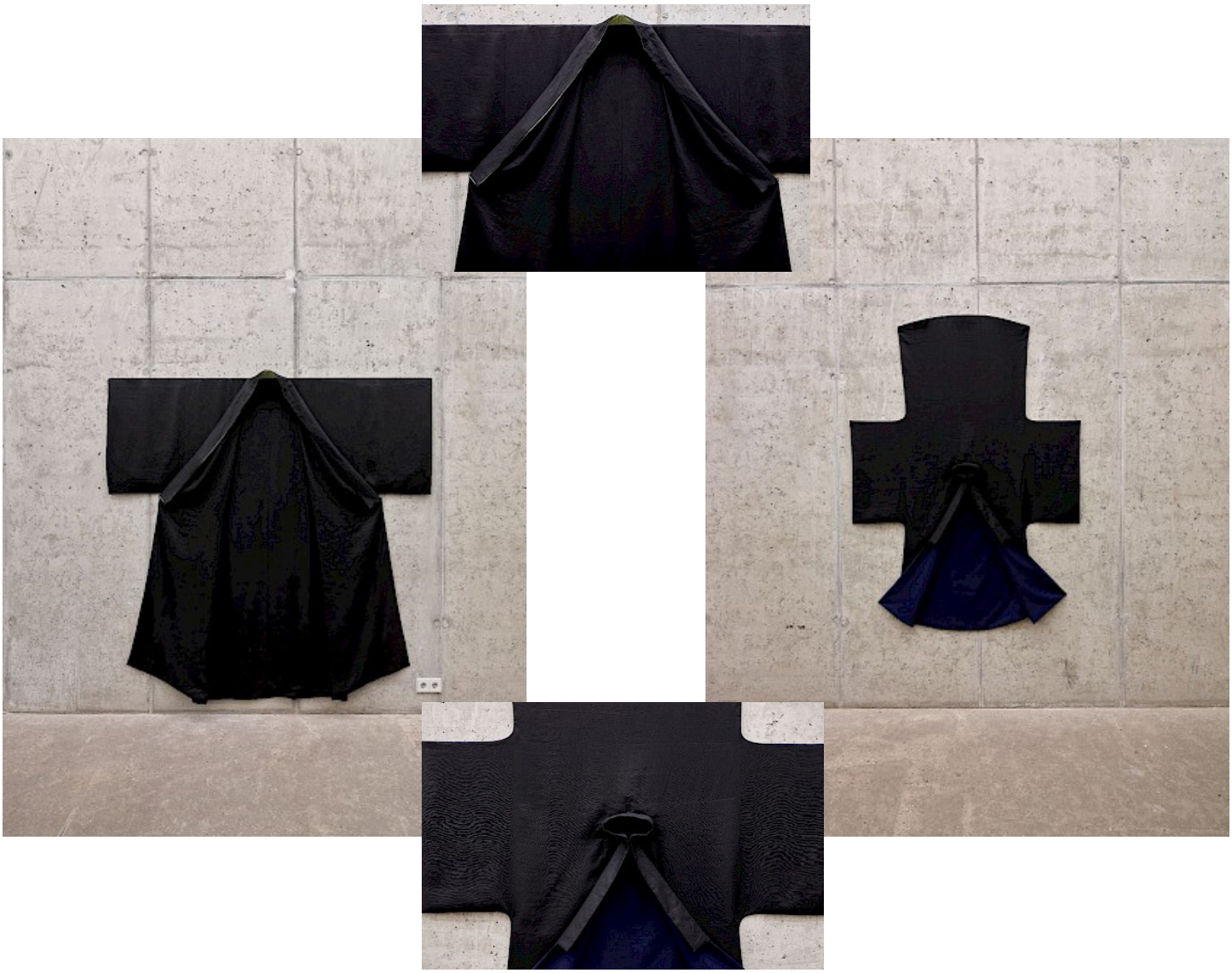




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Citizen k, Citizen 0´ and Only words make the decrees
(text from K0W press release):

A few steps away, the symbolic order switches from vertical to horizontal and shifts to a more civic dimension. Two textile works in classical cuts of Japanese kimonos (˜Citizen 0˝ and ˜Citizen K˝, 2018) are mounted flat, side by side, on the wall. They look valuable, large, and gorgeous; their elegance reflecting a strictly codified principle of form. They, too, are stages for the appearance of individual bodies whose sartorial rituals hew to an iconography of distinction. Different patterns and cuts for varied social occasions and classes visibly assign the wearer to his or her place in the collective structure of societal roles and divisions. And they, too, signify the continuity of a political body that enfolds and integrates the subject. The same can be said of the fourth object in the room, an elaborate recreation of a ruff. Ever more ornate and sometimes astonishingly large, ruffled collars came into fashion in the sixteenth century and adorned the necks of nobles and public officials, especially in the legal professions. Moser and Schwinger´s object condenses the symbolic order into the one point of a centralized authority associated in the title of their work with its legislative function: Only Words Make the Decrees (2018). As in the other works, the staging of a symbolically exalted body is like a prism bringing the regulations of a collective (legal) subject into focus that encounters its likeness - a virtual mirror image - in the delicate fabric´s intricate folds.



Exhibition views and details
Citizen 0 and Citizen K,
K0w, Berlin, Germany, 2018

Exhibition views and details
Only words make the decrees
KOW, Berlin, Germany, 2018



Meeting Points 8

April 12 - June 4, 2017
Beirut Art Center, Beirut, Lebanon

Capitulation Project
Artists´ statement:

The New York-based Performance Group staged their piece Commune for the first time in February 1971. The play included a short scene referring to the My Lai massacre. If members of the audience refused to participate actively in what was happening on stage during this scene, the actors interrupted their performance - sometimes for as long as three hours, depending on the audience´s reaction. The group experimented with several variations of the scene.
Starting with photographs of the performance and the notes of Richard Schechner, the theorist of environmental theatre, we came up with a new version of the My Lai sequence. We worked with the statements of soldiers involved in the massacre, criminal investigation reports, and contemporary articles in the press. In the process, we developed a scenario that enabled us to translate the historical documents into a form suitable for the stage.
We aimed at representing an event of war without using any of the film industry´s spectacular devices. What means do we have, as ordinary citizens, to come to terms with an act of terror? We followed the trail of the Performance Group. Their attempt to create a platform for self-criticism within the context of a theatre performance motivated our dramatic intentions. For this we reconstructed the stage set of Commune: a wave, evoking a landscape and also functioning as an agora, and scaffolding around the stage with seating for the audience.
In 1971 the performers were inspired by rituals: they danced and they sang. We did not attempt to recreate this authenticity in our production. Although we do evoke the symbolic level of their representation, we chose to develop our play with the actors on two different levels. Each of the performers takes on a function, for example, as a reporter, but they can also intervene at any time in their own name. Thus, there is a constant back and forth between the actors and the characters they are representing. This method of dramatic framing enabled us to establish an analogy with film.
There is no live performance in Capitulation Project. The scene was filmed in about 30 sequences during two night shoots, with extras as a `fake´ audience. The distance from the performance that is created through the process of filming is comparable to our detachment from current political events.
We intentionally moved back a few steps in time. We evoked the massacre by means of a contemporaneous artistic form in order to demonstrate that the grasp of an event of war is tied to its medial transmission.

- Frédéric Moser & Philippe Schwinger





Exhibition/perfomance views:
Capitulation Project
Set (wooden stage in form of a wave, wodden screen) and video projection
(Film 16 mm transferred on Beta S.P and DVD, black and white, sound. English speaking, French or German Subtitles, format 4/3, 21 min. 34 sec.)



Exhibition view:
Capitulation Project at Kunstraum Walcheturm, Zurich, Switzerland, 2003

Credits:

Performers: Steffen Boye, Jean-Theo Jost,
Robert Lyons, Julie Randall /
and with Birgit Asshoff, Joachim Bergmann, Arne Friedmann,
Uwe Metzenthin, Eliana salinos, Sabine Souza
De Avellar Pires, Ilka Willner /
Production manager:
Ulrike Mantel /
Camera: Stefan Runge/
Sound: Johanna Herr /
Gaffer: Günther Berghaus /
Production Designer: Volker Rehm /
Costumes: Sybille Gänsslen-Zeit /
Make-up: Martin Turansky /
Camera Assistant: Sibylle Grunze /
Sound Assistants: Uliscuda, Frederik Haupricht /
Costume Assistants: Mahela Rostek, Carola Ruckdeschel /
Construction Crew: Niels Müller, Martin Petersmann, Torsten Schimmer, Uwe Stindt, Barbara Schaefer

Written, Directed and Edited by
Frédéric Moser & Philippe Schwinger

Produced by Fine Arts Unternemen Film ag
Supported by Academy for Film and Television
"Konrad Wolf" / Potsdam-Babelsberg hff /
Bildhauerwerkstatt Berlin im Kulturwerk des
bbk Berlins gmbh / das Werk Novalisstrasse,
Berlin

Orthographic projection

September 3 - October 15, 2016
Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

Press release (text written by the artist):

Two years ago, we said to ourselves: time for a new throw of the dice, let's imagine a new way of working, and let's start by doing what we've never done before.
The form of the result was not to be determined in advance.
We wanted to surprise ourselves by the techniques we used and the working processes; we wanted to decentre ourselves and grope forwards, learning as we did so.
We had to master working in a studio. So this was the opportunity to wonder: while using which medium? And which materials? What might a creative gesture be like, if it did not rely on our own language acquisitions?
We wanted to effect a transposition outside the film language that was dear to us. So the analogy we adopted was that of splicing (joining together two pieces of film) and sewing: editing - with the shock of one shot meeting another and creating meaning - and the assemblage of various fabrics, whose mingling, undefined by any pre-existing practice, questions usages.
Jersey, silk, cotton, velvet, linen, stitched, woven, extensible, with double layers: we observed and handled cloths, and we infiltrated their chain of production, choosing ends of lines, snapping up leftovers, or unearthing rarities. But, instead of following up the production to its destination for a particular garment, upholstery or everyday use, we misappropriated it, turning it into something "handmade" of our own, pending a descriptor.
We started weaving, sewing without a pattern, composing a typography, without a licence, trying to make the border between the intimate and social markers porous.
We caused disturbances by associating emblems, banners, garments, and coatings; we evoked the gesture of getting dressed and groomed, while comparing it with the idea of being shielded and affected.
With a contrasting effect between an enclosing form and an open one, the brightness, the harshness and the softness of material things, we gave rise to a caressingly close evocation of the symbolic thread running through our lives, varying from the waving of a flag or pennant, to marriage banns, here suggesting an uncertain ceremony, a kind of baptism, or else a coveted social rank; a confession, a game, a vow. Have I seen this correctly? Felt this right? Is this directed at me?
We sketched out a dramaturgy in dotted lines, pointing to roles. The human figure, now absent, slipped in between the pieces. An abstract form is a way to bring in the numerous layers of our social organism, without interpreting them unilaterally. We opted for a non-realistic, non-figurative vocabulary, whose forms and signs breathed in the open air, offering an analogy between the stuff we are made of and that animated underworld, which is peopled with our identifications and projections. Orthographic projection is the name given to the method invented by Gaspar Monge for flattening a three dimensional object into two, with the necessary indications for being able to put the object back into its three dimensions.
We made an analogy between this procedure and our work as artists, while broadening observations of the projection phenomenon, when we pass from one dimension (which can be mental, affective, structural or symbolic) to another.
A "place" then becomes perceptible, where two contradictory rationales interact: one that distinguishes and differentiates, by asymmetry; and one that unifies and creates new syntheses.
So how do these projective mechanisms play on us, as split beings, made up of an imaginary and mortal corporeity, heady on regressive models, while aspiring to free ourselves from everything?
It is as if we had constructed in our studio a miniature set-up that evoked the uncountable dimensions of our social order: pomp and emblems, confessions and adornments, codes of representation and signs of intimacy. Then we "crushed" this system, by projecting our three-dimensional construction onto the two walls of a gallery.
We are presenting a series of pieces evoking the flattening of volumes, with the possibility to guess the potential content of these inseparable forms, bodies and decors, while offering a crushing shift, played with a soft and joyo- us anthem.





Exhibition details
The social elevator turned to a weather vane then confined
Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, 2016



Exhibition view: Orthographic projection, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, 2016



Exhibition views:
(top) Whispering at my door
(right) mutation of the self (I) & (II)
Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France 2016









Exhibition views:
(top) Martha, bitte!
(right) See by your palm how everything appears
(bottom) Ambushed by the fourth wall

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France, 2016







Exhibition view and detail:
Modernist surrogate softness

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France, 2016







Exhibition details:
(left) Sotto voce (del popolo)
(center) The strenght to persevere
(right) Quest for honor

Galerie Jocelyn wolff, Paris, France, 2016







Exhibition view and details:
(top) From then on, we did´nt walk alone at night anymore (I), (II)
(left) Whispering at my door

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France, 2016



Exhibition view
(left) Tomorrow, same place same time
(right) Riding round the ring

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France, 2016

Ce dont on sera dans l´avenir capable

Bétonsalon, Centre d´art et de recherche, Paris, France
February 3 - March 26, 2011

The first solo exhibition of the Swiss artist duo in a Parisian institution, Ce dont on sera dans l´avenir capable accompanies the development of the "France, Détours" project initiated by Moser and Schwinger in 2008. The two artists "interrogate France" in stages, to propose a reflection based on the question of living together. The exhibition presents episode 1, produced in Toulouse in 2008, and serves as a basis for the creation of a space for formulation around the simultaneous shooting of episode 2 in Pierrefitte, a co-production of the Kadist Foundation and the production company L´âge d´or.

A performance will be filmed before the exhibition and several choreographic appointments will be given with five dancers performing different possible scenarios for objects, people and situations encountered in Pierrefitte. Other meetings with actors involved in the realization of the series "France, Détours" will constitute a metaphorical forum imagined by the artists for the exhibition.

The films of Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger question the present from political and social facts from recent history. To do this, they put the sources of contemporary reality back on stage, to place them in the place of discussion of a conflict. For them, the construction of reality is linked to the constitution of a space of speech.

The youth they present with their diverse social backgrounds do not quite confirm the clichés that the media and politicians try to create. Moser and Schwinger follow Jacques Rancière´s hypothesis that "the real must be fictionalized in order to be thought." Each situation allows the questioning of fictional elements associated with a specific reality and each time, with the help of new mediators, this reality is approached in a new way. The two artists carry out a field investigation and solicit architects, sociologists, journalists or historians, in order to cross the discourses and methodologies to realize their films.

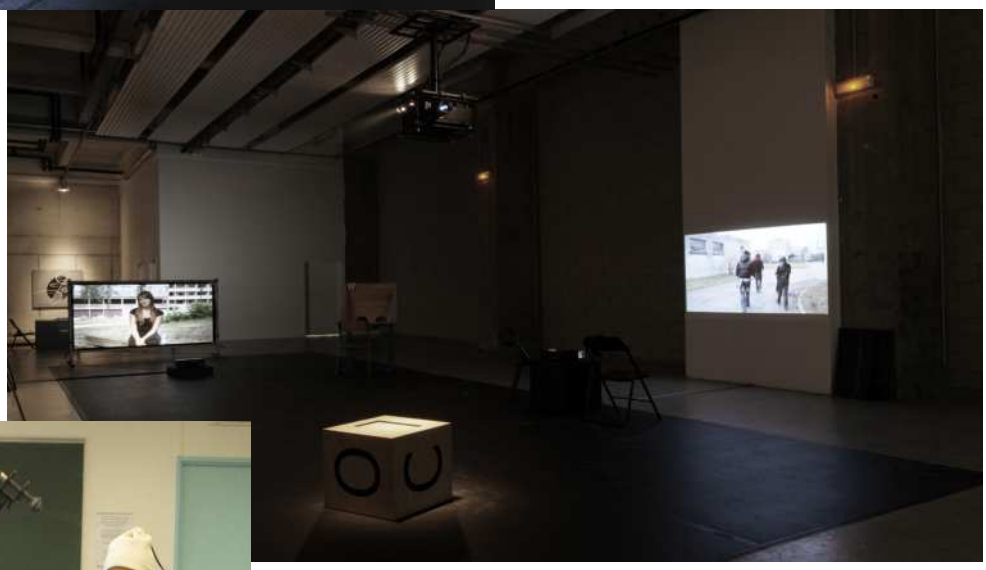
The exhibition "Ce dont dans l´avenir on sera capable" will take place simultaneously with the shooting of episode 2 of the series "France, détours." The two artists then imagined their exhibition as a tool for thinking about the construction of episode 2. To do this, they wished to venture into the field of choreography by initiating a collaboration with five dancers from the Essai training program at the CNDC in Angers. The exhibition unfolds this performative work in three intertwined temporalities questioning the potential of the past, the present and the future contained in the title Ce dont on sera dans l´avenir capable.

Moser and Schwinger´s exhibition focuses on choreographic work as a possible mode of translation of one design process among others. The first episode of the series France, détours, and a diagram elaborated by the artists will complete the exhibition, which will also be accompanied by a publication reporting on the genesis of the invitation made to Moser and Schwinger.

"France Détours épisode 1" takes place at Le Mirail in Toulouse. A big housing complex where riots took place in 2005.
In one scene a teen says:
- "Many people lived there, so little kids played there, and when there were those riots or revolts, the police would show up and they'd have the young people facing them. So it's a site loaded with history, that's why I call it the historic center of Bellefontaine."
Hassan speaks also about his studies:
- "The problem is they think we all can afford to pay for private school. Me, I can't afford to pay 5000 euros a year. And then in public school, there are so few classes, so there's always someone better than you..."
We mix sequences from everyday life, archives from the Candillis architectural project, interviews with teenagers from the neighborhood and a narrative.



Exhibition views:
Episode1: Devoir et déroute.
Ce dont on sera dans l'avenir capable.
Centre d'art et de recherche,
Béton salon, Paris, France, 2011





ON SET Film Still:
Episode 2: Ce trait c'est ton parcours

"France Détours épisode 2" takes place in a small building located next to a school in a Parisian suburb where educators follow school-age children who have been temporarily expelled for bad conduct.
The adults are left off-screen but are present through their talk.
The film focuses on the body language of the children, which reveals their boredom, their indifference, sometimes their docility. It documents an educational relationship that is empty of content, knowledge is out of the picture- and reduced to a few moral principles.

"For many decades, from 1877 until 1950, France's self-image as "La Grande Nation" was shaped by a small book: "Le Tour de France par deux enfants" was seminal reading in schools, telling children what it meant and how it felt to be a proud French boy or girl. In1977, French film-maker Jean-Luc Godard produced a counterstatement. In his TV-documentary "France/tour/detour/deux/enfants", ten-year-old Camille and Arnaud comment on notions such as liberty and equality, revolution and violence, money and on their individual dreams. What they had to say was a long way away from patriotic common sense.

Since 2009, Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger have embarked upon yet another "De/Tour de France", again in the format of a TV documentary. They follow Jacques Rancière's hypothesis that the real has to be fictionalized in order to be thought. The youth they portray does not at all confirm the clichés that media and politics create. In fact, this reality is much more difficult. Capturing its complexity in their films, Moser and Schwinger "re-think" the notion of "France": as a narrative and a discourse that reestablishes a space for an adolescent's emancipation. By employing the means of fiction, Moser and Schwinger expose the forces that try to reduce the complexity and openness of social reality, that want to bring regulation and regimentation."
-Alexander Koch



Exhibition view:
Ce dont on sera dans l'avenir capable
Béon salon, centre d'art et de recherche,
Paris, France, 2011





Film stills
épisode 3:
Ainsi Arrivèrent-ils fébriles
au seuil de la voie royale.
2013

KOW issue 2

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France, March 18 - May 23, 2009

"Working the historical fact, Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger's films tell of war, the hypocrisy of social relationships, and the disenchanted desire of utopia. Using the indirect mode of fiction, the two video directors could make Jacques Rancière's remark their own: 'To think about the real, it needs to be fictionized'. For once the 'fact' is chosen, their work begins by writing a scenario based on a particularly documented study of the behaviors, attitudes, context and chain of events of the original event. Yet, they twist, rework, and replay it, creating a distance that paradoxically brings it closer to our means for judgment." Françoise Ninghetto The installation presented at the gallery by Moser & Schwinger, Farewell letter to Swiss Workers (2006), questions the notion of social utopias beginning from a letter that Lenin addressed to Swiss workers in 1917 before leaving Zurich to engage in the Russian Revolution. A part of the installation, the film, Alles wird wieder gut, is a political fiction that prompts the debate of the following questions through a micro-society in a former East German, 21st century village: in what kind of society do we wish to live? Of what kind of society are we capable? Of what common way of life do we dream? The film is in echo to Tout va bien filmed in 1972 by Godard and Gorin. With a touch of asserted absurdity, the film presents a group of young people who get together to try to find a way out of their social isolation and precarious situation, and this, in opposition to their parents, who are stuck in a position that leads them to restage a picket line in front of their factory, abandoned for fifteen years before.



Exhibition view:
'Donnerstag', 2006, digital video, colour 16/9, 12'53 min.
Groß und klein 2006 (details)
KOW Issue 2009, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

The working day of a women in the dairy industry in the former GDR. Working with the same actors in two totally distinct contexts (see: "Time flies "), our project is to suggest two different versions of the world. The only fictional element in this documentary film is the actor's performance who-after some preparation-appropriates the job of the worker on her side.
Cast: Fernanda Farah
Camera: Frédéric Moser
Sound: Philippe Schwinger
Written, directed and edited by Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger

Alles wird wieder gut

In a village of former East Germany, young adults meet with the intention of finding an alternative to isolation and social precariousness while their parents demonstrate in front of the disused factory, as every day of the year for the last 15 years. The young persons decide to organize a party; it is meant to help them to confront themselves on their divergent opinions as for the model of society to which they aspire. As antidote to exclusion, they choose the debate of ideas. The arrival of a foreign journalist reporting on the region sets off contrasting attitudes: for the oldest, it represents an answer to the wait of a recognition, whereas the younger ones see in it the necessity of freeing themselves from media standardization in order to construct networks of resistance on a local level.

Lenin spent 1914-17 living in exile in Zurich. Before he returned to Russia to play his part in the Revolution, he wrote a letter to the Swiss workers. In it he exhorted them to resist the `imperialist war´ and lauded the "proletarian revolution that is beginning in Europe ". Lenin´s social vision has not stood the test of time; nevertheless, some of his arguments have taken on a new relevance in the context of recent political events on the world stage. This is where the artists Moser/Schwinger come into the picture.

WHAT KIND OF A SOCIETY DO WE REALLY WANT? Responding to Vladimir Lenin´s letter, Moser/Schwinger have realized a video work for the Kunst Haus Zürich, entitled `Alles wird wieder gut´ [`It´ll all turn out alright´], in which they re-address the question of social utopias. What kind of a society would we wish for ourselves? And what social forms are we capable of sustaining? The artists spent a week, not far from Berlin, making a twenty-minute video. The plot revolves around a village community in the East of the reunited Germany, sixteen years after the Berlin Wall came down. Since 1989 unemployed workers have been demonstrating daily outside the gates of their old factory, protesting at the loss of their long-gone jobs. While a group of students in the adjacent village pub discuss their own future and that of their fellow citizens, children are putting on a show in the village church. A boy, playing the part of the young Lenin, cites passages from his farewell letter to the Swiss workers.

REPRESENTING THE PRESENT IN FILMS AND VIDEOS. As in their work `Capitulation Project´ - an attempt to understand, in the year 2003, the My Lai massacre perpetrated during the Vietnam War - Moser/Schwinger have again taken a historical process or event as their starting point and examine the representation of victims and perpetrators. They leave viewers with the knowledge that any search for historical truth is doomed to failure. In the work specially made for the Kunst Haus Zürich, they deliberately make a play on the ambiguity of the term `farewell letter´, which might be bidding

farewell in the usual sense, but could equally well be a letter of dismissal - all too familiar in these times of business closures and reorganization. As in the work `Unexpected Rules´ (2004), with which Moser/Schwinger represented Switzerland at the São Paulo Biennial, once again they are engaging with the issues surrounding representation and communication in the media today. Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger were both employed in the theatre at an earlier stage in their careers, and their art is a mixture of drama, video and installation. In their works they set up a complex interplay of apparent authenticity and subtle deception, which captivates the viewer with its formal precision and emotional intensity.

STOCK EXCHANGE ARCHITECTURE AND THE ZURICH CONCRETISTS. In their Kunst Haus exhibition, Moser/Schwinger focus not only on the question of social utopias but also on artistic-aesthetic utopias. In a seventeen-meter wall painting, they deliberately invoke memories of the Zurich Concretists; at the same time, they take the notion of Concrete Art ad absurdum. The forms used here do not arise from strict parameters devised by the artists - experimental forms and colors with no connection to the real world - for they derive from economic factors, specifically the performance graphs of Swiss Market Index at the Zürcher Börse Swiss Exchange in 2005. (Review by Mirjam Varadinis)

Exhibtition view:
La 7e cité (details)
GroB und Klein 2006 (details)
Galerie Jocelyn wolff,
Paris, France, 2009





Exhibition view:
Alles wird wieder gut, 2006
(left) la 7eme cité 2006 (print on canvas)

KOW issue 2, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France, 2008

Avant moi, le flou, après moi, le déluge

MAMCO Genève, Genève, Suisse
February 27 - May 18, 2008

Working on the historical fact, the films of Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger tell the story of war, the hypocrisy of social relations and the disenchanted desire for utopia. In the diverted mode of fiction. The two video artists could make their own Jacques Rancière's reflection "The real must be fictionalized to be thought". Indeed, once the "fact" is chosen, their work begins by writing a scenario based on a particularly documented study of behaviors, attitudes, the context and the sequence of the original facts. But they divert it, rework it and replay it, creating a distance that, paradoxically, will bring it closer to our possibility of judgment.

"It is under this word, with its multiple meanings, that Moser and Schwinger's filmic approach is concentrated. Practicing the "displaced remake", they ask and restate the question of representation. What they draw inspiration from constitutes the framework of what will be replayed. A historical fact: Capitulation Project (2003) deals with the massacre of the inhabitants of the Vietnamese village of My Lai on March 16, 1968 by American soldiers, but their film is inspired by a theatrical performance of this tragic event, Commune, created in 1971 by the Performance Group of New York. Letter to the Swiss Workers (2006), based on Lenin's 1917 "Farewell Letter to the Swiss Workers", questions social utopias through a micro-society in a 21st century German village. A media event: Unexpected Rules (2004) and Time Flies (2006) take up the Lewinski affair in a pseudo-realistic television mode. The Schwejk Project (2006) reconstructs in a closed universe the relationships of domination constraining the immigrant man. A film, Revival Paradise (2003), geographical and cultural transposition of Jim Jarmusch's film Stranger than Paradise (1984).

In this second phase, that of the representation, Moser and Schwinger set up a device in which actors and public occupy an important place, as in the theater. This is particularly true of the installations where the spectator finds himself in the middle of a constructed set in which an event has taken place and is confronted with this event through the images that scroll on the screen. Moser and Schwinger create a situation in which all the elements of the dramatic process will converge. The staging necessarily and very precisely follows the temporal and geographical displacement of the fictional narrative. The actors do not improvise. Moser and Schwinger, who directed a theater workshop for several years, rely on the actors' own energy to make the manipulation of emotions perceptible (hence the impression that they sometimes "overact"). The images, the framing, the shots, the sequences, the sets, everything is calculated and set up without seeking the adhesion of the spectator to the expressed feelings but to create a distance which enlightens the dramatic processes so that the transposition highlights the human, social and political interrogations, the power of the media and the economy and the fickleness of what could appear to be the historical truth.

Artists' statement:

We conceived the lightbox as a place where politics stages its own performance. The fact that all protagonists are constantly on stage makes each character even more lucid. By distorting the facts in a plausible manner, we are attempting to set the characters' spoken lines within contexts that, in the real world, exclude one another.

The film was first shown at the Biennale de São Paulo (2004) as part of a video installation in which visitors enter the reconstructed film set (a wooden lightbox lined with 1,300 colored bulbs), stand very close to the projection screen, and become first-hand witnesses of the negotiations within the intimate setting of the presidential family.

Schwejk Perspektiven

The tragic-comic "Adventures of the Good Soldier Schwejk," written by Jaroslav Hašek in Prague in 1921-23, serves as the starting point for the film production "Swejk Perspectives. The character of Schwejk, a Czech on loan to the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I, serves as a foil for the creation of an "imaginary Schwejk today".

What actions or reactions arise when the fear of social insecurity becomes more widespread? How is one to live in the present when the future takes on such threatening features? Are poetic gestures possible in a dictatorial regime? Based on these questions, situations are continuously invented that the new Schwejk has to deal with.

The project was developed together with acting students from the University of Performing Arts in Graz from documents, written dialogues and performative sequences. In a kind of laboratory situation, the Kunst Haus Graz became first the filming location and then the cinema for a new film version of Schwejk.



Exhibition view:
Schwejk Perspektiven,
Intstallation
Avant moi le flou,
après moi le déluge, MAMCO, Genève, 2008





Time flies

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Exhibition view:
Time Flies
Capitulation project (details)
FRAC PACA, Marseille, 2010

Unexpected Rules

Artists' statement:
We conceived the lightbox as a place where politics stages its own performance. The fact that all protagonists are constantly on stage makes each character even more lucid. By distorting the facts in a plausible manner, we are attempting to set the characters' spoken lines within contexts that, in the real world, exclude one another.

The film was first shown at the Biennale de São Paulo 2004 as part of a video installation in which visitors enter the reconstructed film set (a wooden lightbox lined with 1,300 colored bulbs), stand very close to the projection screen, and become first-hand witnesses of the negotiations within the intimate setting of the presidential family.





Exhibition views and video stills :
Unexpected Rules, MAMCO, Genève , 2008

Revival paradise

A young woman travels to Warsaw from a poor region in eastern Poland to find a job. Her cousin takes her in, letting her stay in his tiny apartment. He introduces her to a friend of his with whom he devises various schemes that allow them to survive. The woman first attempts to become accepted within this closed circle, and later leaves for a different city in search of work. After a while, she is rejoined by her two friends, and the three of them travel to the seaside.

Based on the framework of Jim Jarmusch`s „Stranger than Paradise", we imported this story of exile to Poland twenty years later. We followed the original film`s scheme in order to better expose the historical shift which has taken place. In the 1984 film, a Hungarian woman discovered the American way of life as she stayed with her cousin in New York; this time, a young woman from a village in Eastern Poland comes to Warsaw in search of work and resides with her cousin. The schism between two divergent cultural models now plays itself out within one society. The scenes - autonomous, but chronological sequence shots - are set in today`s Poland, echoing the original settings in New York, Cleveland and Florida: a modest apartment in the Foksal district, a few streets in the suburb, the countryside flashing by during a car trip, and the Baltic Sea. Societal mutations are revealed to us in snatches, as we stay close to the three protagonists, who live in a closed circle even though they pretend to be part of the surrounding reality. In Jarmusch`s film, the plot was already an alibi to reflect upon a model of life as a threesome. Importing this model into the present context of a former Soviet bloc country, even asking our actors to take on postures similar to those of the anti-heroes of „Stranger…": this was our gamble, for we wished to sow confusion as to the need for defining oneself through an identity. We aimed at an improbable road movie in which the escapade to the sea is by no means a fruitful dream and in which the intimacy shared by three, portrayed as a non-prescriptive model, exposes each character`s reluctance to break away from pre-established roles. With „Revival…", we pursue our critique of the myth of authenticity, with just the slightest air of tenderness rising above reference models.





Film Stills:
Revival Paradise, 2005



NB - Bob Gramsma / Frédéric Moser & Philippe Schwinger

Pasquart Kunstverein, Biel,Switzerland
18.01.2004 - 07.03.2004

In collaboration with the Federal Office of Culture, the CentrePasquArt presents the artists who benefited from the Confederation's workshops in 2002/2003. Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger (born in 1966 and 1961 in Saint-Imier) spent a year in the Berlin workshop. They produce scenarios that combine theater, film and installation. Their stagings shed light on the multiplicity of dramatic possibilities by successfully combining analysis with emotion. Bob Gramsma (born 1963 in Uster) spent the last year at PS 1 in New York. Gramsma invites the artist duo to experience real spaces in order to break free. His constructions offer a monentannuated view of the world of abysses and push meaning to the edge of collapse.

INTERNMENT AREA, 2002
Installation

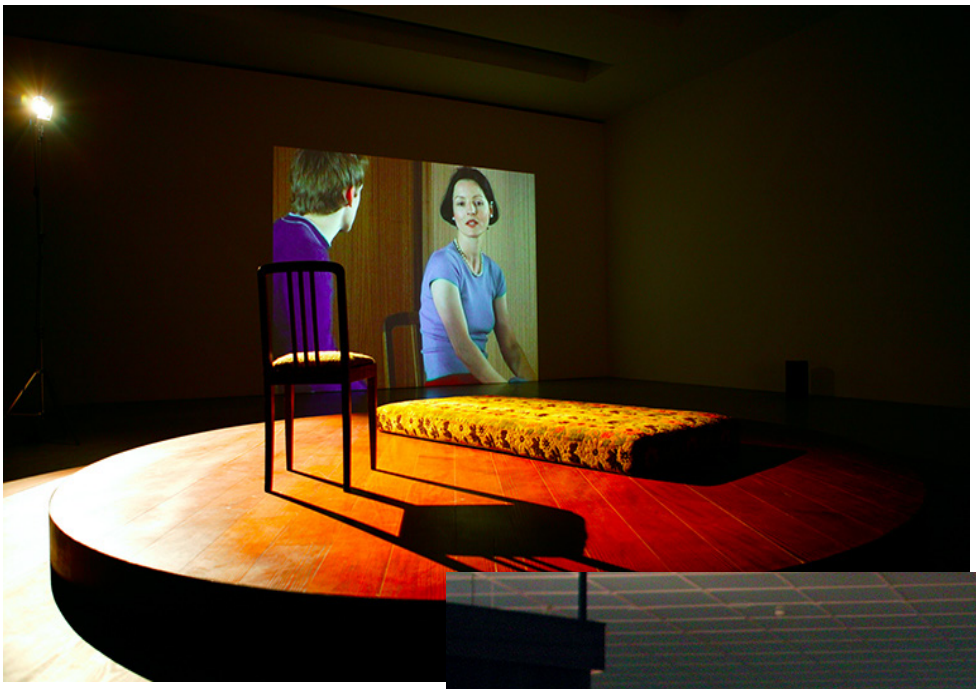
Artists' statement by Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger

The starting point of "Internment Area" is the therapeutic technique of the psychodrama, which was developed by Jacob L. Moreno in the 1930s. In its clinical application we try to discover the leading signs which have become one of the most important parameters of today`s media production: The spread of intimacy in a spectacular dispositive.

The basis for the artistic work is the replica of Moreno`s conceptual design of the scenic area. Through maximal visibility, free spaces, and the sparse usage of Helping objects, the stage is characterized by chairs and a mattress. The signs of an architecture which has extracted much from the 19th century and at the same time foreshadows the TV studios of the 70s shall be made visible. In this dispositive, a group of five protagonists portray a meeting according to the role-playing technique constructed on the basis of real meeting protocol. The meeting was filmed with five actors and lasted 28 minutes. The video focuses on a boy who has fled a boarding school and has been caught. Now, a team of therapists is supposed to help him to work out his conflict situation. His mother accompanies him. At first only taking part in the meeting as an observer she nevertheless becomes involved in the play and enters the stage. In the corner of the stage is the director who functions as the preferred contact person of the protagonists. He asks questions, stimulates the play, and initiates the emotional outbursts. He is surrounded by two helping egos of the patient who take on the same attitude as he in order to express that, which he hardly dares to express.

In contrast to a conventional production in which the director the predetermined text and the parts clearly distributes, the actor directly becomes the author of his own fate, a situation which today is regularly exploited by TV entertainment. This is the technique of the confession. Because the architectural dispositive (scantiness, visibility by 360 degrees) and the human dispositive (the players divide the two stabilizing modes of operation of authority among themselves, that is to say the mode of the director and that of the helping ego) are so conceived, that the patient has no other alternatives but to compromise himself, to tell and to show what he does, feels and projects in intimacy. The stage is available for his emancipation to feel and function better in his life. From then on, the subjective story becomes material for the drama.

The large 1300 qm hall of the Wuerttemberg Art Society has led us to this project through its inherent utopia, its minimalism of the 60s, and its coercing materialism (square room of 36x36m without any opening besides the entrance door). The claustrophobic aspect which is explicitly reproduced in the film unexpectedly becomes apparent in this room. This is how the hall is reflected in its locked in state. The fragment of outdated theater architecture becomes the wonder of the modernistic ideal, which results in just such an exhibition hall. With this installation the dimension of the spectacular becomes logic with implicit regulations which we concentrate in this huge one-eyed room in order to compress its occlusion.





Exhibition views:
Internment Area
Pasquart kunsthaus, Biel, 2004



film still and setting up photos
Internment area 2002

Exhibition view:
Internment area
kunstverein stuttgard, Germany, 2002



AFFECTION RIPOSTE, 2001
Installation
Exhibition view: Pasquart Kunsthaus, Biel Switzerland, 2004
Set and video projection, digital video, color, german language with english subtitles, 5:17 min



Exhibition view and set up installation view: Pasquart Kunsthaus, Biel, Switzerland, 2004 , Ph K0Warchiv





Exhibition view: Pasquart kunsthaus, Biel Switzerland, 2004
(left) Law song, 2000
(right) Un fond de vérité

GALERIE
JOELYN
WOLFF