Text Beate Engel in <there is no life jacket under your seat>, monographische Publikation Edith Flückiger, Hrsg.: Kommission für Kunst und Architektur des Kantons Bern, Vexer Verlag, 2002

Transitional Images in Between

Ordinary, momentary images and events are the material that Edith Flückiger condensates into impressive video and text installations. The artist successfully keeps creating unstable balances, circling around the centre of gravity and never stopping for longer than for the moment of transition. Swinging, swimming and floating, different states in which gravity seems eliminated, are combined to a unique intensity in her video "und vergesse an guten Tagen, dass wir kopfüber ins Leere hängen" ('Forgetting on Good Days that We're Hanging Upside-down above the Abyss '). A summer idyll, where birds are chirping and a girl is sitting on a swing, flying higher and higher – suddenly there is a cut and the perspectives are following each other in a rush. Heaven and earth, harmony and ecstasy crashing into each other.

In her works, Edith Flückiger focuses on 'the state of feeling safe and sound, solid and attached to the ground and the earth'. On the other hand, the attention is also drawn to the opposite: to feel lost in this world, to be without orientation, to fall and get lost; nothing left that holds – an isolated, padded weightlessness.'
The people in Edith Flückiger's video installations are subject to cosmic forces and gravity fields which also have an impact on the bodies of the viewers. Surrounded by huge fish, they dive into a parallel submarine world, become part of a system that obeys to obscure rules and triggers certain movements. Some of the visitors of the biennial video festival in Langenthal in 1997 felt as if they were loosing their footing when they entered the room with Edith Flückiger's installation 'without title (swimmers)': a video beam on the ground was tilted to one side and used as a technical 'birth giving device', spitting out swimming people who were poured over the floor in a wild current and sucked in again by the black hole of the machine.

The video work "erst hell, dann leicht, dann himmelhoch" ('First Bright, then Light, then Sky-high') not only lays bare the digital structure of the picture, but also leads back to the archaic roots of picture production. It shows two girls lying outdoors on the ground. A light rain starts falling, imperceptible at first. But slowly, the surrounding ground gets darker and when the two girls stand up, their outlines stay marked on the ground. As soon as it is created, the naturally produced image disappears in the (video-) rain. 'Video treats light like water' Bill Viola says, who had repeatedly worked with water as a medium of transformation, as a place of the isolated inner world and of swaying images as metaphors of death and life.[1]

The topics of transitoriness and emptiness also show up in Edith Flückiger's text compositions, which she has designed as monitor installations. Here, the writing outgrows the 'linear and poorly one-dimensional gesture', which – according to Vilem Flusser – should be replaced by codes and gesture of much higher complexity, exactitude and richness. Flusser's reading instruction says: 'first, we have to follow the lines, receive the information directed to us, store it in our memory and process it there. Then, we have to move in the inverse direction of the lines in order to capture the information's dynamic and to enter into a dialogue with it. …An attempt to reach back through the text (and maybe between the lines) to the writer and across to his background.'[2] It is exactly this inverse function that is performed in Edith Flückiger's 'textpict 04', an animated concrete poem in German. The simple word sequence "was einem bleibt" ('what one remembers') moves from the left to the right as well as from the right to the left side of the screen, some words changing their position and thus suggesting new contexts of meaning: "bleibt einem was ('is there something left') …was bleibt einem ('what choice is there') … einem bleibt was ('someone is retaining something') …" A soundtrack with celestially metallic sounds supports the meandering thought-composition.

Another animated text line in 'textpict 03' follows the structure of the *ecriture automatique* (automated writing): "nichts fehlt nichts bleibt nichts sagt nichts wagt/ nichts mir nichts dir nichts will nichts hier/ nichts blau nichts rot nichts schlau nichts tot/ nichts wahr nichts leer nichts klar nichts sehr..."

These are not 'truisms', but ruminations – some of them negating each other – running in the opposite direction, from the right to the left side of the screen. Each word evoking another sequence of words, thus creating completely new aspects to the original meaning. After a certain time of observation, the word bits are conceived as a kind of secret code leading to spheres of an absolute and positive non-differentiation. This work requires a kind of meditative communication from its spectators, which differs essentially from usual TV consumer habits. [3]

By complementing the video stills in this catalogue with her own texts, Edith Flückiger adds completely new dimensions to them. The first person narrator tries to grasp the own thinking; not the clearly definable thinking, but the thinking in between, in a short vacuum: just back from anaesthesia, looking out of the window, day-dreaming or travelling by train. Below the images of flying knives, the artist tells that sometimes she would hear her own voice, 'the silent voice accompanying my reading, it is not the voice I read with, but the voice I think with and that I use only to communicate with myself –...")

Umberto Eco has defined the poetic impact of a text as the ability to repeatedly create new and different ways of reading, and never become completely worn out.[4] The inner voice of the artist emerges softly but insistent from the deep layers of her works. Incomprehensible at first, it then becomes very clear - a voice without compulsion to analyse and interpret, but which carefully finds its way and creates tense atmospheres. Out of a blurred pixel surface covering a large wall in the new Museum of Art Lucerne, a face is emerging slowly. Just at the moment when the oversized face has formed itself completely, it disappears again in the flickering of the video. In addition, there is a female voice whispering out of two loudspeakers. Just like the face, the whispered sentence "I don't care if I ever know" also falls into its components, which are constantly being rearranged – thus becoming associative incantations. The images and their fuzzy shadows fuse with the acoustic echoes and implant themselves in the brain where they keep spinning round and round for quite a while.

Beate Engel

[1] Bill Viola. Installations and Video Tapes, Museum of Modern Art, New York 1987, S. 39.

[2] „Lesen von Texten" The 'Flusser-Reader zu Kommunikation, Medien und Design'. Mannheim 1995, S.55

[3] see „Zen oder die Kunst, ein Videoband zu machen." in 'Video Kunst Zeit', Nicoletta Torcelli, Weimar 1996,
  pages 233-237.

[4] see Umberto Eco, 'The open Work', Milan, 1962

<if>, Wandprojektion, DV 2001, Ton: Hanspeter Giuliani