

Eva Borner «Images in the head», an intermedial installation

Accompanying text by Annelise Zwez

In 2007 Eva Borner was granted the Valiart-prize for Medial Art which enabled her to realise the interactive sound installation www.saitensprung-on-line.ch in cooperation with Martin Bircher. In the summer of the same year the media development programme («site-mapping») of the Swiss federal department for fine arts granted her a sum enabling her to accomplish the intermedial installation «Bilder im Kopf» (images in the head) in the Basel-based gallery Karin Sutter.

What is extraordinary about Borner's oeuvre, who accomplished her studies at the Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz in Aarau, is the entanglement of technical media with content-centred visions. Her project "Bilder im Kopf", an elaboration of her praised diploma, evokes a "real" world within the virtual space of the imagination. Her artistic means, a double bass connected to a computer, a video-projection and multi-channel speakers, are not intrinsically media aesthetics, but aiming at access to a virtual reality.

By plucking the strings of the spotlit double bass in the centre, the visitor opens the acoustic representation of a room of the protagonist's home. The big format video-projection on the opposite wall showing a bleak façade suggests being in a flat in a rather modest neighbourhood. Depending on which string you plucked you get to either kitchen, bathroom or living-room. Sometimes the woman is home, taking a bath, singing along with the radio, or she's in the kitchen rattling with cutlery. Often she's heard murmuring to herself, sometimes it's her thoughts that are heard clearly out of nowhere. If you've picked a moment when she's away you will hear her answering machine going off as a caller leaves a message.

The work is not limited to the audio structure which is solely a means to make contents audible and visible to the imagination. Without interaction from the visitor, however, there is no output. If the strings are not touched, there will only be the murmuring background noise of the apartment. If the woman is present she will usually say inconspicuous things to herself, like "I should laugh more often" or "why not sit down and read a truly serious book", or she gets angry with herself muttering "the keys, where are the keys?". If she's present but only thinking to herself her thoughts are made audible: "I don't want to have to believe reality" she is heard murmuring, or "what would have had to happen to make us more interesting to each other?" Later she realises: "I was so afraid I was panicking". The order of her utterances is never repeated. A random generator juggles the 80 statements in ever new combinations.

Medial arts are often in inter-relation with film, photography and music. Thus, the latter also plays a role in Eva Borner's installation in the shape of the double bass, but also when her invisible protagonist sings along to the tragical song "Slip Away" by Laurie Anderson. The connection to drama, philosophy and literature is somewhat rarer, but more important and, therefore, even more important. Neither the choice of the song nor the quotations from "Waiting for Godot" are there by accident. The chosen quotations mirror the artist's state of mind. Throughout months she had collected sentences that touched her personally. She found them with Fischli/Weiss, picked them up from passengers during train rides, in the literature of Arthur Schnitzler, Peter Stamm, Connie Palmen or Clarice Lispector, or simply invented them herself.

The spacial and auditive experience in "Bilder im Kopf" has voyeuristic traits: the more curious one remains, the more will one learn about the virtual figure. One learns that she is being stalked by a man leaving messages on her answering machine, hears that she's being called by people speaking English and wonders why she keeps pondering about death. The play that takes place inside one's head is also about loneliness, about Beckett's absurdity. Last but not least it is a mirror of our times in which we spend hours navigating in virtual home pages living the romantic illusion of partaking in real life. "Images in the head" is a multi-medial masterpiece with numerous participants. Eva Borner acts as a producer and director. She says she's not a programmer, but uses new media because they enable her to realise her artistic imagination. She is lucky to be supported by sound wizard Hans Peter Gutjahr.