

ARTICUL ACTION

A R T R E V I E W

May 2014

Special Issue



**MATTHEW LANCIT
EVELIN STERMITZ
BENJAMIN POYNTER
JOANA FISCHER
LIENE STRAUPE
NINIA SVERDRUP
KIREILYN BARBER
MATTHEW PELL**

Matthew Pell (United Kingdom)

ARTiculationAction

M A Y

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Matthew Pell

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(United Kingdom)

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Matthew Pell's Video Art explores human identity in urban architectural environments.

His practice is concerned with figurative movement, light and the manipulation of time and sound.

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"The imagery of my collage-like drawings reveals intertwined, evocative dream landscapes and questions environmental and existential topics. Delicate fragments are taken out of context and assembled together in something new."

Ninia Sverdrup

(Sweden/Germany)

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Regardless medium Sverdrup's work always deals with the concept of time. She has worked with a series of issues of time and its relationship to other concepts, such as rationality.

Benjamin Poynter

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Benjamin's work in recent years has revolved around time and labor intensive game projects. Although the theoretical basis of his works varies from project to project, at the undertone of each is a need to blur the binary between fantasy and reality.

Evelin Stermitz

(Austria/USA)

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Evelin Stermitz, M.A., M.Phil., studied Media and New Media Art at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, and holds the degree in Philosophy from Media Studies. Her works in the field of media and new media art focus on post-structuralist feminist art practices.

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(Canada/France)

Matthew Lancit is an award winning Canadian filmmaker. Aside from making film and video art, he has published heavily personalized essays on a wide range of subjects. Lancit is currently at work on his second feature length documentary and fathering his baby daughter in Paris, France.

Matthew Lancit



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(Latvia)

I don't need people to understand my art, I'm happy if they enjoy it and if my art can help people to understand themselves. I make my photos and other works because it is an interesting exploration process, results vary from time to time, but the process is for myself.

Liene Straupe



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(USA)

Kireilyn Barber uses everyday experience and common or mundane subjects from everyday life to work in series or around a system, which can be subject or time-based.

Kireilyn Barber

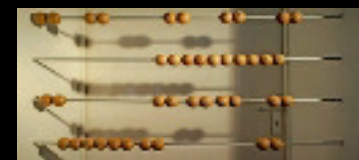


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(Montenegro)

"My work is inspired by everyday- life situations and paradoxes of contemporary society and world we live, that strange place saturated with the media, with an exaggerated production and exaggerated consumption."

Milena Jovicev



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(USA)

"My longest enduring fascination is to capture the human form and psyche utilizing multiple media. Often my interpretation of the female form is anatomically exaggerated, emphasizing the curves that distinguish women as well as define feminine beauty and fertility."

Jana Charl

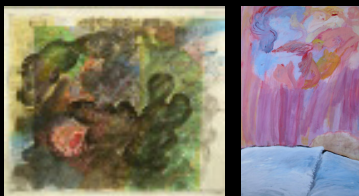


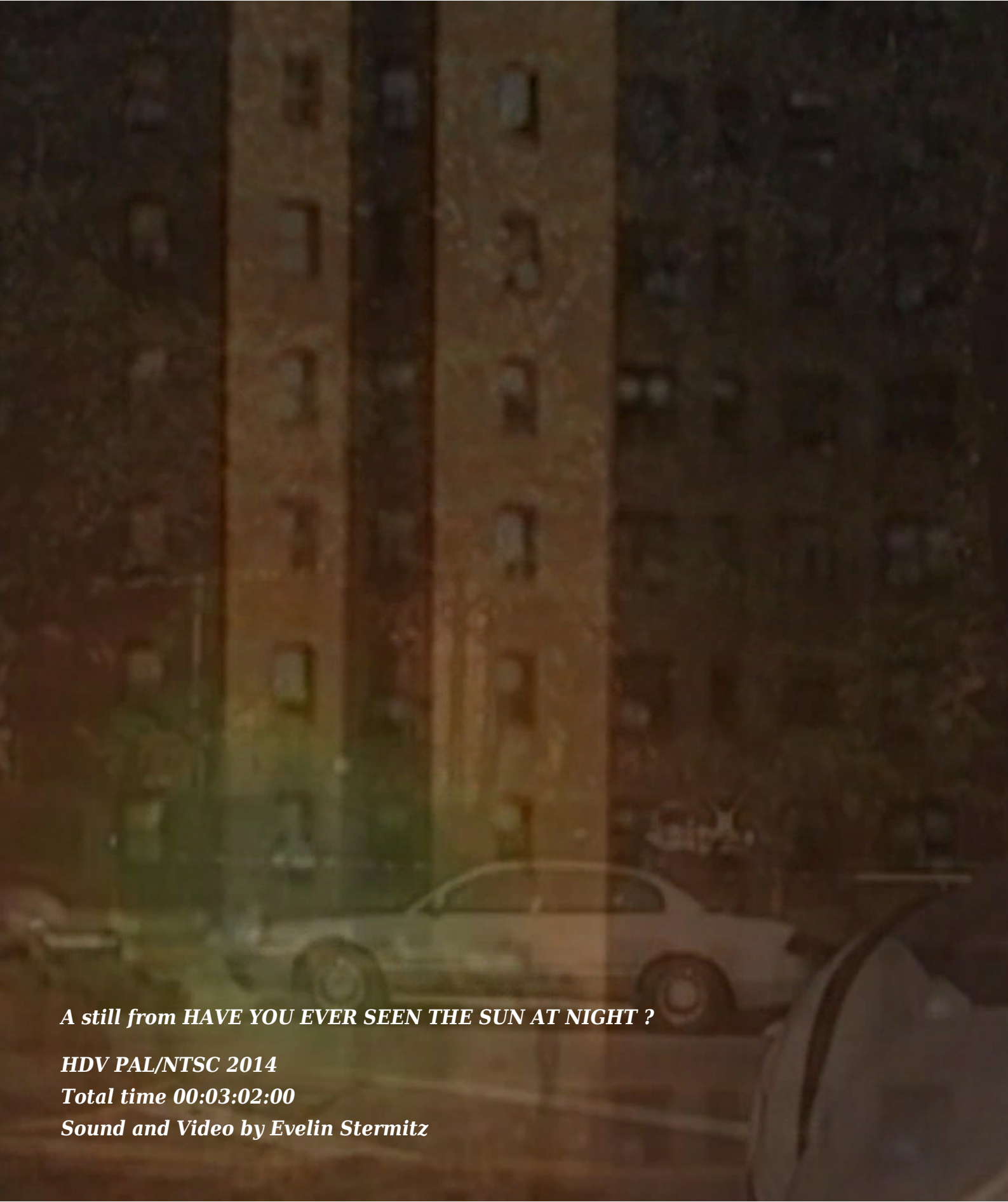
99

(Turkey)

" My artwork is based on personal history, on relationships and memory (dreams, space, geography, land). It is broadly related to memory, dreams, space and connotations. These topics are drawn from daily life as much as from unconscious thoughts. Essentially, I'm attempting to create images according to my own psychological needs. "

Çiğdem Menteşoğlu



A still from the film 'Have You Ever Seen the Sun at Night?' showing a multi-story brick building at night. The building has many windows, some of which are lit. A car is parked in front of the building. The scene is dimly lit, with a warm, orange-brown color palette.

A still from HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE SUN AT NIGHT ?

HDV PAL/NTSC 2014

Total time 00:03:02:00

Sound and Video by Evelin Stermitz

Evelin Stermitz

Evelin Stermitz, M.A., M.Phil., studied Media and New Media Art at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, and holds the degree in Philosophy from Media Studies. Her works in the field of media and new media art focus on post-structuralist feminist art practices. In 2008 she founded ArtFem.TV - Art and Feminism ITV (<http://www.artfem.tv>) and received a Special Mention for the project at the IX Festival Internacional de la Imagen, VI Muestra Monográfica de Media Art, University of Caldas, Manizales, Colombia, in 2010.

Her works have been exhibited and screened at various venues such as the MMoMA Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Russia / Vetlanda Museum, Sweden / Centro Nacional de las Artes, Mexico City / Museum of Modern Art, Buenos Aires, Argentina / PAN Palazzo delle Arti Napoli / CAM Casoria Contemporary Art Museum, Naples, Italy / Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina, Novi Sad, Serbia / Fundació Joan Miró and CCCB Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, Spain / Museum of Fine Arts, Florida State University, USA / MAC/VAL Musée d'Art Contemporain du Val-de-Marne, France / Chelsea Art Museum, New York, USA / International Museum of Women, San Francisco, USA.

www.evelinstermitz.net

An interview with Evelin Stermitz

Hello Evelin, and welcome to ARTiculAction. I would start this interview with my usual introductory question: what in your opinion defines a work of Art? And moreover, what could be the features that mark the contemporariness of an artwork?

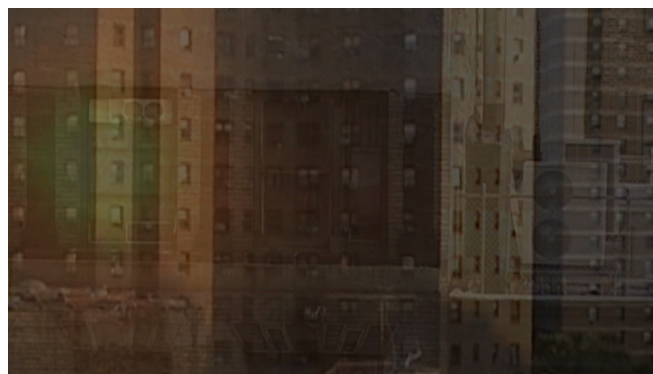
Thank you for inviting me to give this interview. Describing to define a work of art, in my opinion, it is the mind and soul of the creator that becomes visible through artistic expression. The artwork is both intellectual and media related, in contemporary aspects to post-media and new media art, mixed media, installation, and performance.

Contemporariness is a broad term, at least for me, it means expanding the tradition, articulating contemporary issues, sometimes digging in the past and spurring a new discourse with different perspectives, critique, finding new methods and using new technology in the arts, creating interdisciplinary work. Expanding, widening, and breaking with tradition, bringing forth a new mindset on the arts.

Actually, to discuss contemporary art and contemporary artists means to discuss the present and glancing in the future. What was contemporary then is contemporary for us now, where the visionary aspect should be foregrounded.

Would you like to tell us something about your background? Are there any experiences that particularly impacted on the way you produce your art nowadays? In particular, besides your studies of Media and New Media Art at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design you hold a degree in Philosophy from Media Studies: so I would like to ask your point about formal training... Sometimes I ask myself if a certain kind of training could even stifle an artist's creativity...

The academic involvement in the arts founds a ne-



HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE SUN AT NIGHT ?

Still

cessary basis for emerging an own artistic perspective, articulation, and language. Theory and intellectual reflection come to the surface of artistic practice and in the art piece itself and can help to position one's work in the artistic discourse. It can be a critique as well as a statement of awareness or certain kind of aesthetics.

Since I have a background in media studies and merge this with media and new media art that involves gender and socio-cultural aspects, the absolute line is diverse. In my perspective, the wider the theoretical involvement of an artist is, the more interesting and challenging the work of art can be. But this strongly involves the artist self, one should not narrow or limit the own expression.



Evelin Stermitz



A still from **HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE SUN AT NIGHT ?**

HDV PAL/NTSC 2014

Total time 00:03:02:00

Sound and Video by Evelin Stermitz

I cannot really talk about any impacts that influence my work, maybe I am not so much aware about them, but for sure there are many. For instance, I love to travel and to do art projects during my stay somewhere else; this helps to be free from daily business, to get new influences and new perspectives on culture, life, and art, to find oneself in a different environment.

I love to reflect upon personal experiences and about women's position in socio-politics, but not all of my works are women and gender related. I love the visual image and like to work on images and its perception and what is possible to do with them. Influential are probably other women artists,

their art and thoughts, women writers, women philosophers, artist friends.

Before starting to elaborate about your production, would you like to tell our readers something about your process and set up for making your artworks? In particular, what technical aspects do you mainly focus on your work? And how much preparation and time do you put in before and during the process of creating a piece?

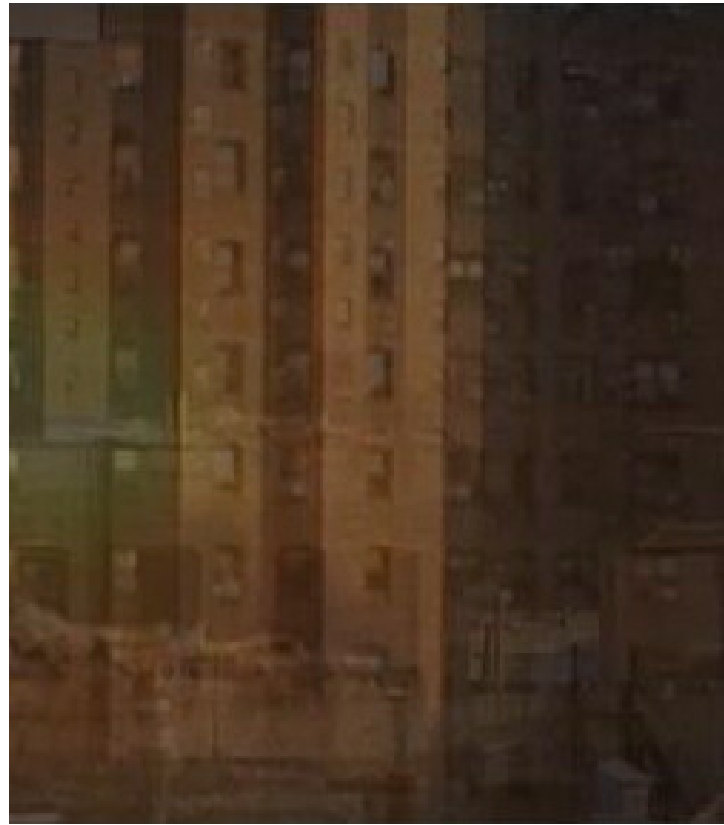
In general, it takes me a lot of time to think what I want to do before I actually begin with the process of creating a new work. Important for me is to feel attracted to something, to be drawn into something.

The process of e.g. filming mostly is rather fast and immediate then, and I do not do video takes over and over again. I keep experimental freedom as well as I follow the act that I have in mind, but I always have a picture of idea in my head before I begin to work on a concrete project. Before this, I do investigations, drawings, taking notes, collecting articles and text parts, pinning and collecting my ideas in a mind cloud. Also important are my experiences that I went through and try to embed them in e.g. video pieces and later in a broader theoretical context. I think it is a waste of time and energy to work without a final picture that you would like to strive, albeit the picture is not firm yet and exists only as a pre-figure.

Then, the postproduction of e.g. video is again a process that takes quite a while and where experiment and concept come together. But finally, I am setting myself a limit of a satisfactorily outcome, because too many amendments can also ruin the intention of a work. And if you ask me later what kind of software technique I have used in a video piece, I actually cannot answer the question, because I do not know it anymore. The video software and further technical aspects are actually not an important issue to me, important is just what you finally create and what you want to articulate with the work. But this entails, that you must know how to handle all the technical aspects, so that you can use them as a playful and creative method. During creation I am just in a workflow and creative process and that is all. It can take constant days and nights and then with a longer break to reflect and then again constant days and nights in absolute peace and mainly in front of the screen.

Now let us focus on your artworks: I would like to start with *Have You Ever See The Sun At Night?* an interesting sound-video art project that our readers have started to get to know in the introductory pages of this article, and I would suggest to visit your website directly at http://evelinstermitz.net/video_sun/sun.html in order to get a wider idea of it... In the meanwhile, could you take us through your creative process when starting this stimulating project?

This video piece evolved from a larger artistic investi-



A still from **HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE SUN AT NIGHT?**

HDV PAL/NTSC 2014

Total time 00:03:02:00

Sound and Video by Evelin Stermitz

gation, since I took several interview projects during my stay in NYC in Summer 2013 and later created pieces on the basis of those interviews. For the mentioned video work, I asked people in the hood what they think about "Life" and it was stunning that quite a lot could not reflect upon the question.

But the interviewed people that I have included in the final video were appropriate to provide the basis for further reflections on the question for the audience.



GHT ?

The title of the video, referring to the question of the possibility to see the sun at night, is a metaphor for the good in humans, the good in life, the light in the dark and the possibility to grasp the impossible.

I interviewed people of Color only, because I wanted to break with the tradition of predominantly White people in media. Further, I experienced that Afro-American people have a strong awareness and deep sensitivity toward meaning and soulful human issues.

Actually, I find it outrageous to discuss the aspect of Black and White people at all, but this is our society and the dyadic, exclusive, discriminatory, racist system is still dominant. To oppose this, I aimed to highlight their voices and images, with mentioning them as equal people, without labeling them, when even in a short video piece. I really love them all and feel so grateful that they were open to let me video grab them. I really would love to do a feature film with Afro-American people only!

By the way, I can recognize that one of the possible ideas underlying this work is to unfold a compositional potential in the seemingly random and chaotic structure of traffic... Even though I am aware that this might sound a bit naïf, I am wondering if one of the hidden aims of Art could be to search the missing significance to a non-place... I am sort of convinced that some information and ideas are hidden, or even "encrypted" in the environment we live in, so we need -in a way- to decipher them. Maybe that one of the roles of an artist could be to reveal unexpected sides of Nature, especially of our inner Nature... What is your point about this?

This question is absolutely not naïf, but very important, since the artist should travel for the sublime recognition with all its nuances. Only through this, aspects that are covered by noise and debris can become visible. I like the idea of locating a specific non-place through art. Through this, the areas and experiences of regular-mundane perception are left behind and become specific notions of remembrance in a peculiar and non-familiar way. Important is that artistic perception results in an elevation as such. Further, art can be one form to create room for non-articulated aspects and perform such as visible and audible. If you mean that "reveal unexpected sides of Nature" could be to attribute peculiarity and find traces in the distinctiveness, then art can be a form to find a dialogue in the specific textures of perception. I think, "perception" is the significant word for an artist that seeks for the unexpected, values the depth and is eager to explore more in a socio-political environment. Inner aspects are central in some of my works; mainly they are rela-



A still from **WHAT IS LOVE?**

HDV PAL/NTSC 2013

total time 00:10:16:00

Concept, Sound, Video by Evelin Stermitz.

Special credits to Eric Payson.

ted to my own experiences, psychological traces and the woman in a socio-political environment. I must admit that my works are self-centered to a certain degree.

But it is also interesting how to deal with the perceived information as an artist, how to transform it into art, what kind of appropriate materials to be used to make it finally an art piece. Further the role of the audience is important, to cope with new techniques, new visions, new aspects. Actually, an artist always reveals, articulates, explores, and finally the art piece tries to make understand, to sensibelize, to mediate, to articulate again.

Another interesting piece of yours on which I would like to spend some words is What Is Love? This piece is strictly connected to the chance of establishing a deep intellectual involvement with your audience since it follows the question that gives title to the piece by various answers from short interviews of women... so I would like to ask you if in your opinion personal experience is an absolutely indispensable part of a creative process, both for conceiving an artwork and in order to enjoy it... Do you think that a creative process could be disconnected from direct experience?

This video piece was another one that I created in



*A still from **WHAT IS LOVE?***

2013 based on interviews. Recently, I found strong interest in the spoken word, I became interested to create sound collages and in finding sound traces of the oral voice. The personal question is foregrounded in this video piece, and actually it is not possible to find an absolute answer, since it is such a personal issue. Actually, the issue of “Love” tangled me at that time and there is a personal relation of art piece and art life and life in general. Personal experiences of the artist, the experiences of the interviewed people - as voices of art - in the video, in relation to the experiences of the audience, since “Love” is such a universal theme, are obviously a central aspect in this piece.

I think that the involvement of reflection and connection of personal experience as an artist in creating art is important, because an artist is a social person, a human being that lives and perceives socio-political environment. I am sure, that even, if someone creates pure mathematical computer coded art, there is always an essence, an impetus to create, that resides from the artist's experience. Even in abstract art you can find traces of correlations to the artist's and viewer experiences.

In particular for this video piece, I recorded women voices only and did not film the people. I think this process makes it easier to collect manifold statements, since people are not too shy as to speak in front of a camera.



*A still from **WHAT IS LOVE?***

Further, it keeps the people anonymously and leaves more space for the imaginary of the audience. To include only women's voices was important to me, since I wanted to highlight women's voices and intended to explore what other think about this issue. So I walked up and down the NYC High Line and asked the women that I met. The diversity of statements with its various sounds of voices surprised me. But I think that in our fast-paced society the matter of “Love” is marginal, people are degenerated and do not think about universal values and feelings anymore, although it pertains everyone, it is hardly self-experienced and rather possession oriented, desensitized.

To the audio recordings, I filmed a car drive with my friend Eric Payson, since we often do a journey when I am in NYC and I love the American street perspectives and highways. Using this as a visual background meant for me to provide a surface for the voices that is not too distracting for the listeners. I think that car journeys provide a lot of time for reflections and to discuss issues when being on the move. I did not pay attention on correct filming of the perspective and rather wanted to see for me what I filmed later, since I also have been involved in talking and wanted to experience the perspective myself not only through the camera. Finally, the video turned out to become like an amateur film from an old 16 mm role or made by another 70s camera, whereby the digital purity-cleanness-cold



A still from **LES Blocks**

3 channel video

HDV PAL 2013

total time 00:01:10:00

Concept, Sound, Video by Evelin Stermitz.

Special credits to Kharlique Gardner.

got lost. I find it always interesting when an art piece is moving and attracting the perception of the audience through a connection of "touch" that is noticeable. Of course, this perception is individual, but mostly it is a special kind of sensibility in aesthetics that the art piece mediates. I think that real art is never de-touched from real life although it transcends reality in an aesthetics that creates the artistic real.

Your work often reveals a socio-political criticism, and moreover - as in the stimulating 3 channel video entitled LES Blocks and especially in I Don't Love You Anymore, which I have to admit is one of my favorite work of yours - in my opinion it also seeks to challenge art in its conventions of exclusivity and question the audience's role as passive consumer: and I am sort of convinced that Art these days could play an effective role not only making aware public opinion, but I would

go as far as to say that nowadays Art can steer people's behavior... What is your point about this?

I am not so sure about if art really can steer people's behavior. Politics, news and social media can do this, but visual art in general receives only a small audience, the people that targets art in our society is not that large as "we artists" might assume. But all in all, contemporary art aims to involve the audience, its role is not anymore passive and exclusive. In that sense, art can raise awareness of problematic issues, can involve the recipient through interactive pieces, and can lead the audience to think different or to re-think about issues.

However, I aim to do socio-political criticism in my art pieces. *LES Blocks* is a 3-channel video work that I did after a series of audio recordings in the



hood at the Lower East Side in NYC. It is shocking how people largely live in public housing; rape, drugs, suicide is pretty common. Young people do not have any perspectives, doing fast food jobs and sometimes not even have a permanent place to stay, having a troubled childhood, poor education. I posted these audio recordings on Facebook as a series of "Lower East Side Talks" so that more people have access to them. Although, people were more eager to talk without a video camera, one woman even said that she does not like to talk, because the authorities could detect her voice and even one woman was told by police not to talk in public about the happenings. But this said, with all the audio recordings it was done for me to just leave them as they are and not to use them in a particular art project.

Finally, I wanted to film the blocks because I felt attracted to them and found some young people



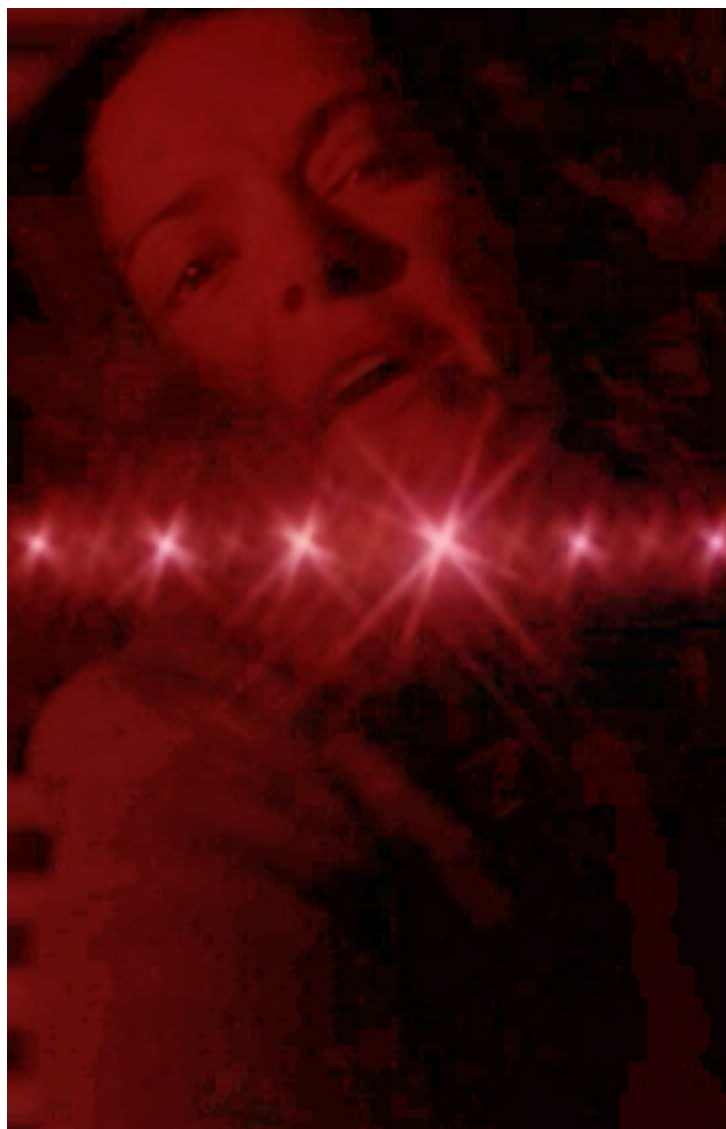
A still from ***I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE***

DV PAL/NTSC 2012 total time 00:08:45:00
Concept, Sound, Video by Evelin Stermitz

in front of a building. Kharlique Gardner was one of them who spoke a few sentences into the camera and it was just so perfect to include in the video piece. So many famous people of all kind of artists originated from the Lower East Side, but as one person said, they do not come back. Each year that I come to New York, I find it more desperate to visit this area. It changes so very fast from year to each year; also the Jewish community that has been very strong seems to vanish, and together with the people all their old stores, bakeries, stories, history, and culture. But despite this, the art scene is flourishing at the Lower East Side, plenty of galleries have recently opened in the abandoned side streets, young artists and young gallery owners are occupying the empty stores and bring new artistic life to the front.

To talk about the other video that you mentioned, *I Don't Love You Anymore*, this articulates the women's ability to finish a wrong relationship. It came out from my experience that many women are staying in a relationship, although it is doing harm to them and actually is already over. They rather prefer to stand a bad relationship instead of having the courage to finish it and start something new, to lose old patterns, old dependency. Also in popular cinema, it is not very common as a film thread that the woman is leaving the partner. In most films the stigma occurs for a woman to be left and to be commiserated. But this is not appropriate for our society anymore and a few films were changing this thread. I picked up some of those films and created an only "break up" film out of the scenes to show the strength of the women and not their weakness. While women "making a scene" to the male actor was considered as a form of hysteria and as an unassimilated women's role in Hollywood cinema as well as in real society, nowadays it is considered in a few films as strength and independence.

In particular, for gender aspects, it is necessary to decode the male mainstream and make visible hidden women's aspects. To render visible suppression and commodification is only one aspect to decipher a male-formed society that occurs within capitalist structures.



A still from ***I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE***

DV PAL/NTSC 2012

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Concept, Sound, Video by Evelin Stermitz

During these years your works have been exhibited in several occasions around the world... it goes without saying that positive feedbacks are capable of providing an artist of a special support... I was just wondering if the expectation of a positive feedback could even influence the process of an artist...



By the way, how much important is for you the feedback of your audience? Do you ever think who will enjoy your Art when you conceive your pieces? I sometimes wonder if it could exist a genuine relationship between business and Art...

Actually, I never think of an audience when creating

creating an art piece. I am just creating and try to find an aesthetics that fits my vision and the concept, but finally view the work from the outside also, as to regard the work of a stranger. Although the response of the audience is important for the artist and the relation of the work in the art context, since otherwise it would not make sense to create at all and someone could just create for one's own sake. But since I hardly get any direct response from the audience because I seldom visit all the exhibitions and screenings, I can only assume that the work is discussed since it has been curated and is shown. The process of creating for the pleasure of others is risky, because it can mislead the intention of the work and lower the quality. I mainly create works with critical aspects and not for the pleasure of viewing beautiful images. Some-times I receive feedback from the curators, but the work being curated and with this being involved in the discourse of the exhibition is a good response at all.

Further, the acknowledgement of artist friends is important to me, because I can feel that my work is understood and appreciated. But in my opinion, the artist should develop such a strong personality that is independent from positive response and that can handle to be open for critical comments, whereby sometimes critique is more important to proceed in the artistic span. I see the quality of an artist also in the ability to critical self-reflect over the own artistic work and artistic series.

Thank you for your time and for sharing with us your thoughts, Evelin. My last question deals with your future plans: what is next for you? Anything coming up for you professionally that you would like readers to be aware of?

Actually, I prefer not to talk about future projects or current occupation, because it makes more sense to discuss realized works. But two of my future wishes are, first to install a multiple channel video piece in a concrete room with all its technical facilities and second, to find time to create an artistic inspired feature film or to create an artistic lead documentary.

Thank you also for sharing your interest in my artistic work!

An interview by articulation@post.com