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The artist behind the video

Interview with Evelin Stermitz

As part of your artistic path, what brought you to video art, and what type of role does it play for you now?

I have always been interested in the moving image as a visual experience of both spectator and creator, and dealt with this also in theory. Since I have been using photography as an experience of single but still images, I thought to expand this somehow non-vivid and moment based aspect. The camera and capturing the movement intrigued me, and with this all the aspects of altering and manipulating the image for artistic purposes. You can relate what you were filming and are able to create experiences that transcend reality. With multiple channel video works it is possible to draw the spectator into an artistic reality that creates its own meaning. Further, it is interesting what meaning the artistic real creates.



How much influence do you believe your cultural background, and the *foreground* of globalized culture have had in your artistic expression?

Although, I have an Austrian cultural background, my works are created mainly abroad and influenced by countries that I have visited. I think the video pieces that I created are strongly influenced by my experiences of finding myself with a foreign glance in American culture, further some works I did in Slovenia also, where I studied. For me as an artist, it is important to be free from any own predominantly cultural heritage, to be free from any cultural determination. Only when I feel free, I can create free works that express meaning not only related to a small cultural area. The works should gain a form of empowerment of its own and express an international art approach. The globalized culture is influential in a way of perceiving art works by other artists that are circulating internationally. Actually, for me as an artist, the globalized culture is influential not in creating as such, but rather in the area of exhibiting. Globalization means for me in particular an international exchange of artistic ideas and collaborations.

Your relationship with digital tools: how much do you think they changed your artistic expression, and in what way?

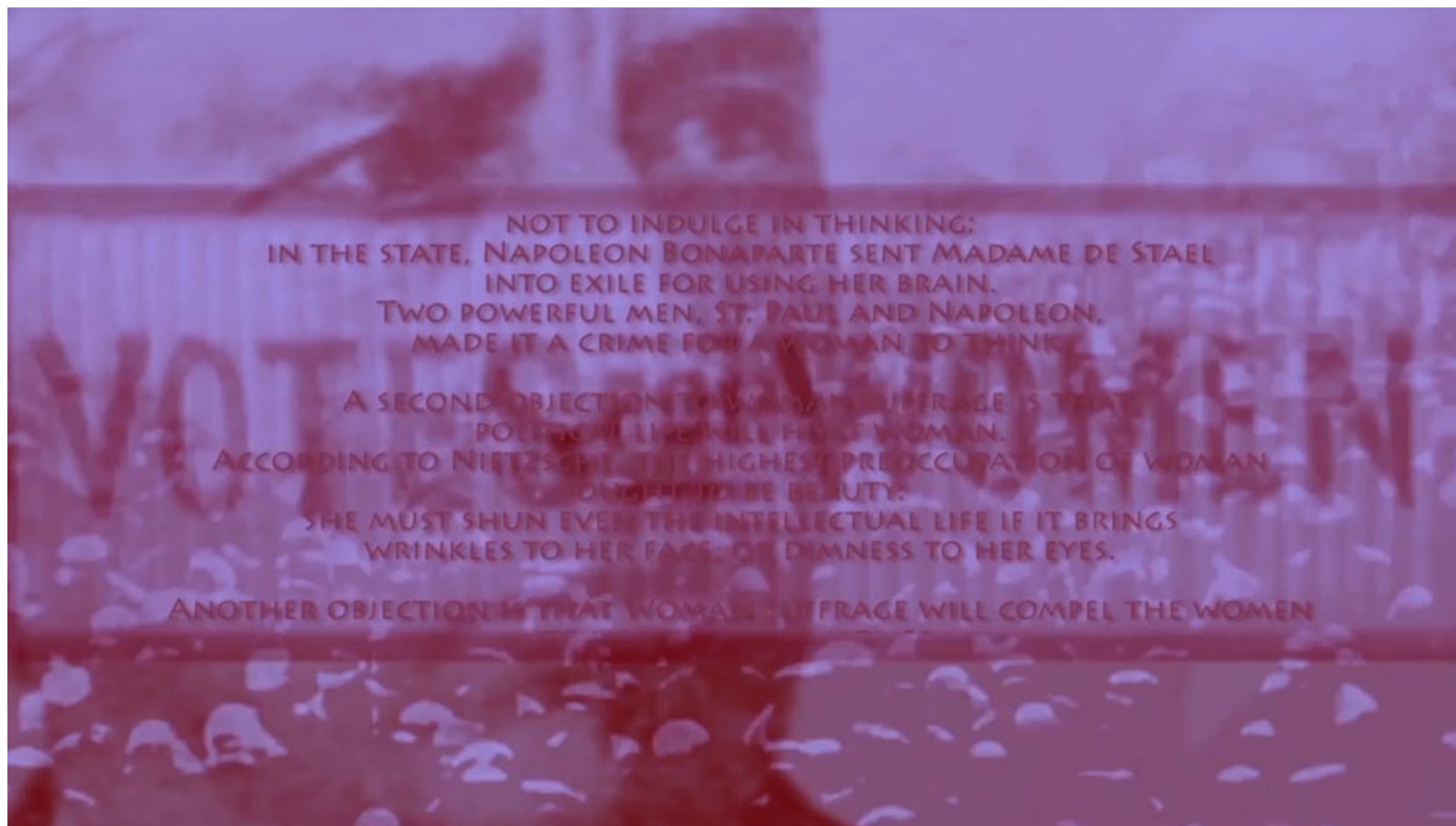
Since I have been dealing with digital tools for quite a while, I got used to them maybe like a painter to the brush, color and canvas. For me, digital software and hardware is not something that has changed my creation, it is just something that you use for your artistic expression. You can only create what originates from yourself, and not what occurs from any digitized machine or program.

Which are, if any, the artists (and not only videoartists) who have influenced your path, and for what reasons?

I remember, that I saw video pieces by Shirin Neshat that were very impressive to me. I liked the idea of dealing with women in society in an artistic approach and in a psychological aspect of images. Later, I got to know works by VALIE EXPORT and many other women artists from the 1970s period that influenced my aim of art in connection to feminism. Later, American artists, like Nina Sobell, Beryl Korot, Perry Bard, Margot Lovejoy, Michelle Handelman, Elise Kermani, amongst others, were influential in my further understanding of art and the artistic process of creation. I understood that art is socially as well as individual. Interesting was and is the connection of performance and video art, because it was so dominant in the 1970s and further occurs in current video art pieces by many women artists. And later, since I founded ArtFem.TV (www.artfem.tv) in the year 2008, I gained access to many video art pieces by women artists that I would not have seen before creating this online video project.

If you look back, what are the moments, the experiences that, as a videoartist, have marked your personal artistic history?

When I began to occupy myself with video art, I have been interested in video and performance, in creating sound to the videos, recently I found interest in sound recordings in addition to the images. The expansion of video art through multiple channel video was important. Important was, that I met artist and composer Elise Kermani, who created the sound to many video pieces and this turned out to be a wonderful collaboration and friendship. Actually, I collaborated and met with many wonderful artists and curators and this was always a wonderful experience and exchange of thoughts. These are the moments where you feel that your artistic work makes sense and is appreciated, is understood and discussed, that you feel connected to a wider universe.



Beyond your personal experience, do you think there have been significant steps in the history of videoart, and if so what?

First of all, of course, the inventive character of early video art is lost nowadays, because video is so very common and much available now. And second, the style of video art changed from non-edited black and white videotapes to digitized software edited video files. But important is that video art became now a common art genre shown in art institutions and at festivals. It is not a kind of non-institutionalized art form anymore, albeit it is still not centered yet. Concerning the change of style, influential was the 1990s pop generation with its clip aesthetics, and nowadays the digitized technical software. But actually, very common is also the material in form of pure recordings. Well, all depends probably on the aim of the artist.

Later, the invention of the Internet and its spreading of videos plays an important role, because it became possible to perceive video art online, even in online exhibitions and festivals. This changed the perception of video art as to be former perceived as something exclusive, while the exclusive character of video art got lost through the Internet and received quite a public character and perception.

Further important, of course, is the invention and expansion of multiple channel video and video installation. For example, the vast total room installations through video art by Pipilotti Rist are showing the current possibilities of the media video in the arts.

If you look forward, what are your expectations as a videoartist?

Actually, my expectations are not so high, because video art as an art genre is pretty common nowadays. But, my expectations are rather in realizing own new works and in exploring new fields of perception. Finally, I would like to find a certain room with all its technical equipment to install a recent multiple channel video installation, or to have the other 3-channel video pieces installed. Also, maybe I can find time to create an artistic inspired feature film or artistic motivated documentary. With video it is so easy nowadays to create real feature films or documentaries, what was not possible easy to do a while ago.

Looking at the scenario of international videoart, what are the *nodes* on which you feel should be working, to give it more breathing?

I think, that the art institutions should still make some more room for video art and video installations. The audience and its experience of video art is still limited, because for the institutions it is technical featured and time based art. Current international video artists are already well connected through festivals and collaborations, but in general the current institutional system puts video art still on hold, while video art became acknowledged as an art form in theory and embedded in some art institutions and galleries. Important is further, the acknowledgement of the works by many women artists in this still male dominated technologic genre, while many women artists from the 1970s were pioneers in early video art.

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