

PROGRAM 1

The Lives of Performers (Before the Rehearsal)

Maya Schweizer

Before the Rehearsal, 2009, 16 min.

Maya Schweizer's short documentary *Before the Rehearsal* observes members of the L.A.-based comedy troupe *Slow Children Crossing* rehearsing a sketch in a private apartment, literally between a microwave and a refrigerator. After the rehearsal, the actors discuss (self-)marketing strategies for attracting greater media attention to their group. Thus the work demonstrates that the rehearsal of role models doesn't take place (anymore) in "real" life, but (for a long time now) in commercial media.

"Formed in 2006, and including mainly African-American writer-performers, this group describes itself as promoting a 'take-no-prisoners' approach to humor, dealing with subjects such as 'politics, race, sex, slavery, celebrities'. The video developed as a relatively spontaneous response to Schweizer's interaction with this group of aspiring television workers, and they participated in its production as a networking strategy. Schweizer was invited to record several of the group's rehearsals and meetings, in return for copies of the master tapes, which *Slow Children Crossing* could then potentially use for promotional purposes. The members of *Slow Children Crossing* consciously and continually present themselves to each other (and to Schweizer's camera) as savvy media professionals, in command of every aspect of their brand, despite the relatively limited material resources that seem available to them. So *Before the Rehearsal* features fragments of scripted performances, followed by moments of feedback and self-critique, in which the performers rapidly shift between the characters they are playing and other modes of equally constructed self-presentation." (Maeve Connolly, *TV Museum: Contemporary Art and the Age of Television*, Bristol and Chicago: Intellect Books, 2014)

Credits

Slow Children Crossing, featuring Ivy Lindsey, Brett J. Buttler, Tiffany Thomas, Alem Sapp, Saudia Rashed and Destini Meshak in *Before the Rehearsal*

Sound mastering: Thomas Wallman

Camera and editing, colour correction: Maya Schweizer

Translation: Frank Weigand

Thanks to *Slow Children Crossing*, Ann Kaneko, Laura Horelli, Clemens von Wedemeyer, Sylvia Schedelbauer and Christine Woditschka.

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Eva Könnemann

ensemble, 2010, 83 min.

ensemble is a fictitious documentary that accompanies the troubled development of a stage production. Stefanie Diekmann writes:

“The film rehearses the rehearsal under real working conditions: after the actors were cast and before the (only) performance at Kampnagel in Hamburg. The rehearsal stage (often termed “laboratory” by theatre directors) here becomes the secluded setting of an experiment within which a working process has been solely launched in order to be observed.”

The filmic approach resembles a test arrangement: a group of actors specifically cast for the film spends six weeks in the black box of a theatre in order to work on Georg Büchner’s revolution drama *Danton’s Death*. The conditions of their encounter are fictitious, while the date of the planned opening night in front of a paying audience is real and unavoidable.

The play’s director is a performance artist from the independent scene who refuses the conventional role of a director, inviting the actors—all very different in their respective views of their profession—to work non-hierarchically. Only through the ideas and imaginations of every single individual shall the play be developed. By way of this freedom, which not all of the actors come to terms with in equal measure, the group’s self-reflection becomes increasingly central to the working process. Instead of advancing the *mise-en-scène*, the rules and regulations of procedure are being discussed. In the emerging deadlock, it is the ensemble itself that increasingly resembles the protagonist of *Danton’s Death*. The revolution is almost finished, and now it is time to establish a new social order. But how difficult it seems to conciliate the interest of the individual with those of the community. (Eva Könnemann)

Credits

Cast: Niels Bormann, Nikola Duric, Inga Fridrihsone, Charalambos Ganotis, Jacob Peter Kovner, Felix Kramer, Carsten “Erobique” Meyer, Jelka Plate, Michael Rastl, Vanessa Stern and Tom Stromberg

Direction, camera, editing and production: Eva Könnemann

Sound: Jens Röhm

Music: Erobique

Costumes: Jelka Plate

Production manager: Sabina Doerr

Commissioning editor: Bettina Kasten (ZDFkultur)

In collaboration with Kampnagel Internationale Kulturfabrik Hamburg

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Marlies Pöschl

Sternheim, 2011, 35 min. 9 sec.

Twelve teenagers find themselves in a remote, indistinct interior space. Which role they are to play here is still ambiguous to them. On the one hand, two theatre coaches, Frauke and Eva, are engaging them in a workshop for the development of their theatre project “Sophie 2.0.” At the same time, the young protagonists are asked to participate in auditions for director Christoph Martin’s next film. The teenagers find themselves on the interstice between those two contradictory educational settings, and still have to invent the parts they want to play. How do they deal with those different requirements, and how do they act out resistance towards them? Which roles do they develop for themselves in order to shape their space of play?

Sternheim is a semi-fictional film based on a coming-of-age novel (Bildungsroman) entitled *Die Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim*, published in 1771 by German author Sophie von La Roche. Falling in between the literary movements of the German Enlightenment and *Empfindsamkeit* (Sensibility), this text is the first German *Bildungsroman* to focus on the development of a female protagonist. At the same time, the film refers to popular TV casting shows, which increasingly depict the development of their protagonists as a “make-over.”

In a dazzling meandering between reality and fiction, *Sternheim* intertwines historical and contemporary narrations of self-formation. The film partly replays dramaturgic elements of both formats so as to investigate their aesthetic and antagonistic potential, and at the same time to critique the ideas about education and subjectivation conveyed through them. (Marlies Pöschl)

Credits

Directing, scriptwriting and production: Marlies Pöschl

Cast: Valerie Angermayr, Lilly Bacher, Sophie Ferner, Selina Graf, Anna Schmeikal, Juliane Stadler, Verena Stümpfle, Sebastian Hartl, Andreas Kellner, Gabriel Staffa, Alexander Stockinger, Florian Macheiner, Frauke Steiner, Rosalin Hertrich, Alena Baich, Andreas Markus

Photography: Leopold Leskovar, Barbara Sas, David Rabeder, Philipp Kaindl, Carolina Machtynger

Sound: David Rabeder, Simon Rabeder, Martin Fisch

Sound design: Stefan Hajek

Editing: Sebastian Schreiner

Set design: Ivonne Stark

Assistant director: Melani Murkovic

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Maya Schweizer and Clemens von Wedemeyer

Rien du tout (Nothing at All), 2006, 30 min.

Rien du tout can be seen as a commentary on the staging of Samuel Beckett's play *Catastrophe*, a work on the despotic power of a stage director—played here by a woman—over her assistant and the actor preparing to play the part of a condemned man in the Middle Ages. The young people who turn up to the open-call casting add their waiting and exchanges of everyday conversation to the work. The non-cinematographic reality of the extras gradually becomes the focus of the film: in a kind of spontaneous party, the actors take over the open-air car park to put on what becomes the real play.

The catastrophe in question is the rioting in the Paris suburbs that was going on while the film was being shot at the invitation of the Centre d'art contemporain (CAC) de Brétigny, itself located in the suburbs of the city, to coincide with a Wedemeyer exhibition taking place there. The casting for the film took place on the opening day of the exhibition, and the shooting, which was done in the CAC's theatre and car park, was programmed to coincide with the centre's opening hours, creating a confused meeting of spectators, actors and film crew, with an approach that comes close to the proposals of Relational Aesthetics. In this social experiment, visitors to the exhibition are caught up in the action together with the people waiting to become filmed, and it is they who generate the film, over and above the scripted narrative. To a certain extent, the film can be said to indirectly incorporate its own making-of: even though it has no hard-and-fast substance, its narrative gradually goes in an opposite direction to that which it initially appears to take: it turns back on itself until it reaches the final scene, a public tableaux vivant that is the real play that is being filmed. (Adapted from Manuel Segade, "Screen Affections", in: *Clemens Von Wedemeyer, Centro Galego De Arte Contemporánea*).

Credits

Cast: Inge Offermann, Yann Chermat, Sabine Kuntoff

Script: Clemens von Wedemeyer, Maya Schweizer

Camera: Frank Meyer, Rosario Romagnosi

Costume design: Clara Camus

Sound recording: Karim Sou

Sound design: Thomas Wallmann

Assistant director: Aurélio Cardenas

Production management: Florence Alexandre

Unit manager: Gaspard Hirschi

Produced by: CAC Brétigny, Pierre Bal-Blanc; BB4 Berlin Biennale, Château-Rouge production, Gaele Jones

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