

"90 degrees", DV, 4:3, colour, 7.50 min, 2007
(derived from the motifs of the 5 channel video installation "Gate 0")

Actors: Peter Afken, Maggie Koller, Nora Schwarz, Mark Kepler
Direction, Camera, Sound, Drawings, Editing: Josephin Böttger
2nd Camera : Peter Afken

Gate 0, 5 channel Videoinstallation at **SKAM** Hamburg, 2007

The fact that the sequel to Gate 1 is entitled Gate 0 somehow reveals the essence of this video installation. In the quantum universe, particles of matter are not restricted by the physical limitations of what we commonly regard as reality. A photon, for instance, will quite readily move back in time to retrieve an errant charge before continuing on its original path. Moreover, it is now common for serious cosmologists to propound multi-dimensional reality models with parallel "bubble" universes. It is becoming increasingly difficult to grasp physical reality with common sense.

The three protagonists in the Gate 0 installation obviously have mixed feelings about their encounters with their multiple selves. The stoic male character confronts a small army of selves with almost pathological indifference, as they engage in absurd 'looped' choreographies involving empty carrier bags or hammers. One of the two female protagonists, a chainsaw-wielding manual labourer, appears to be more upset by the strange goings on. The other female character, a caricature of a 'typical' petit bourgeois housewife, is less adventurous, and seems to be having trouble finding a suitable role in a disconcertingly foreign and mirror-free environment.

The main part of the installation is comprised of three large screens, which simultaneously show the three central video sequences. The films are accompanied by pseudo-scientific text snippets, which are independently 'beamed' onto the floors and walls of the exhibition space. The installation is rounded off by a blackened cardboard box, which is fixed to the wall at approximately eye level. Closer inspection of the inconspicuous box reveals that it is in fact the miniature 'laboratory' model used as one of the sets in the main videos. To complicate things even further, yet more video loops are played on a tiny window-like screen inside this box.

The visual impact of the installation is provided by the sheer diversity of images and the speed of the editing. Video footage is interspersed with animated material, snippets of written text, and static interference. A good deal of the atmosphere, however, is created by the detailed audio design. The brilliance, transparency and elegance of the noises conspire to produce an evocative soundtrack. Much of the work's suspense is created by the subtle, and often menacing, interaction of sounds and images.

Gate 0 teeters on the edge of a linear narrative. However, the viewer tends to get distracted by the multitude of visual and acoustic impressions, and is overwhelmed by the number of possible associations, interpretations and connotations. The work not only explores the way we interact with our environment, our contemporaries and ourselves, but also questions the validity of our sensory perception, and our ability to cope with a wider reality.

Science used to subscribe to the theoretical possibility of unlocking the divine master plan by employing causal logic. Nowadays however, analysis of fundamental scientific reality tends to rely on degrees of probability, whilst allowing for the possibility of entirely indeterminate conditions. Like the Copernican revolution, which relegated the earth to the cosmological periphery, the quantum scientific revolution further undermines the stability of human existence by blatantly flouting the supposedly immutable laws governing physical reality. Gate 0 reflects this fuzziness.

As the protagonists cling to the last vestiges of reason in an increasingly irrational universe, the plot trundles doggedly towards a logical conclusion, before being consumed by the weight of its own complexity.

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