



**MAKE THE MOST OF NOW**

25.03–24.04.2010

**KUNSTHALLE EXNERGASSE**

## Introduction

*Make the Most of Now* — a strong urge for ‘immediacy’ has been haunting modern art: Attempts to merge art into life, seeking for an experience beyond alienation and objectification. This approach can be very well understood looking at e.g. performance art from the 1960s and ‘70s. Is it possible, however, that this promise of ‘immediacy’ has already been fulfilled — albeit under a different premise?

The title of the show *Make the Most of Now* re-appropriates and refers to the slogan of a mobile provider’s advertisement campaign. The desire for an intense and more real life mirrored in this invocatory slogan raises serious doubts about its potential fulfillment. It might be considered that the boundaries between emotions, experiences, intensity and their (medial) representation have gradually dissolved. The claim for an intense, ubiquitous and encompassing presence might just be another symptom of the contemporary postfordistic blurring of life and work in our capitalist society. Presently, as the economical paradigm has shifted towards immaterial labour, the entire life has become time of production. The ‘Here and Now’ becomes a new resource.

In this regard the title *Make the Most of Now* is more of an ambiguous call for involvement into the ‘Now’, oscillating between a decisive imperative and a rather disillusioning, artificial theatricality. Accordingly, the works included in the exhibition share a more diffused approach towards an idea of a wholly absorbing experience of time and presence: Nevertheless in their respective means, they all are all characterized by a high level of emotional intensity. Considering the relation of any unmediated ‘authentic’ and ‘live’ event and its medial (mis-) representation, the ‘real’ is created artificially in order to be able to transmit a form of ‘immediacy’.

The exhibition explores unlike forms of showing so-called ‘great emotions’, viewed against the background of today’s shifted perception of time and experience. The included works are presumed to be capable of reflecting on so-called ‘life’, ‘desire’ or merely speak about ‘personal feelings’. Their strategies are either performative or at least referring to concepts of theatricality. In doing so, on a more abstract level, they act as a template for alternative links of affects and desires; other forms of subjectivity, recollection and presence.

In questioning the current status, the exhibition’s intention is to disclose performatively how to elude, shift or re-frame the present expectations of what might be coined ‘dispositif of immediacy’.

The 1972 experimental film *Lives of Performers* by American artist and choreographer Yvonne Rainer serves as an important historical reference and conceptual frame for the outlined context. Here, Rainer adapts strategies from her choreographic work and uses her dance company members as actors, making 'every day life' the material of the film. *Lives of Performers* being Rainer's first feature film — captioned "a Melodram" — extends her stylistic vocabulary to techniques of fiction and story-telling, therefore breaking with the then-predominant anti-narrative aesthetic paradigm. She makes artificiality become a means of analyzing the pre-conditions of her actors' 'everyday life'.

Yvonne Rainer's "Lives of Performers" looks for a valid account of intense emotions, which then becomes the starting point for a dramaturgy uniting "autobiographical fictions", "untrue confessions", "undermined narratives" and "mimed documentaries".

## **Artists:**

Manon de Boer  
Keren Cytter  
Yael Davids  
Edith Dekyndt  
Katja Gretzinger  
Lina Grumm  
Alexander Hempel  
Paul Hendrikse  
Joachim Koester  
Hans-Christian Lotz  
Yvonne Rainer  
Eran Schaerf  
Jochen Weber

## **Concept and Curator:**

Max Benkendorff

## **Exhibition Architecture:**

Max Benkendorff  
Jochen Weber

Works

## Manon de Boer

°1962, Amsterdam, Netherlands —  
lives and works in Brussels and Amsterdam

### **Sylvia Kristel — Paris, 2003**

*Sylvia Kristel — Paris* is a documentary movie about a pop icon from the 70's, Sylvia Kristel, a Dutch actress and model who became famous for her role in the soft-core movie *Emmanuelle*, one of the most successful French films ever. During a period of two years, Manon de Boer asked Kristel twice to talk about cities where she had lived. By separating image and sound, portrait and voice, the documentary introduces an element of doubt to the viewer, appealing to the collective memory, in which Kristel equals *Emmanuelle*. De Boer presents an intimate portrait of a performer, moving beyond the basic contours of factual depiction and capturing instead the subtle seduction that is critical to the art of performance.

The film opens with a silent portrait of Kristel, elegantly posed for the camera in a manner that recalls Warhol's 'Screen Tests' (1964–66). It then cuts to an extended montage featuring exterior shots of Paris, accompanied by a meandering voiceover from the actress. As the image crawls across Paris, rising from street to rooftops and back down again, so too Kristel moves through the story of her past. Her narrative lingers over selected events and glosses over others, cutting abruptly from one episode to the next.

Courtesy Jan Mot, Brussels

## Keren Cytter

°1977, Tel Aviv, Israel —  
lives and works in Berlin

### **Der Spiegel, 2007**

Keren Cytter's short film *Der Spiegel* (The Mirror) confronts the viewer with the naked body of a woman aged about 40. In a spoken stream of consciousness she expresses her desire for a younger body and for a man to save her from her loneliness. A chorus made up of three further women comments on and moderates the events. It represents the "mass" which is as "proud and frisky" as it is merciless. As two men arrive the situation sharpens dramatically.

The theatrically condensed setting takes place in a single, almost empty room; it is registered in a single shot by a restlessly moving hand camera. Camera and mirror, other's glances and comments are the instances that confront the protagonist with the reality of her ageing body and -time and again - make clear how self- and external perception differ. The individual's relation to its social surrounding is staged in the shape of its perpetual collapse. The film thereby fathoms the expressional potential of verbal, visual and theatrical languages.

Courtesy Galerie Schauort, Zürich

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Yael Davids, *Notation of Hands' Positions*, 2007

Pencil on paper (drawing executed by Annelies M. Middel)



## Yael Davids

°1968, Tel Aviv, Israel —

lives and works in Amsterdam, Netherlands

### ***End on Mouth in Absentia, 2007***

“The work exists for a moment. Afterwards, what is left is a void, an absence, an object that ‘has been”, Yael Davids has said. *End on Mouth in absentia, 2007*, is an installation that brings together drawings, photography, texts and scores relating to her performance *End on Mouth, 2004*. In the performance, she investigates the nature of theatre by proposing a different articulation of its constitutive elements, such as audience, stage, voice, text and choreographed gestures. Avoiding any direct representation of the live event, the installation instead gathers evidence and residue that allow us to imagine the performance that took place or the one that will happen next and, more importantly, deals with the emptiness that follows the lived moment. The work explores ideas of theatre as both an architectural space and a communal experience, yet also shows an awareness of the very different context of an art gallery, with individual visitors rather than an audience.

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Akinci, Amsterdam

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Edith Dekyndt, *Home alone*, 1999, Video installation

## Edith Dekyndt

°1960, Ypres, Belgium —

lives and works in Tournai, Belgium and Strasbourg, France

### ***Home alone, 1999***

Edith Dekyndt starts working with barely tangible, nearly unsizeable materials: the ordinary television image. The visitor is confronted to the diminutive variations of an ethereal image that is projected onto a white space. The images are produced by a television screen receiver, and are thereby invisible to the spectator. A camera, which is placed under the T.V. set, films the reflections of light as they are projected onto a white wall and transmits the latter onto a video projector. Only the stroboscopic effects that spread across the room can be perceived.

What comes first is no longer what the image represents, but rather its reflection in the ether, its dissolution into the atmosphere around the place where it appears. To the aggressive power of the moving image, to its capacity to absorb and fascinate (its iconic capacity) even to dictate, Edith Dekyndt opposes the fragility of sensitivity, the rising of a profound emotion that springs from nearly nothing. Starting from an absence, she manages to suggest an intense emotion that could be called, as we used to say at school, in inverse proportion. Here are the limits of the work. [Pierre-Olivier Rollin, *A Poetry of Nearly Nothing in Le Matin*, Belgium, 1999]

Courtesy FDC SATELLITE, Bruxelles –  
Galerie les filles du calvaire, Paris





## Joachim Koester

°1962, Copenhagen, Denmark —  
lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark

### ***Tarantism, 2007***

Tarantism is a condition found in southern Italy that results from the bite of the wolf spider or tarantula. Its symptoms include nausea, speaking difficulties, delirium, heightened excitability and restlessness. The bodies of those who have been bitten are seized by convulsions. At one time it was thought that it could only be cured through a sort of frenzied dancing. Even the Bishop of Polignano, who in the 17th century allowed himself to be bitten in order to disprove the cure, felt compelled to dance to relieve his symptoms.

The “dancing cure” called the tarantella emerged during the Middle Ages as a local phenomenon in and around the city of Galatina, Puglia, and was widespread throughout the region until the middle of the 20th century. The dance developed from a form of uncoordinated movements, in which people would “quiver and hurl their heads, shake their knees, grind their teeth and make the actions of madmen,” into today’s highly stylized dance for couples.

Joachim Koester’s interest in tarantism is tied to its original sense: a dance of uncontrolled and compulsive movements, spasms and convulsions. In *Tarantism* he has utilized this idea to generate the movements of dancers, who explore, in six individually choreographed parts, what might be called the body’s terra incognita.

Courtesy Jan Mot, Brussels



## **Yvonne Rainer**

°1934, San Francisco, USA —  
lives and works in New York, USA

### ***Lives of Performers, 1972***

In *Lives of Performers*, Rainer's first full-length film and the one that most clearly demonstrates her shift from dance to film, the distance from narrative cinematic conventions and critique of traditional spectatorial positions is pronounced.

Rainer says the two ideas that frame *Lives of Performers* are "dance and emotional life" and the film does revolve around both the on and off-stage, fictional and non-fictional activities of a group of dancer/performers. Footage of dance rehearsals, dramatic enactments, photo stills and tableaux vivants are set against a sound score that comments on and runs across the action.

Spontaneous, intimate and realistic elements are set against the contrived and theatrical to subvert any persistent sense of the fictional; the layering of performances is confounding. Despite this play on notions of 'character', Rainer doesn't balk from the use of melodrama or comedy on screen whenever she sees fit. But the melodramatic aspects of the film — talk of love, desire and sexual contact, scenes of emotional intimacy, love triangles — are countered by the filmic treatment which thwarts genre expectations. This subversion is particularly pointed in the distance that the commentary on the actions creates.

## **Eran Schaerf**

°1962, Tel Aviv, Israel —  
lives and works in Berlin, Germany

### ***Twice upon a time, 2009***

Rehearsing Coverage of an event about which there is no certainty that it happened also covers the possibility that the event can still happen. So coverage becomes the screenplay of the possibility and refers to itself as the location where the possibility is staged, as well as to events that could take place outside film. Transporting the event back and forth between several language-realities — news and literature or politics and theater — the screenplay stages the event as a fragmented one, dispersed across these languages. Thus the event can no longer be determined by a beginning and an end; it may begin in one language and continue in a second; the first refers to the second or the second anticipates the first, turning the event into the screenplay of a subsequent event. [Eran Schaerf 'Who Is Where. Role-Slippage in the Infinite Territory', "Territories", Berlin 2003]

Courtesy Zwinger Galerie, Berlin

## Commentary

A 'commentary layer' is inserted into the exhibition architecture. In this case 'commentary' might best be described by referencing Bertolt Brecht, who used an added second layer as a dramaturgical device for estranging the scene, and in doing so, allowing the audience to distance itself, making the actions on stage a visible construct.

The commentary layer is developed by the close collaboration of artists and graphic designers. It is inserted into and running along the main exhibition layout, and its aim is to complete, extend, evaluate and interrupt the narration evoked by the artworks shown. This second layer is an independent and distinguishable sequence of suspended panels, monitors, posters or the like. Understood as an artistic gesture, its contents are recurrent elements from design and pop culture, revealing an associative chain of references to the exhibition's thematic complex. They relate the thematic complex of the exhibition with "everyday life". By inter-linking the layers, the commentaries points to the aspect of theatricality once again, increasing the awareness of the exhibition's factitiousness.

**Katja Gretzinger,  
Paul Hendrikse**

°1972, Melle, Germany —  
lives and works in Berlin, Germany  
°1977, Terneuzen, Netherlands —  
lives and works in Berlin, Germany

**Lina Grumm,  
Hans-Christian Lotz**

°1982, Berlin, Germany —  
lives and works in Berlin, Germany  
°1980, Hamburg, Germany —  
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**Alexander Hempel**

°1977, Leipzig, Germany —  
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Cover: Edith Dekyndt, Perpetual Room, 2009,  
Courtesy FDC Satellite, Brussels

