



100 DUTCH MINUTES

video art from The Netherlands

Curated by

Răzvan Ion (RO) & Felix Vogel (DE)

Participating artists:

Yael Bartana, Arno Coenen & Transformer di Roboter, eddie d., Dan Geesin & Esther Rots, Jeroen Kooijmans, Jeroen Offerman, Erwin Olaf, Julika Rudelius, Martijn Veldhoen, Bea de Visser, Guido van der Werve

Screenings

(with a lecture by Răzvan Ion & Felix Vogel)

Timișoara: 31 October 2006, 18.00 hours
Faculty of Art, Galeria Mansarda

(Str. Oituz nr. 4)

Cluj: 2 November 2006, 19.00 hours
Faculty of Art, Casa Matei Corvin

(Str. Matei Corvin nr.6)

Iași: 7 November 2006, 18.00 hours
French Cultural Center, Projection Hall.

(Bd. Carol Ier nr. 26)

Bucharest: 13 November 2006, 18.00 hours
The National Centre of Dance-Bucharest (B-
dul Nicolae Balcescu nr. 2

(TNB, latura nordica - acces lângă Lăptăria Enache, etaj 3/4)

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Dutch does not exist!

by Felix Vogel

The term Dutch is allocated with many different associations. Mostly, they are around the field of pluralism and multiculturalism but in very oppositional ways. On the one hand, people argue that the Netherlands has today a multicultural state with liberal and peaceful politics, where-as people on the other hand claim that the concept of multiculturalism failed and that because of this pluralistic idea problems have raised. I would like to argue that Dutch is a utopia, a process that is still in progress, something that is becoming, but not existing. Therefore, it could be claimed that Dutch does not exist!

There are more reasons, why it could be maintained that Dutch does not exist. In our today's globalized world art is not a question of nation anymore. Artists live and produce not only in their home country, but in many different cities and places all around the world. Mostly, the art does not have to do anything with the country in which the artist is living in. In the past as well as today, national affiliations of artists are occupied for political reasons – reasons that are not connected in any way with art. Although, it could be claimed that any national identity does not exist today and is constructed for political reasons or rather that it does not play a role for the production of art, it is again different with Dutch, because this term is not allocated with national-separatist associations, it describes something that is open and not something that is closed or something that tries to separate. We could claim that Dutch does not exist and that it is a utopian process, moreover we could also claim that Dutch is – like any other nationality – unimportant for the production of art and that there is nothing like Dutch art, concerning Dutch as an expression for national affiliation. I would still like to use the term Dutch in another way, as a term that describes a special kind of video art. I would like to (re-)invent the term, but without forgetting with what it is “usually” connected (multiculturalism, pluralism, utopian system,...).

It is remarkable how contemporary Dutch video artists reflect on the recent issues of their society – only one among them is the dilemma situation described above – in a subtle and differentiated way. Artists work with the indeterminability and precariousness of a pluralistic society, but in addition to that we find a very differentiated view on topics, concerning singularity and identity – admittedly, these topics are strongly connected with a society that is supposed to be everything else than mainstream.

The condition under which these videos are produced form a way that is socio-politically involved, but with the big difference to “political art” that the artists recognized that art is not the same as politics, that art cannot work as politics and that art is not the substitution for politics.

The other seems to play an immense role in the video productions of Dutch artists today. In the “Dutch case”, the questioning of the other puts issues of identity and identity representation in a totally new and bright light. Topics like gender and queer representation, parallel societies, non-European religious and cultural traditions, postcolonialism, the opposition of rural and urban space are on a completely new layer, if put in a Dutch context. The other is described as something that is completely unrelated to the same. The question now – and especially in the Netherlands – is, if the other still exists and if it is therefore part of the multicultural society or not or if the other could be transferred into the same (be mechanisms of integration and representation) or not. It seems that this is the major question in Dutch society and it definitely is one of the most important questions in the video art of 100 DUTCH MINUTES.

Julika Rudelius' video *Your blood is as red as mine*, shows with its pseudo-documentation style an apparent difference or rather an appar-ent similarity between “white” and “black” (the other). It is remarkable how fast object and subject, other and same are changing and turned in oppositional directions, or how one “black” character says: “You’re here to study me. I am here to study you.”

We could see that the outstanding fact of Dutch video art is that they reflect these socio-political issues not only on the level of content, which is always everything else than propagandistic or uncritical, but also in a very fresh way in the fields of aesthetics and aesthetic progress.

One of the conspicuous methods that are used in the field of aesthetics in the presented videos is irritation – we could speak of certain “aesthetics of irritation”. It is not totally clear, what is happening, even, if most of the videos tend to be very narrative, having a structure, without many breaks and with a very clear “picture”, there are still many open questions. Things are happening without reasons, people are appearing and disappearing just from now and then and everything seems clear at first sight, but later it gets more confusing, more irritating. Why is there a piano on the raft in the middle of the lake in Guido van der Werve's nummer vier (I don't want to get involved in this, I don't want to be part of this, talk me out of it)? Without any answers – and without any time to think about the piano – the scene changes and you are confronted with a choir performing on a ship under sail... Some things are just there and cannot be turned, no matter how you look at them.

Other example: The bubble-making lips in Bea de Visser's Blowup. How could one ignore the sexual reference? But are not these innocent lips of young – not even teenage – girls? How could one find this

attracting? How could one overcome the temptation of these seductive lips? But is not this against all conventions? And again: irritation! In Dan Geesin & Esther Rots' De tuin it looks like as if a usual soap-opera-like story about a family is told, just with the minimum of move ment – you do not know anything about their relation, but you immedi-ately start to put things together – if the video is over, you realize that everything is different as you might have imagined. It is not only the irri-tation that plays a crucial role in this work, but also the deep critic of mass media, in this case the genre of the soap-opera, and the ques-tion: How easy could you be manipulated?

Thus, the aesthetics of irritation are also aesthetics of criticism. The critical power these videos create/produce is transformed out of the irri-tation – out of the irritation, that is the visualization of the unexpected, the unknown, the improper – more exactly: the visualization of the other.

Most of the time, the critical power behind their videos could be seen first at the second view. It is this special elusive Dutch condition, or bet-ter: this special progress (because it is – like the term Dutch – in motion and not steady) that is reflected and worked with in the video works of 100 DUTCH MINUTES.

Olandez nu exista! de Felix Vogel

Termenul olandez este folosit în contexte foarte diferite. Cel mai ade-sea este folosit în contextul pluralismului și al multiculturalismului, dar în direcții foarte diferite. Pe de o parte oamenii susțin că Olanda este astăzi un stat multicultural cu o politică liberală și pacifistă, iar pe de altă parte se afirmă că multiculturalismul a eșuat și că, din cauza existenței pluralismului, au apărut diverse probleme. Aș vrea să știu că termenul olandez este o utopie, un proces care este încă în progres, ceva care devine, dar nu există în acest moment. De aceea, se poate afirma că olandez nu există!

Există mai multe motive în baza cărora se poate afirma că olandez nu există. În societatea globalizată de astăzi, arta nu mai este o chestiune legată de națiune. Artiștii trăiesc și lucrează nu doar în țările lor natale, ci și în orașe din întreaga lume. De cele mai multe ori produsul artistic nu are nicio legătură cu țara în care artistul respectiv trăiește. În trecut, ca și în prezent, afilierile naționale ale artiștilor se făceau în baza unor criterii politice - criterii care nu au oricum de-a face cu arta. Se poate afirma că astăzi nu mai există identitate națională decât ca un construct apărut din considerații politice, care nu joacă niciun rol în producția artistică. Situația este cu totul alta în ceea ce privește ter-menul olandez, deoarece acesta nu este folosit în asocieri de tip naționalist-separatiste, ci descrie ceva deschis și nu închis sau care încearcă să se separe. Putem susține că olandez nu există sau că este un proces utopic. Mai mult de atât, putem de asemenea afirma că olan-dez – ca în cazul oricărei alte naționalități, nu este important pentru producția artistică și că nu există artă olandeză, adjectivul olandeză desemnând expresia unei afilieri naționale. Aș vrea totuși să folosesc termenul olandez în alt sens, ca un termen ce descrie un anume tip de artă video. Aș vrea să (re)inventez termenul, dar fără a omite noțiunile de care este „de obicei” legat (multiculturalism, pluralism, sistem utopic, ...).

Este remarcabil modul în care artiștii video olandezi reflectează asupra problemelor recente ale societății lor (situația dilematică descrisă mai sus fiind doar una dintre ele) într-o manieră subtilă și diferențiată. Artiștii lucrează cu necunoscutul și nesiguranța unei societății pluraliste. În afara acestora descoperim o perspectivă diferențiată asupra unor aspecte ce țin de singularitate și identitate – putem admite că aceste aspecte țin de o societate care este orice altceva, dar nu comună. Condițiile în care aceste producții au fost realizate trimit la o implicare socio-politică, diferită de „arta politică” prin faptul că artiștii admit că arta nu este același lucru cu politica, că ea nu poate funcționa ca politica și că nu este substitutul politicii.

Alteritatea joacă un rol important în producțiile video ale artiștilor olan-dezi contemporani. În „Cazul olandez”, problematizarea celuiilalt pune întrebări legate de identitate și reprezentarea identității într-o manieră cu totul nouă. Teme ca genul, comportamente sexuale, societăți paralele, tradiții religioase și culturale ne-europene, postcolonalism, opoziția dintre spațiul urban și cel rural apar într-o lumină cu totul nouă dacă sunt puse în contextul olandez. Celălalt nu este descris ca fiind seamănul tau. Problema este astăzi, și mai ales în Olanda, dacă celălalt încă există și dacă este parte integrată în societatea multiculturală sau nu, sau dacă celălalt poate fi transformat în seamăn (cu condiția să existe mecanisme de integrare și reprezentare) sau nu. Se pare că aceasta este marea problemă a societății olandeze și este în mod definitoriu unul dintre cele mai importante aspecte surprinse în cele 100 de minute olandeze.

Video-ul lui Julika Rudelius, “Sângele tău este la fel de roșu ca și al meu” prezintă în stil pseudo-documentaristic o diferență sau mai degrabă o similitate aparentă între „alb” și „negru”(celălalt). Este remarcabil cât de repede obiectul și subiectul, celălalt și seamănul se inversează. Este memorabilă secvența în care un personaj de culoare spune: „Ești aici ca să mă studiezi. Sunt aici ca să te studiez.”

Ceea ce este cu adevărat ieșit din comun în arta video olandeză este adoptarea unei atitudini inovative în domeniul estetic și reflectarea problemelor socio-politice, nu doar la nivelul conținutului, care este cel mai adesea propagandistic sau necritic.

Una dintre metodele evidente folosite în estetica acestor producții video este iritarea – se poate vorbi de o anumită „estetică a iritării”. Nu rămâne complet elucidat ceea ce se întâmplă în aceste producții video, chiar dacă majoritatea lor tinde să fie narativă și cu o structură fără întreruperi. Se întâmplă anumite lucruri fără motiv, oameni apar și dis-par într-o clipă, totul pare foarte clar la prima vedere, dar treptat devine din ce în ce mai confuz, mai iritant. De ce apare un pian pe o plută în mijlocul lacului în video-ul lui Guido van der Werve “Numărul patru (Nu vreau să mă implic în asta, nu vreau să fiu parte la asta, scoate-mă din schemă)”? Fără a primi vreun răspuns și fără răgazul de a te gândi la acel pian, scenele se schimbă și vezi apoi un cor dând o reprezentație pe o ambarcațiune... Unele lucruri sunt pur și simplu acolo și nu pot fi schimbate din orice unghi le-ai privi.

Alt exemplu: gestul buzelor din video-ul lui Bea de Visser. Cum am putea ignora aluzia sexuală implicită? Nu sunt totuși acestea buzele inocente ale unor fetițe (nici măcar adolescente)? Cum le-ar putea con-sidera cineva atrăgătoare? Cum ar putea ignora spita acestor buze seducătoare? Nu este oare împotriva tuturor convențiilor? Din nou: iritare!

Lucrarea lui Dan Geesin și Esther Rots se prezintă ca o telenovelă obișnuită despre o familie, sumar schițată, astfel încât nu aflî mai nimic despre relațiile dintre personaje, dar începi imediat să corelezi informațiile oferite. Când se termină îți dai seama că totul este diferit de cum ți-ai imaginat. Nu doar sentimentul de iritare joacă un rol important în această producție, sau puternica critică adusă de mass-media telen-ovelelor, ci și întrebarea: „Cât de ușor poți fi manipulat?” Astfel, estetica iritării este și estetica criticii. Sentimentul puternic pe care îl transmit aceste producții video se naște din iritare, din vizualizarea neprevăzutului, a necunoscutului, a nepotrivutului; mai pre-cis din vizualizarea celuiilalt.

De cele mai multe ori, acest sentiment puternic poate fi simțit abia la a doua viziunare. Este vorba de acest caracter criptic al olandezului, sau mai bine zis de acest progres special (pentru că este asemenea ter-menului olandez - în transformare) care se reflectă și cu care se operează în producțiile video selectate în 100 DE MINUTE OLAN-DEZE. (Traducere de Andreea Manolache).

Artists

Yael Bartana (Kings of the Hill, 2003, 07'30")

Born in Israel, Bartana's work is about the connection and the boarder between tradi-tional and contemporary (Jewish/Israeli) societies. Her videos focus on rituals and practices that are supposed to form a (collective) identity; rituals that were taken from the past and used in another way in the present. In her documentation-like style, she transforms scenes from the everyday life into poetic and questioning images.

Arno Coenen & Transformer di Roboter (Baghdad Disco, 2005, 04'44")

A video-animation artist, who is interested in turning contemporary (political) prac-tices upside down. His animations are mostly ironic, if not sarcastic. He uses the images and icons of today's society to put them either in a new context or to stage it hyperbolized in the familiar context – the result is the same: irritation.

eddie d. (Orquesta Revoltillo, 2002, 4'55" & Travelocity, 2003, 01'35")

He converts found footage of TV clips as well as staged recordings of apparently trivial every-day objects into meaningful and unexpected compositions. The specific sound of the trivial and its repetition gives us a totally new view of the world of every-day items. It is not only the sampling of different sounds and images that plays a crucial role in eddie d.'s work, but also speed, fast-forward and slow-motion.

Dan Geesin & Esther Rots (De tuin/The Garden, 1999, 11'00")

Their cooperation work focuses on the perception of mass media and the function of visual narratives. They do not present answers, but they show how easy one is manipulated and how much structures of different medias became self-evident.

Jeroen Kooijmans (Nina, 2001, 7')

Koojams' interest in the possibilities of new media – although his videos might look simple or direct, Kooijmans has a deep sense of fantasy and poetry. There are only little, “unremarkable” things in his videos, which catch the attention of the public. Only little hints to understand the minimalist fairy-tale-world of his work and of today.

Jeroen Offerman (The Stairway at St. Pauls, 2002, 08'00")

He's video works “are conceptual and often of a performative nature” (J. Offerman). The history and mythologisation of high art and trivial art are regularly taken as basics of the videos, but then put in another context, which creates unexpected and not rarely humorous stories.

Erwin Olaf (Rain, 2004, 5'28")

Not only his videos, but also his photography-series, are often satirizing the behav-ior of society. In his colorful and often erotic images/videos, Olaf creates new worlds that are familiar, but, if it comes to details the pictures appear unexpected, unfam-iliar and irritating. He analyzes structures and hierarchies of social communities and groups, like families or couples and shows that the unfamiliar is often included in the familiar.

Julika Rudelius (Your blood is as red as mine, 2004, 16'17")

Rudelius works with video and video-installations. She is interested in contemporary issues like ethnicity, gender and the precariousness of youth. In her documentation-like videos and multi-channel video-installatons Rudelius plays with the hidden sub-jectivity in an apparently objective medium. The obviously incidental aesthetics of her work try to show us something of a world, we suppose to know but actually do not.

Martijn Veldhoen (why do I keep going/Forward, 2004, 6')

Veldhoen's work could be seen as both: installations in public space and experimen-tal short-films. Some of his movies are presented in public space, working with the special structure and the special conditions of the room. Not only in public space, Veldhoen re-thinks the boarder between fiction and reality and the conditions of the media, but also in his video works.

Bea de Visser (Blowup, 2002, 05'16")

The representation and the ambiguity of the body, i.e. the portrait are a central con-stant in de Visser's paintings and videos. She asks – with a minimalist exhausting of the medium “video” – about innocence and hi/stories of faces and how or why they appear this way.

Guido van der Werve (*nummer vier /I don't want to get involved in this, I don't want to be part of this, talk me out of it*, 2005, 11'45") His narrative and disorienting videos show a very sensitive and subtle way of put-ting poetics, music and unexpected shots together. Van der Werve could be described as a conceptual Romanticist of the 21st century, whose aim is to intro-duce a new language that describes things as they are without asking why.

Curators

Felix Vogel

Theoretician and curator born in 1987. He wrotes for different magazines, and mem-ber of advisory board of PAVILION. He is co-curator of "100 Minutes" exhibition series. He is assistant curator for Bucharest Biennale 3. He lives and works in Karlsruhe, Germany.

Răzvan Ion

Media artist and theoretician. Editor of the PAVILION. He published recently his artist book "visual_witness". He was a visiting lecturer at various universities and art centers like University of California Berkeley, Headlands Center for the Arts, San Francisco, Art Academy Timisoara. As artist he exhibited around the world. Creator of the art group Critical Factor (a concept group which change the members at every project). He is also the co-director of Bucharest Biennale (with Eugen Rădescu).

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