

秘密 - A Diachronic Home

Isabella Färnkäs

June, 2015



The battles have been cancelled – have we noticed?

Gia Edzgeradze

In the middle of the floor of a big exhibition hall, full of people hungry for art sincerities, a white mattress is placed – the ultimate privacy in the midst of social pandemonium. On the mattress, a young, thin body lounges. Perhaps sleeping, dozing, or dreaming – even possibly doped. Neither the slovenly-cool clothes, nor the physical characteristics of this body reveal to us its gender or social class. Naked, untidy feet – the casual, grubby style of teenager pedicure. The body devoid of identifications; just a young body... tired, overstrained, surrendered, ironically writing in white, on a dark blue jacket, "Ha-Wei". But what made it so tired – this body?



Instead of comfortable pillows, in the manner of hotel beds, on the mattress are two monitors (the size of pillows). Chaotic-kaleidoscopic information runs wildly across the screens. We know the world expands without control; but digital signifiers, freed from flesh, expand even more turbulently, much wider and 100 times faster! From time to time, additional, smaller frames of screens are relayed across the monitors, with parallel and contrasting information.

At the beginning of this chaotic video, we see an eye, turned on a vertical axis. The artist gives us a hint: this is the specific vertical eye of our mind, which our culture uses to structure the drift of data entering us. Our mind places every datum we perceive within the symbolic structure of values created inside our consciousness, with its pyramidal-vertical and subordinated character. Every glittering datum here on the screens (a sea, a toy, a building under construction, a highway, some McDonald's food etc.) is removed from its native context, thrown from the nest and stripped bare, therefore all the images look strangely active, having a double presence.

On both screens, lines of texts run alongside these tinsel shimmers – between these two monitors, an intense dialogue takes place. On the left are the writings of some distinguished authority: tempting, provoking, seducing and enticing. But the answers from the right monitor seem to be mostly negative, confused, perplexed and bewildered. It's clear that both genders are involved in this dialogue, and it definitely exposes a Hegelian master-slave character. Yes, it is a fact – within our present culture, woman is not only confused, she is actually absent; she doesn't exist within the living world (as Alcan stated, "she has no foundation" – inside a patriarchal world she had no chance to develop her native language, her native discourse). Woman is just a sheer bewilderment, whereas the patriarchal-phallic discourse is a rigorous discourse of seduction. This gender dialogue (and indeed any dialogue between binary opposites) is firmly structured in our human consciousness in an unbalanced way – the dominant and submissive roles within binary opposites are clearly and permanently determined, and as usual everybody always plays them with delight. That's how the structure works!

What is not structurally innate is expelled from the structure by the anonymous will of the structure. That's why, here on the mattress, we see an outcast – an outcast body, rejecting the adoption and display of identifying signs, refusing to be part of a determined form of symbolic exchange.

That is the reason for the ultimate loneliness we see on the mattress: "a form of dwelling" outside discourse, beyond

language and also beyond any orientations (from time to time we see this figure on the mattress in the fetal position). All the figures of real alternative culture unconsciously long for such a state, because this kind of person (dating back to the Beatnik movement) is always and everywhere driven and motivated by the fully detached nature of our human soul.

Within Western culture these types of detached soul-wills created "the third space", a space of rebel individuals (the other two spaces — state and religion, have an entirely communal nature), individuals who don't want to accept the hegemony of the deterministic language of human culture, and with the help of subversive lifestyles, destabilization, deconstruction, trance, and ecstasy, strive to move beyond it — towards Khora — the territory of the pre-language condition. Perhaps, inside of this entirely open consciousness, we have a chance to be reborn and succeed in developing awareness beyond language, the restricted nature of culture, and the horrifying concreteness of "presence".

And what of the background, represented by the information running on the flickering monitors? Today, for our social space, the goals to be reached are not "Real" and ontological — these two lie outside the scope of social attention. Today, social interest is involved only with social life itself. That is why the avalanche of visual signs running on the screens are just empty signifiers, they do not have any visual energy and they are not loaded with any deeper meaning! So, the transformation water into wine (via the intervention of Jesus) didn't happen; on the contrary, empty signifiers multiply so boundlessly that we only live in their frantic stream without any opportunity to dive deeper into any data, notions, or ideas — which is always humanity's desperate desire. We just skate on the surface — the romanticism of depths, penetration and stepping into other territories gave way to the reality of the next minute and the next second.

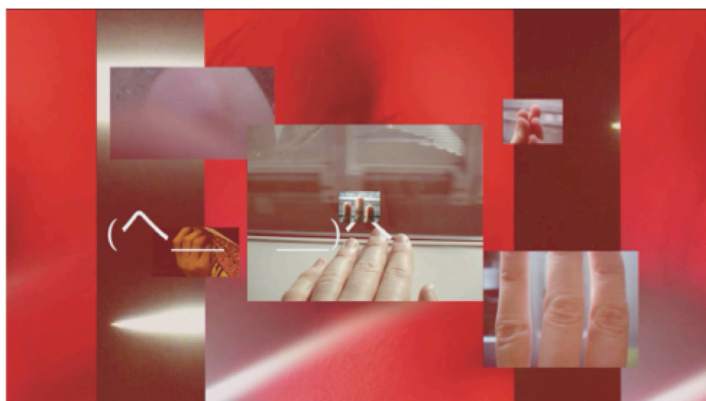
And is this good or bad?? We do not know yet — and therefore we suffer...

Our hermit on the mattress is also unaware of this; that's why he is in "nowhere" — in a gap, in the doorway, between two streams — an old and a new; here it is difficult to survive: without relatives, friends, without communication and orientation — being inside the "Real" and enjoying a no-thing!

For such a type of recluse the escape can go two ways. First: to go back and become again a part of what is no longer in the present: the historic consciousness of "depth and territories" is completely exhausted but it is always possible to organise and distort current data, via some historical patterns or other of 'meaning' as cherished by the mind. Or second: to refuse entirely the "self" and to open one's consciousness towards the forceful drift of signs, and to the "dynamic unity of obviousnesses", and to begin to float together with the world.

(It is only we human beings who divide signs into naturally-born or artificially-fabricated. There is no division of this kind on an ontological level.)

The world is oneness, and it floats not knowing interruptions, accidents, reparations, goals and tasks (all this garbage is only located in our heads). We know about this kind of universal drift only theoretically and virtually. But what is obvious is that the creature on the mattress doesn't want any more theories and virtual illusions; but unfortunately — and this is dramatic — he is not yet ready to take any practical steps. That's why he is in a suspended condition: the human



being has no access yet to the realm of detached song-games of an entirely self-sufficient soul.

This over-described artwork, "Vice Versa", opens up a realm of fundamental generalizations to us, and it may seem odd that such a piece belongs to the very young artist Isabella Fuernkaes. To reference such global issues, and observe events so remotely, it is necessary to have a certain degree of detachment (which comes to a person only over time), and it also needs a long and certainly bitter experience (where the trivialities of life are already left behind, and all phenomena is seen, more or less, in their natural light). How can a young artist succeed in showing us all this? Perhaps there is a hidden secret here, hidden but having a huge impact on us — some sort of super-external, as well as congenital factors: Isabella grew up in Japan till the age of eighteen (in the midst of a culture of contemplation and detachment), but on the other hand her parents are from "good old Europe" — a German father and a French mother (and as is well-known, Europe has more than enough bitter historical experience). So, probably these broad, global influences are the precondition for these kinds of "transcontinental questions"

In a personal conversation with the artist I had the pleasure of hearing about her new project "秘密 - Diachronic Home". My pleasure was to feel how a young soul within the darkness of our daily life, tries to come nearer to the spiritual form of responsibility for meaning and for its production — especially in the territory of art!

Her new project, which is still in progress, is also connected with big questions, examining profound and fundamental paradigms. As in her previous work, we come across contrasting visual layers, but here there is an addition: a layer of sound. Several monitors placed on shelves show images of books on shelves (works by well-known authors — this is the library of the artist's father, who is a philosopher). Structured in a strict geometric way into one impenetrable book wall, these books, with their design and aura, look like the celebratory garments of our severe, but old and long-standing friend, Logos. In front of the books we see flirtatiously charming and seductive trinkets (which are usually placed in front of the books by the female half of the family). It seems that in these trinkets the whole seduction and charm of Eros, that was once coquettishly playing with the formidable Logos (now fully appropriated by male discourse), is blocked. But one can say more; both of these principles (Logos and Eros) are shown here as if frozen — their once-playful dynamic and interaction has now turned static. The laughter, smiles, seduction, and flirtation of Eros, and the ruling and pretentious, truth-orientated convictions of Logos, are here turned to stone. This petrification happened because of our constant, tendency to look back to the past (exactly as in the Old Testament story), with our eternal hope of finding timeless values there. So we have here in this video a gorgeously bizarre, silent funeral of both beauty and wisdom. This aspect is also underlined by loud, prayer-like readings (from loudspeakers, in several languages), excerpts from the books of famous writers. They concern the topic of books and libraries, and also some subtleties that are associated with this territory. In contrast to the nostalgic fascination with the past in the videos, on the smaller screens that appear within the main screens (which show book shelves), one can see strange sequences of absurd sensuality, of delicate, but irrational and senseless, actions of the human body with objects or with itself. These actions, as I understand it, can be associated with two meanings: firstly, to give us a hint towards the entire necessity of catharsis and secondly, they try to warn us: we have to learn to touch the world in a particular, utterly new and refreshed way — that the world would not again be turned into a cosmos of empty signifiers. The beauty of signifiers is undeniable, but they are not nourishing, therefore they will never bring us to the "ultimate unknown" — into its full and all-absorbing realm.

These lines about the second as yet unfinished art piece are interpretations of visual images about which I heard more than I saw. But nevertheless they still had the power to create in my consciousness a strong and high quality reflective movement.

And what else is art at its best to suggest art to us?

Gia Edzgeradze is Georgian born Soviet Nonconformist artist now residing in Germany.

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