

PARTICIPATORY PANOPTICON

Simon Senn

Vernissage_Saturday 10 April 2010 at 5.30 p.m.

10 April-16 May 2010

Fri-Sat-Sun_2.00-6.00 p.m. or by appointment

On 10 April, the CACT Centre of Contemporary Art in Canton Ticino inaugurates the first personal show of Swiss artist **Simon Senn (1986)**. Senn's work develops primarily around man and definitions of identity. His idiom is that of performance, which he records diligently with videos. As a result, the works on show here installations and video projections should not be intended essentially as the film images in themselves, which are merely their means of production. Their purpose is to outstrip the medium itself, which thus becomes irrelevant or marginal, so as to take on an important trans-medial dimension, in other words of self-sacrifice, of the technical medium, so as to return to man, to his naked body, to his intimate nature: to the man who is far too often imprisoned in/by his own culture. Simon Senn, then, thinks as a socially and contextually committed artist... so, 'stripped bare' and '*mise en abîme*', the Genevan artist, a pupil of Yan Duyvendak, sets out to investigate and develop on the theme of the inner workings of the technological society, based on relative wealth and consumption; the self-same democratic, technocratic and bourgeois society that has made safety and control one of its main political, ideological and electoral platforms.

The dichotomies that are so rife in his work have already been described by Géraldine Zodo in one of her essays. Both artist and spectator, Simon Senn restores the anthropological dimension of man in the context of his socio-political fabric, where he lives and works, accentuating the paradoxes of a society hell-bent on suffocating the roles related to his status as a human being, with his status as an individual, part of a system, with its functions. Established in the eighteenth century and capable of taking from humanism in order to strengthen a cold democratic utilitarianism, this Enlightenment vision vigorously questions the identity of man, of society itself, of a modernity that ever since the French Revolution has demarcated the social and the societal dimensions in its transit from domination to psycho-physical control.

It is no coincidence that the artist and the curator met and found common ground in a topic as important as that of the **Panopticon**, the architectural model and utilitarian school of thought elaborated by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) to control diversity, where the concept of parole and discipline determine the modern and contemporary social structure.

On the threshold of the new millennium, Senn strikes a critical pose, contributing to marking the passage from a consumer society to a society of renewal. He does so by putting four installations on show here. **L'Hôtel des sapins** (2008) is an interactive video work that records a performance that took place in an abandoned building, where six participants (men and women), numbered, hooded and otherwise naked, filmed each other with video cameras, while trying not to be filmed themselves, so each striving to escape from the domination of the others. The reiteration of the various moments of this performance, summarised in a documentary film, enables the public which has a remote control to set the various different perspectives of the images being projected, once again bringing in the issue of the freedom to control what we are seeing and at the same time doing.

Meanwhile, the recent work entitled **Le bois-des-frères** (2009) features the same thematic mechanisms, albeit with different methods and relative to the concept of play: such as therapy and, at the same time the didactics of behaviour.

With **Room Nr 15** (2008), Simon Senn has come up with a directly more self-referential topic. The set for the video could be anywhere, a hotel room, a darkroom or a cellar, as it plays skilfully with the relationship between private and public, individual and group, freedom and lack of freedom. A sensual person whose face is censored moves anonymously, followed by a TV camera: ambiguity is also an apt description of how we interpret the work and of insistent voyeurism as one of our society's leitmotifs. The videos were shot by eight people who were filming and raping a young man. The apparent autonomy and self-determination of both action and actor and our (in)ability to observe what we see in the media and image communication bring us back to the increasingly aestheticising mystification of the means of information and to their ability to influence the world of our perceptions.

Simon Senn and his collective **Californium 248** will be holding a performance selected and promoted by **Liste 15** later this year, on 20 June, in Basle.

Mario Casanova_2010 [translation Pete Kercher]

The logo consists of the letters 'CWGT' in a bold, stylized, blocky font. The 'C' is solid black, while the 'W', 'G', and 'T' are white with a thick black outline. The letters are closely spaced and have a slightly irregular, hand-drawn appearance.