

Acting Facts
by Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger

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Film data

Year:

2003

Original format:

Digital video on DVD

Duration:

9.40 minutes - loop

Language:

English speaking subtitles in italian

The project

With Roger Tebb as performer. This film take part to the Prague Biennial „Peripheries become the centre“ in the section „Come with me“ curated by Gea Politi.

There were a woman and a baby about 4 years old, who were walking, and an older woman, a grandmother or something. I rounded them up, brought them back down to Meadlo, and we stood around them for a couple of minutes talking. Among this group, there were children of all ages and older women. Lieutenant Calley came back to us, and said: "Take care of them."

So we said: "Okay." And we sat there and watched the civilians. Few minutes later Calley came back again and said: "I thought I told you to take care of them." I said: "We're taking care of them." And he said: "I mean kill them." So I looked at Meadlo, and he looked at me, and I didn't want to do it. And he didn't want to do it.

Extract from the monologue

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Review by Axel Lapp

Acting Facts tells a story of a massacre that resulted in the deaths of several hundred unarmed civilians, murdered by American soldiers on the morning of 16 March 1968 in the Vietnamese village of My Lai. When the news of this bloodbath finally came out late in 1969, it caused widespread incredulity and shock. This was the first report of a war crime that had been committed by American soldiers, and even those who were violently opposed to the war in Vietnam would have never thought such an atrocity possible. In 1970, the events at My Lai were officially investigated by the Peers Panel and the findings were widely publicised and discussed. At home, the support for military action in Vietnam began to waver.

The text of Acting Facts is composed of different testimonies presented before the Peers Panel; it is an account of what happened in My Lai drawn from the public recollections of eye-witnesses and perpetrators. These memories are mediated through an actor who at times recites the text, but who also falls into acting it out, taking on the different personae – the bullying officer, or the grenadier who straightens up when addressing his superior. The action appears to be happening just outside the frame of the video. Some of the scenes appear very familiar, as the popular genre of the Vietnam drama or action film has informed our general knowledge of this war. But some scenes are at odds with our expectations. There are repeated breaks in the continuous and uncut development of the story as the film alternates between a verbalised account of the action and its visualisation.

Acting Facts is to be seen in connection with the larger installation Capitulation Project, 2003, that also deals with the experiences of My Lai. In 1971 in New York, Performance Group staged four versions of an improvisation that aimed at coming to terms with these

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crimes committed by contemporaries of the performers and their audiences. The actors based their texts on official documents, recollections and media reports and made the audience participate, taking on the roles of both, victims and perpetrators. The viewers see the resulting film by Moser / Schwinger from the stage on which the original improvisation was re-enacted, placing them at the same time within and outside the performance.

For Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger, theatre is not about enacting fantasies, but about the investigation of information transfer. They use theatrical form and its mediation in film as an approach to furthering knowledge about communication and about cognition. Their films concentrate on the performative aspects of introspection: in *affection riposte* (affection retort), 2001, they re-enact the drama of a theatre scene from John Cassavetes's film *Opening Night*, 1977, that informs the acted relationships among the film's protagonists. In *Internment Area*, 2002, they restaged a theatre therapy session based on the work of psychotherapist Jacob L. Moreno, with actors playing patients acting out their own lives. They bring emotions to the stage, and through the filming add a further perspective that makes an analysis of the processes of acting possible.

Moser / Schwinger work with non-narrative narratives; their films do not present a full story, they do not elaborate a linear development of one theme, but are rather elliptical and at times also decontextualised. *Acting Facts* therefore cannot only be seen as a film about Vietnam or about My Lai, as these places are never even mentioned in the spoken text, but as a pathology of armed conflict, as a study in dehumanisation and the methods of coming to terms with it.

Axel Lapp



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Artists' info

Frédéric Moser & Philippe Schwinger were born in 1966/61 at Saint-Imier (Switzerland). From 1988-91 they are co-directors of "l'atelier ici et maintenant", an independent theatre company based in Lausanne. From 1993-98 they study at the High School for Visual Arts in Geneva. They win the "Swiss Art Award" 3 times in a row (in 98-99-2000) and the Providentia "YoungArt 2000" prize. In 2001 they are invited for 6 month at the Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart. In 2002 they receive the One Year Scholarship & Studio in Berlin of the Swiss Federal Office of Culture. In 2003 they are invited to the first residence program at the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw. In 2004 they represent the Swiss Contribution at the 26th International Biennial of Contemporary Art of São Paulo. They presently live and work in Berlin.

filmography

2006 Schwejk Perspektiven, Time flies, Donnerstag, Alles wird wieder gut / **2005** Revival Paradise / **2004** Unexpected Rules / **2003** Capitulation Project, Acting facts / **2002** Internment Area / **2001** Affection riposte

solo exhibitions

2006

Amanda, Gallery Arndt & Partner, Zürich
Farewell Letter to the Swiss Workers, Kunsthaus Zürich

2005

Revival Paradise, Kino Lab, Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw
Play gallery for still and motion pictures at MACO, Mexico-city

2004

Non chiamateli civili, Associazione Prometeo, Lucca
Capitulation Project, Cornerhouse, Manchester
NB - Bob Gramsma / Frédéric Moser & Philippe Schwinger, Kunstmuseum PasquArt, Biel

2003

ARTissima 10, Play gallery for still and motion pictures, Torino
Capitulation Project, Play gallery for still and motion pictures, Berlin

2002

Internment Area, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart
Affection riposte, Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart

2001

Affection riposte, Centre for Contemporary Images, Saint-Gervais Geneva
Embrigadés, Galerie Skopia, Geneva

2000

Lux Gallery, London
Galerie Institut - Horten, Düsseldorf
Dose miracle, Musée des beaux-arts, La Chaux-de-Fonds

1999

Auf den Höhen, Museum zu Allerheiligen, Kunstverein, Schaffhausen

selected group exhibitions and festivals

2006 Protections, Kunsthaus Graz / 59. festival internazionale del film, Locarno / 35. International Film Festival Rotterdam, Rotterdam / Multiple Versions : cinema and contemporary visual art, 4th. Magis Spring School, Udine / 41. Solothurn Film

Festival, Solothurn / Trieste Film Festival, 17a edizione, Trieste
2005 Contemporary Swiss Art Show in Japan, Chiba City Museum of Art / 58. festival internazionale del film, Locarno / Contenance, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart / 49th London Film Festival, the British Film Institute, London / Helden Heute, Kunsthaus PasquArt, Biel / 11th Biennial of Moving Images (Focus), Centre for Contemporary Images, Saint-Gervais Geneva / Contrabanditas de Imágenes, Selección 26 Biennial de São Paulo, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago de Chile
2004 26th International Biennial of São Paulo, Swiss official Contribution, São Paulo / The 3rd Seoul International Media Art Biennale, Museum of Art, Seoul / So wie die Dinge liegen, Hartware Medien Kunstverein, Dortmund / Play at Cirrus, Cirrus gallery, Los Angeles / Video lobby, Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius **2003** Remakes, CAPC- Musée d'art contemporain, Bordeaux / Shifting time/space, Kunstraum Walcheturm, Zürich / 10th Biennial of Moving Images (Intramural exhibitions), Centre for Contemporary Images, Saint-Gervais Geneva / Peripheries become the Center, Prague Biennial / Flux, Musée des beaux-arts, La Chaux-de-Fonds / Arco 03, Galerie Skopia, Madrid **2002** Another Swiss Version, AR/GE Kunst Galerie Museum, Bolzano / Videomathon, Centrul pentru Contemporana, Chisanau / VideoRom, Gian Carla Zanutti Gallery, Milano / Showroom, Galerie Skopia, Geneva / Lange Nacht der Museen, Projektraum Römerstrasse, Stuttgart / Shrink to fit, www.xcult.org et Musée de la communication, Bern **2001** VideoROM, Valencia Biennial, Valencia / Art 32 Basel, Galerie Skopia, Basel / Swiss Videos, Galerie Barbara Thumm-Angelika Richter, Rosso Bar, Venezia / Analogue-Dialogue, Musée jurassien des Arts de Moutier-Kunstmuseum Solothurn **2000** No vacances, Internationale Videoausstellung, Berlin / Screening, Artjunkie, Leicester Square, London / Out of Space, Kunstmuseum Thun / Paroles, paroles, Kunsthalle Palazzo, Liestal / Prix fédéraux des beaux-arts, Fri-art, Fribourg / Dans le domaine du possible III, Centre PasquArt, Bienne / L'art dans le monde, Beaux-Arts Magazine-Parkett, Pont Alexandre III, Paris **1999** Prix fédéraux des beaux-arts, Kunsthalle, Zürich / #1, Espace croisé, Lille / Habiter le monde, Alliance française, Montevideo / Another Swiss Panorama, Centre for Contemporary Images, Saint-Gervais, Geneva / 3 ème festival de l'art en vidéo (section swiss video), Musée d'art contemporain, Lyon **1998** Dog Days Are Over (video lounge), Centre Culturel Suisse, Paris / Prix fédéraux des beaux-arts, Museum zu Allerheiligen, Schaffhausen / Videostore, Bricks & Kicks, Wien / Freie Sicht aufs Mittelmeer (video lounge), Kunsthaus, Zürich and Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt / Not strictly private, Shed im Eisenwerk, Frauenfeld / Video Exhibition, Cultural Foundation, Abu Dhabi

selected bibliography

Frédéric Moser Philippe Schwinger: Unexpected Rules, [texts: Alessio Moretti and Stefan Schoettke], Swiss Federal Office of Culture, Berne; Revolver, Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, Frankfurt a. M., 2004.
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Frédéric Moser Philippe Schwinger, [editor: Andreas Münch], Swiss Federal Office of Culture, Bern; Centre PasquArt, Biel; Edition Fink 2004.
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