

# Unexpected Rules

by Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger



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*The Video Installation Unexpected Rules was produced as the Swiss Contribution to the 26th International Biennial of Contemporary Art of São Paulo in 2004.*



*Installation view, São Paulo, 2004*

## Film selected for



58. festival internazionale del film Locarno.  
3-13 agosto 2005.

## Film data

### Year

2004

### Original format

35mm transferred to HD

### Screening format

DigiBeta 16/9 colour

### Duration

16:06 minutes

### Language

English

## The project

The script is based on the "Clinton-Lewinsky Affair", which arose from the nexus between power, sex, and globalized media and shows how multifaceted levels of interest, along with public images, ultimately render the "true" interpretation of an event impossible. Moser & Schwinger's version of the affair does not follow a linear storyline that is shaped by causality and rational behavior. Rather, their cinematographic and scenic adaptation of the actors' contradictory emotions, interests, and strategies creates a complex plot that forces the viewer to accept paradoxes as a part of reality. These different layers are integrated into a popular form of representation - a cross between a TV show and puppet theater.

The film was originally shown as part of a video installation in which visitors enter the reconstructed film set (a wooden lightbox lined with 1,300 colored bulbs), stand very close to the projection screen, and become first-hand witnesses of the negotiations within the intimate setting of the presidential family.

## Artists' statement

We conceived the lightbox as a place where politics stages its own performance. The fact that all protagonists are constantly on stage makes each character even more lucid. By distorting the facts in a plausible manner, we are attempting to set the characters' spoken lines within contexts that, in the real world, exclude one another.

*Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger*

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## Review by U. Mantel

The work "Unexpected Rules" by Frederic Moser and Philippe Schwinger exploits a popular theme. Its script is based on an historical event, which similarly to what takes place in the entertainment industry takes advantage of ingredients such as sex, power and money. The Clinton-Lewinsky affair constitutes the point of departure of their dramatic staging, which, however, does not conform to the usual principles of a cinematographic storyline. In "Unexpected Rules" the web of intrigues woven around the head of state of a superpower is displayed from unusual perspectives and shown by means of surprising facets. Details, such as the blue, semenstained dress give way to the interplay of various power sources and mechanisms. Political intrigue constitutes the point of departure for investigating the complexity of our subconscious and of our perception.

The scenic representation is fully focused on the subtle performance of the actors. Within a formal stage setting they perform in line with international, media-edited, publicly known facts. As in a role-play they interpret determined characters - the President, his opponent, the public prosecutor, the intern, etc.- presenting the affair and its consequences as a case story: "Look: here's the catch. Those who cannot learn from history a condemned to repeat it." And straightaway, the President is caught in the trap they set for him. The representation, however, soon departs from the familiar plot. What comes to light is a multifaceted structure resembling a surrealist dream, wherein new episodes spring forth continuously. The characters come into view suddenly and in the most unusual situations. They have their own dynamics and follow their internal logic. ("Nothing happened. I swear. It's pure nonsense, I'm the President"). And they behave themselves in an unconventional, unexpected manner. They abduct the viewer to a colorful world, in which logic and linearity no longer exist.

Serving as background for the script, in addition to the

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## // Review by U. Mantel

President's affair, was the theory of "para-consistent logic", developed by the Brazilian logician Newton da Costa. Mr. da Costa busies himself with formal systems capable of assimilating contradictions. Not without reason does this theory stem from Brazil, explains the anthropologist Roberto da Matta: "Among us these sharp contrasts between interiority and exteriority, true and false, man and woman do not exist. The Brazilians, on the contrary, have the ability of dealing with seemingly incompatible aspects and of integrating them".

Through the translation of a trivial situation into a para-consistent terminology, new types of interpretation for intersubjective relations spring into existence. As a result, the customary connections between cause and consequence lose their matter-of-factness. An individual is allowed to make a statement and to retract it forthwith. ("No, that was not my voice, it was not me"). Both the sincere admission and the urge for dissimulation are given the same weight: "I see no problem if you sincerely deny your relationship with the young woman. I mean, if we constantly repeat a lie, it will become true", the public prosecutor advises the President with a virtually disarming frankness. The integration of the possible and the impossible, of reality and absurdity, condenses itself in the closing episode to an almost familial scene, in which the public prosecutor, the first family, the intern, the diplomat and the secretary are seated on a sofa facing the camera.

The work of Moser and Schwinger promotes integration wholly in line with the para-consistent theory of contrary forms and contents. It is mod, political and psychological. It constitutes a political Punch-and-Judy show in the truest sense of the word and exhibits political intrigue as the psychodramatic role-play of a performance group. "Unexpected Rules" presents the mechanisms of power and of the media, couples them to psychological and carnivalesque elements and thickens them into a complex plot, in which the acceptance of absurdity as a

part of reality, becomes manifest.

"Unexpected Rules" is, subsequent to "Affection riposte" (2001), "Internment Area" (2002) and "Capitulation Project" (2003) a further video installation by the Swiss Artists, in which the original film backstage becomes integrated. In this manner, the viewers find themselves in the center of the events, with the filmsetting becoming their stage. In the case of "Unexpected Rules", "The Lightbox", a wooden construction with 1000 colored light bulbs, displaying both show elements and a stage setting of the sixties, makes this possible.

"It is our intention to transmit the impression of a type of art music hall that conveys a new type of reasoning. On a subject that is as old as the world itself, we wish anticipate a piece of the future." (Frederic Moser and Philippe Schwinger, 2004).

Ulrike Mantel

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## Cast & credits

|                                 |                      |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>The President (Roy)</b>      | Roger Tebb           |
| <b>The First Lady (Heather)</b> | Ilya Parenteau       |
| <b>The Intern (Amanda Cook)</b> | Fernanda Farah       |
| <b>The Prosecutor (Jerry)</b>   | Peter Cotton         |
| <b>The Secretary (Melinda)</b>  | Katie Mullins        |
| <b>The Diplomat</b>             | Hans Haasis          |
| <b>The Daughter (Sunny)</b>     | Leslie Alina Schäfer |

**Written, directed and edited by**  
**Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger.**

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Production manager</b>  | Ulrike Mantel                               |
| <b>Camera</b>              | Anne Misselwitz                             |
| <b>Gaffer</b>              | Günter Berghaus                             |
| <b>Sound</b>               | Johanna Herr                                |
| <b>Set construction</b>    | Sebastian Kulisch                           |
| <b>Costumes</b>            | Sybille Gänsslen-Zeit<br>Carola Ruckdeschel |
| <b>Make-up</b>             | Marion Greiter                              |
| <b>1. Camera assistant</b> | Christoph Lemmen                            |
| <b>2. Camera assistant</b> | Marc Lontzek                                |
| <b>Grip</b>                | Bernhard Kühn                               |
| <b>Sound assistant</b>     | Marc Witte                                  |
| <b>2. Gaffers</b>          | Johannes Neumann<br>Christof Stemmerberger  |
| <b>Script continuity</b>   | Barbara Gebler                              |
| <b>Catering</b>            | Ingo Biermann                               |
| <b>Volunteers</b>          | Lea Gryze<br>Paula Redlefsen                |

## Post-production provided by

Schwarz Film AG, Berlin  
Kopffilm GmbH, Berlin

## Produced by

Swiss Federal Office of Culture, Berne  
Academy for Film and Television "Konrad Wolf", Postdam-  
Babelsberg HFF  
Fine Arts Unternehmen Film AG

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Kopffilm GmbH, Berlin  
Mikrom GmbH, Berlin  
Schwarz Film AG, Berlin  
nanocosmos GmbH, Berlin

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Swiss Federal Commission of Fine Arts  
Academy for Film and Television "Konrad Wolf"  
Fine Arts Unternehmen Film

## and especially to

Newton C. A. da Costa, Jean-Yves Béziau,  
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Andreas Münch, Franziska Schott and Marco Schibig,  
Catherine Scharf, Manuela Kessler, Lucienne Pillonnel,  
Célia Gambini, Ulrich Sauerwein, Stefano Pesce,  
Christoph Engelke, Undine Simmang, Knud Hackradt,  
Holger Krahn, Matthias Wolff, Christoph Keller,  
Dinah Sales de Oliveira, Mônica Shiroma de Carvalho

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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 Imagenes, Seleccion 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, Artjunky, 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

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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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