

Flash Art

Body Display

VIENNA SECESSION

The most spectacular aspect of "Body Display, Performative Installation #4: Body & Economy" is its display: Vienna's first white cube, the main hall of the Secession building, has been temporarily transformed into a black box, creating a stage-like situation. Usually flooded with daylight, the darkened space appears low and inscrutable, lit only by several video projections and spotlights guiding the spectator through the show. On display are installations and video works gathered under the theme of "the human body in the economic context."

"Body Display" is the fourth station of an ongoing exhibition series initiated by the Munich-based Siemens Arts Program and curator Angelika Nollert. In collaboration with art institutions in Austria and Germany she conceived five exhibitions relating to the topic of performative installation: "Construction & Situation" (Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck), "Narration" (Museum Ludwig, Cologne), "Communication" (Museum of Contemporary Art Siegen), "Body

& Economy" (Vienna Secession), and "Architecture" (Gallery for Contemporary Art Leipzig). As Nollert describes in the exhibition catalogue, the project strives for an exploration of the performative potential of installation art, taking aspects such as temporality, space-time relations, participation, and performativity into consideration. Referring to a notion of the body as carrier of specific codes and projections, the Viennese exhibition, co-curated by Eva Maria Stadler, pursues an identity-forging approach. It interrogates the body and its image with regard to an increasing mediatization and exploitation in economic contexts, analyzing possibilities of counteraction. While ~~René Pollesch's~~ video-installation *Body Double 9* appropriates Hollywood movies to expose their construction of identity through switching between male and female roles, *Ode. Ode is not a song/Have you a feeling of standard*, a video by Victor Alimpiev and Marian Zhunin, discharges any narrative context. Creating a utopian space for uni-

formed bodies with neutralized identities, it critically questions notions and possibilities of individuality. René Pollesch's TV production *24 Hours Don't Make One Day* bluntly mirrors the human condition in times of globalized sell out in mass media, and *The Lugubrious Game*, an installation by John Miller, appeals to subconscious consumer fetishism. Through imitating a samba dancer and juxtaposing her image with footage taken at a Brazilian carnival, Andrea Fraser examines her role as artist and the use of her own body in commercial contexts. In

The She Zone, Anette Baldauf and Dorit Margreiter define a remarkable notion of performativity, combining a discussion about their visit to a shopping mall for women in Abu Dhabi with images taken on site.

Despite its stage-like framework, the exhibition falls behind its repeated claim for an active involvement of the audience. In fact most of what appears as 'performative installation' does not provoke participation or interaction at all. The spectators thus remain in their familiar role: watching, not acting.

—Luisa Ziaja



JOHN MILLER, *The Lugubrious Game*, 2004. Installation view at Vienna Secession. Courtesy Vienna Secession. Photo: Matthias Herrmann.