



Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart

**TERESA HUBBARD / ALEXANDER BIRCHLER
No Room to Answer – Projections**

February 28 – May 10, 2009

Press conference: Friday, February 27, 2009, 11 am



Introduction

From February 28 to May 10, 2009 the Württembergischer Kunstverein is showing the exhibition *No Room to Answer – Projections* by the Swiss/U.S. artist duo based in Austin, Texas, **Teresa Hubbard and Alexander Birchler**. With seven video installations, the exhibition presents central aspects of Hubbard and Birchler's work, which expands the narrative forms of theater and cinema in an unparalleled way.

In their elaborately produced video works—both filmically and architecturally—Hubbard and Birchler bring into play the shifts between the conscious and the subconscious, presence and absence, inwardness and outwardness. They fathom conflicts involving desire and repression, gender positions, remembering and forgetting. The house, or the dwelling, as an unstable space between home and haunting, frequently comes to the fore in their work as well.

Through their open narratives, which interweave agency and its spaces in a complex manner, Hubbard and Birchler unhinge the spatiotemporal order. Involved scenes include both real locations and mise-en-scènes appropriated by the artists based on personal experiences, historical research, and literary or filmic sources.

The **European premiere** of the video installation *Grand Paris Texas* from 2008 is being hosted by the Württembergischer Kunstverein in Stuttgart. The protagonist of the work is "The Grand," a long-abandoned cinema in Paris, Texas—the same small town made famous by Wim Wenders through his 1984 film of the same name, without the actual town even having made an appearance. *Grand Paris Texas* interweaves various narratives and metanarratives: about an obsolete site of filmic illusions, about a small town and its entanglements with Wim Wenders's film as well as with the French capital, and about the techniques and production methods of filmmaking itself. In *Grand Paris Texas*, Hubbard and Birchler for the first time take up formats of the documentary so as to equally approach both real and imaginary spaces and situations.

Teresa Hubbard, born 1965 in Dublin, Ireland, and Alexander Birchler, born 1962 in Baden, Switzerland, have been working together since 1990. Their works have been shown in numerous biennials, including the Venice Biennale (1999), the Busan Biennale (2008), or the Liverpool Biennial (2008) and in exhibition venues like the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington D.C., the Museum of Contemporary Art at the Kunstmuseum Basel, the Hamburger Bahnhof–Museum for Contemporary Art in Berlin, the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, the Whitney Museum in New York, the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, and the Reina Sofía in Madrid.

In 2008, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth dedicated a comprehensive solo exhibition to the artist duo with *No Room to Answer*. Now with *No Room to Answer – Projections*, the Württembergischer Kunstverein is focusing on a wide selection of video installations by the artists. A further variation on the exhibition will be offered by the Aargauer Kunstmuseum in Aarau, Switzerland in the fall of 2009.

A **catalogue** accompanying the exhibition with essays by Sara Arrhenius, Iris Dressler, and Andrea Karnes has been published by Hatje Cantz Verlag.

Works in the Exhibition

Grand Paris Texas, 2008

High-definition video with sound, length: 54 min.



Around 150 km northeast of Dallas the small Texas town of Paris is situated, its main attraction being a miniature reproduction of the Eiffel Tower crowned by a red cowboy hat. Paris, Texas has achieved a measure of notoriety due to Wim Wenders's eponymous film, despite that the town doesn't appear in the film nor hosted the filmmaking production.

In Paris, Texas, the long-abandoned cinema "The Grand" was discovered by Hubbard and Birchler. This singular location populated by pigeons, where time stands still while it simultaneously advances, ultimately prompted the artists to produce a video work in and about "The Grand" and Paris, Texas. Taking up documentary formats, *Grand Paris Texas* intermingles the erstwhile site of the projecting of filmic illusions with projections, intertwining the French metropolis and Wim Wenders's film, onto a small town. At the dilapidated cinema, cluttered with debris and dated technology, we observe a film team armed with dust masks and gloves, their activities reminiscent of those pursued by speleologists. At one point, Hubbard and Birchler are even caught in the picture.

In a series of interviews, local residents comment on the former cinema, on films in general, and on Wim Wenders's *Paris, Texas* in particular. A funeral home director, for one, compares his work with that of a film director.

In *Grand Paris Texas*, narratives and metanarratives are intricately interwoven—for instance, in the involvement of a VHS tape of Wenders's film that was found by the artists in a video store in Paris, Texas. Years ago, another video renter had accidentally overwritten the last section of the film, making it impossible to discover how the story of *Paris, Texas* ends. This anecdote can indeed be interpreted as a reference to the open narrative techniques employed by Hubbard and Birchler.

Night Shift, 2005–2006

High-definition video with sound, length: 08:24 min. (loop)



Over four subsequent episodes, all of which are set in a U.S. police car at night, the following chain of events is repeated: Sam, an aging officer, is waiting in the car. A male, or alternately female, colleague—with gender and skin color respectively shifting—joins Sam with two cups of coffee. The waiting officer time and again takes hold of his drink to the words “Two sugars, no cream.” The shifting colleagues thereupon begin a soliloquizing conversation that revolves around the threshold between being asleep and awake. Sometimes the transience and the loss of dreams is discussed, other times the indeterminable and uncontrollable moment of awakening. Might we be sleeping when we believe to be awake? To what extent do dreams and reality interpenetrate? Parallel to the philosophical considerations, *Night Shift* unravels a game, complexly intertwined in terms of both form and content, involving repetition, mirroring, and deviation.

House with Pool, 2004

High-definition video with sound, length: 20:39 min. (loop)



House with Pool is a concatenation of numerous potential encounters marked by relentless dynamism—and, at the same time, a narrative about “not-encountering”: of persons, past and present, conscious and subconscious, cause and effect. The protagonists are a young woman and an older one—perhaps mother and daughter—as well as a gardener who is to make a terrible discovery. The mute events take place at a fenced property with house, pool, and yard. Impelling the flow of the narrative are objects, plots, noises, and sonances: for instance, a piano piece that is played in two variations.

Johnny, 2004

High-definition video with sound, length: 03:51 min. (loop)



Johnny zooms in on adolescent musicians clad in red uniforms in a marching band. The trumpeter has set the key for the song “When Johnny Comes Marching Home,” but the other band members cannot seem to bring themselves to musically accompany him. The camera advances very closely in on the playing musician as well as on those refusing to play. While we are only shown fragments of the trumpeter’s face, we are able to freely discern the faces of the silent musicians, some tense, some placid. The presented portraits are always of individual nature, for we never see the entire group at once. Even the hands of the musicians, busy keeping the different instruments ready to play, are captured by the camera.

The song “When Johnny Comes Marching Home” dates from the American Civil War and is attributed to Patrick S. Gilmore. It concurrently sings of and summons the heroes returning home from the war, celebrating a triumph that has yet to be redeemed.

Single Wide, 2002

High-definition video with sound, length: 06:07 min. (loop)



The camera circles around a mobile home of the U.S. “single wide” type as well as around the pick-up truck standing out front. One wall of the mobile home has been removed, enabling us to look into its stage-like interior in the manner of a dollhouse. Between the two scenes a young woman is moving about. She leaves the home and gets into the pick-up, giving free rein to her anger and despair. While at first appearing to drive away, she suddenly barrels into the house instead, with half of the truck ending up stuck in the house and the other half jutting out. Unperturbed by these strange events, the camera continues its circumscribing path. Before and after, cause and

effect, as well as the beginning and end of this endlessly repeating narrative remain vacant in the process.

Eight, 2001

High-definition video with sound, length: 03:35 min. (loop)



The video work *Eight* already references in its title both what is to be told here as well as the structure of its narrative. It apparently revolves around the (eighth?) birthday of a girl—and this in an endless loop. The camera is constantly panning, only interrupted by two short editing sequences, from the interior of a house to the outside yard and back. The localization of and transition between interior and exterior here remain just as unresolved as do the starting and termination points of the narrative. The girl is oscillating back and forth through these ambiguous states. Having arrived in the rainy, nocturnal yard, she approaches the remnants of the drenched party and cuts herself a piece of the birthday cake. Yet before she can take a bite, the girl has already arrived back in the house, only to recommence her journey back outside. At the point where the bounds between inside and outside—sheltered home and stormy world—are traversed by the girl, the spatial order has already been reversed.

Detached Building, 2001

High-definition video with sound, length: 05:38 min. (loop)



In *Detached Building*, the camera pans back and forth in a seemingly constant movement between the interior and exterior spaces of a corrugated tin shed. Outside it is dark. The lighted interior of the shed is cluttered with household items, tools, and musical instruments. Sometimes the shed is devoid of people, other times filled with a group of male teenagers immersed in rehearsing a piece of music. Outside we can at times perceive a young woman throwing stones at a house in the background, and then she suddenly disappears again. As in other video works by Hubbard und Birchler, a void emerges on the threshold between inside and outside, a visual pause within which paradoxical temporal leaps take form. They are turning points at which the various sequences are simultaneously interlinked and severed. They mark, in *Detached Building*, tears within the spatial and temporal order, and order of the sexes.

Biography

Teresa Hubbard, born 1965 in Dublin, Ireland, lives in Austin

- 1985–88 B.F.A., University of Texas at Austin
1987 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, Maine
1988 Yale University School of Art, MFA Sculpture Program, New Haven, Connecticut
1990–92 M.F.A., Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax
since 2000 Professor at the Department of Art & Art History, University of Texas, Austin
since 2004 Core Faculty, Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts, Bard College, New York

Alexander Birchler, born 1962 in Baden, Switzerland, lives in Austin

- 1983–87 Schule für Gestaltung, Basel
1985 University of Art and Design, Helsinki
1990–92 M.F.A., Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax
1990–92 Lecturer, Department of Art Education, University of Zurich
since 2004 Core Faculty, Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts, Bard College, New York

Solo Exhibitions (Selected)

- 2009 Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart; Aargauer Kunstmuseum, Aarau; Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin
2008 The Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth; K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf
2006 Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin; Miami Art Museum, Miami
2005 Museum Sammlung Goetz, Munich; Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela; Galerie Bob van Orsouw, Zurich; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City; Kaiser Wilhelm Museum Krefeld; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, Israel
2004 Whitney Museum of American Art in Altria, New York; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; Museum für Gegenwartskunst Basel
2003 Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela; Vera Munro Galerie, Hamburg; Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin
2002 ArtPace Foundation for Contemporary Art, San Antonio; Kunsthalle zu Kiel; Kunstmuseum St. Gallen; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York
2001 Museum Haus Lange und Museum Haus Esters, Krefeld; Huis Marseille. Foundation for Photography, Amsterdam; Galerie Bob van Orsouw, Zürich
2000 Bonakdar Jancou Gallery, New York; Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (mit Sophie Calle und Remy Markowitsch)

Group Exhibitions (Selected)

- 2008 *Busan Biennale*, Seoul; *Interieur / Exterieur*, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg; *Liverpool Biennial*, Tate Liverpool; *The Cinema Effect: Illusion, Reality, and the Moving Image*, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C.; *Held Together with Water*, Istanbul Museum of Modern Art

- 2007 *12th Biennial of Moving Images*, Center for Contemporary Images, Geneva; *Unidentified Emotions*, Art Statements Gallery, Hong Kong; *Seduction – A Theory-Fiction between the Real and the Possible*, Centre for Creativity, Beijing; *Le Mois de la photo 2007*, VOX Centre de l'image contemporaine, Montreal; *Dialogues and Attitudes*, Works from the DZ Bank Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest; *Kunst aus der Sammlung Verbund*, MAK, Museum für angewandte Kunst/Gegenwartskunst, Vienna; *The Screen Eye or The New Image*, Casino Luxembourg; *Une Question de Génération*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon; *Imagination Becomes Reality. Werke aus der Sammlung Goetz*, ZKM, Museum für Neue Kunst, Karlsruhe
- 2006 *Gefrorene Augenblicke. Von Vallotton bis Hubbard /Birchler*, Kunsthaus Zurich; *Auflösung III – Entgrenzung*, NGBK Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst, Berlin; *Irritation des Gleichgewichts*, Paul Klee Museum, Bern; *Kunst Lebt!*, Landesmuseen Baden-Württemberg, Kunstgebäude, Stuttgart; *Melancholie*, Nationalgalerie Berlin
- 2005 *Contenance. Fassung Bewahren!*, Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart; *Geschichtenerzähler*, Kunsthalle Hamburg; *The World is a Stage*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; *Vanishing Point*, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus; *Me Myself I*, Kunstmuseum St. Gallen
- 2004 *3': Condensed Information*, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt am Main; *Video dreams: between the cinematic and theatrical*, Kunsthaus Graz; *The Cobweb*, Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela; *So Wie Die Dinge Liegen*, hardware medien kunst verein, Dortmund
- 2003 *Fast Forward–Works from the Goetz Collection*, ZKM/Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe; *Looking in–Looking out, Positions in Contemporary Photography*, Kunstmuseum Basel; *Adolescence*, Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid
- 2002 *The Starting Line*, Pinakothek der Moderne, München; *On Stage*, Kunstverein Hannover / Villa Merkel Esslingen; *Out of Place: Contemporary Art and the Architectural Uncanny*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; *Say Hello to Peace and Tranquility*, Netherlands Media Art Institute, Amsterdam / Nikolaj Contemporary Art Museum, Copenhagen; *Dialogues & Stories*, Museum Sammlung Grothe, Duisburg; *Das Versprechen der Fotografie*, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt; *La Biennale de Montréal*; *Solitude im Museum*, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart / Musée d'Art Moderne de St. Etienne
- 2001 *I Like Theater & Theater Likes Me*, Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg; *Dialogues & Stories*, Museum Sammlung Grothe, Duisburg; *Das Versprechen der Fotografie*, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt
- 2000 *Nachbilder, Neue Fotografien in der Sammlung*, Kunsthaus Zürich; *Imago*, Center for Photography, University of Salamanca; *Anti-Memory*, Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama
- 1999 *48th Venice Biennial*, Venice

Complete CV at

http://www.hubbardbirchler.net/biography_full.html

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Hans D. Christ, Iris Dressler

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Lenders
Museum Sammlung Goetz, Munich
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.
Kunsthaus Zürich
Modern Art Museum Fort Worth
Burger Collection, Hong Kong and Switzerland
Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin
Galerie Bob van Orsouw, Zurich

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