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## ESIOD 2015

### Clemens von Wedemeyer

2016, DCP, color, 39 min., English, German. **Producer** Thomas Herberth, Florian Brüning. **Production company** Horse & Fruits (Vienna, Austria). **Written and directed by** Clemens von Wedemeyer. **Director of photography** Frank Meyer. **Production design** Renate Schmaderer. **Costumes** Julia Cepp. **Sound** Herbert Verdino. **Music** Birke Bertelsmeier, Rioji Ikeda. **Sound design** Maximilian Liebich. **Editor** Janina Herhoffer. **Visual effects** Holger Hummel. **With** Stephanie Cumming (Esiod), Sven Dolinski (Avatar).

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Vienna 2051. After many years, a customer comes back to the city to close her bank account. Not only data about money, but also memories and other personal data are digitally stored in this account. The customer is not recognized by the computer system. She has to undergo a "memory check," during which they observe how she reacts to data, videos, and images from the account. She is looking for a way to access the virtual safe in order to travel back in time and to send a message to our present.

In *ESIOD 2015* Clemens von Wedemeyer creates a layer of dystopian science fiction, projecting the current financial crisis and the virtualization of work, life, and capital in the architecture of the "First Campus" – a construction project of the Austrian Erste Bank – into the not all too distant future. His protagonist gets visibly lost in the border zone between real and virtual space, and the film itself continues to disintegrate into a cloud of pixels, becoming transparent.

## Notes on *ESIOD 2015*

Two years ago I was asked to participate in an “art in architecture” project (a funding program to install public art) in Vienna. My films are often based on particular locations, but this time it was a bank that had recently built its headquarters in Vienna (Erste Bank). The perspective of this site was the future, so I began planning a science-fiction film. What will a bank look like in the future, what is its capital? Banks also try to economize data and to translate their customers’ reality into numbers. For several years now, computer users have been urged to build up networks, not by storing their memories on their own computers, but by placing them in a cloud, networked up with the experiences and activities of other users who then become our ‘friends.’ What a bank knows is the economic structure of its clients, it could thus unify such functions, which had already become successfully established in the accounts of those things that provide us with experiential networks such as Google, Apple, or Facebook: to generate capital from the stored memories and relationships. The bank data become part of the databank. Initially seen in a positive light, one could pay one’s debts in the future with memories, for a databank can draw its usefulness from this. Memory-debt is an interesting word. For if an account were blocked for monetary reasons, the memories would also get lost, giving rise to a double loss: an economic amnesia as well as a personal one.

Computers make work easier, but with regard to large amounts of data they are the only tool that makes work possible at all. Artificial intelligence perhaps first began in the Banking Business, for the abstraction of monetary relations have long become absorbed into mathematics and processed as algorithms. An ideal turf for autonomous machines. Large buildings, however, are above all a sign of power and emptiness. Those who work there are not the ones who can log into the network from elsewhere – even if they have not already become dispensable.

A customer comes back to the city to close her bank account. The computer can only recognize her from the data records. And there’s an anecdote to this: A couple of years ago in Istanbul when I was opening my Facebook account, the algorithm wanted me to say whether I recognized certain persons in photos which were then selected from my account and shown to me for confirmation. I called such a test, which artificial intelligence provides for the customer in the film, “memory checks.” The machine is played by an actor (Sven Dolinski). The visitor (Stephanie Cumming) is observed by him while she reacts to the contents stored in her account. Which algorithms do computers use to test whether someone is truly reacting to traumatic or shocking images? Freud’s psychoanalysis, which attempts to recognize, analyze, and interpret the unconscious? Can a machine be outwitted by a ‘played’ reaction? And what does this double play mean in the fictional fiction?

Building a new bank is a projection. A virtual data space is superimposed onto real architecture. In the film, body movements become movements on the screen. For the computer these are also moving data, which are not pictures, that is, different from what we know from films. Can uncontrolled movements confound a computer, can a human dance hack a computer and cause it to crash? The film could be part of a series to be called “Parallel Future.” What interests me in this part is to build up a fiction that speaks about the future, but that must necessarily disappoint it, for the future only ever speaks to the present, out of which this dystopian construction emerged: 2015. *Clemens v. Wedemeyer, 2016*

Clemens von Wedemeyer, born in 1974 in Göttingen, is an artist based in Berlin. He studied photography and media at the Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences (1996–1998), followed by studies at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig (MFA 2005), where he presently holds a professorship in the expanded cinema class. His work has been presented extensively in group and solo exhibitions and film festivals worldwide. Central themes in his films and video installations are power relations and history that marks everyday life.

## Films

1998: *Mass (Men—again and against masses)* (3 min.). 2002: *Big Business & The Making of Big Business* (25 min.). 2003: *Silberhöhe* (10 min.). 2004: *Die Siedlung* (20 min.). 2005: *Otjesd (Leaving) & The Making od Otjesd* (15 min.). 2006: *Metropolis, Report from China* (in collaboration with Maya Schweizer, 42 min.). 2007: *Von Gegenüber/From the Opposite Side* (38 min.). 2008: *Die Probe/The Test* (12 min.). 2009: *Against Death* (9 min.). 2010: *Sun Cinema Location* (55 min.). 2012: *Muster (Rushes)* (79 min.). 2013: *The Cast (procession)* (15 min.), *The Beginning. Living Figures Dying* (18 min.), *Afterimage* (video installation, Forum Expanded 2014, 6 min.). 2016: *ESIOD 2015*.