



She  
was acting  
under  
description.

© Kerstin Schroedinger

## Fugue

### Kerstin Schroedinger

2015, 16 mm, black/white, 8 min., English. **Producer** Kerstin Schroedinger (Zürich, Switzerland). **Written and directed by** Kerstin Schroedinger. **Director of photography** Kerstin Schroedinger. **Editor** Kerstin Schroedinger.

Contact: [krstn@zeromail.org](mailto:krstn@zeromail.org)

Framed by a grid, an elusive figure performs a number of movements, leaving traces of light on the film emulsion, while short texts are projected onto the figure, obscured by the uneven surface of its body.

"In music, a fugue is defined as a contrapuntal compositional technique in two or more voices. It builds on a motif that is introduced at the beginning in imitation and recurs frequently in the course of the composition. *Fugue* is a formal and physical experiment in order to understand the relationship between image, sound, and movement. The movements and the setting are informed by motion studies that were conducted and filmed at the beginning of the 20th century with the aim to use film making for analyzing motions of manual mechanized labor as well as concepts of biomechanics that elaborate the relation between body and mind as a form of actor's training. In the film, the movements that are recorded are also printed on the part of the film strip that is read as optical sound by the light sensitive sensor of the projector. What you hear is what you see. The image recurs as movement and the movement recurs as sound."

*Kerstin Schroedinger*

## Moved Images – Moving Bodies

In this text I would like to look into the question of how to deconstruct the dominance of the visual. In order to do so I will examine the material qualities as well as the conditions of production for analogue film.

In film, bodies in movement are connected with mechanically moved images through the level of time: “solidarity and conflict between the movements of matter (film in this case), of the body and of consciousness on the basis of time” (Maurizio Lazarato, *Machines to Crystallize Time: Bergson, in: Theory Culture & Society* 2007) on which the relations between movements are based. The time-based quality, then, is the hinge by which we can use historical, past time and continuing, passing time as counter movements.

The production process is subject to the rhythm of the recording or playback device – camera or projector – and this rhythm becomes visible (and audible) through the vibrating of the projection. While the generation of images takes on a rhythm in any projection of film, the situation changes when a body moves in front of the camera. Another movement joins up with the movement of the film strip in the camera. The body is carried by the movement of the film, but it also serves as a carrier of its own representability. It is re-animated in the projection. This vitality, however, is a fragile affair, the moving body itself always moves at the borders of visibility. If it moves too quickly, for instance, it disappears, since photochemical emulsion reacts too slowly. We have learned to read such material traces of movement in film. We see it as blurriness and streaks.

Being a product of industrialization, film also developed its own form to intervene in historiography as a historical document. It is just these streaks that point to a historical endeavor as the images learned to walk. At the same time, however, celluloid also registers movement and stores it. This happens first at the point when the movements of human bodies become subject to the mechanization of society. Film takes up this moment and documents the instant of subjection. This is constituted in what follows, it gets inscribed into the film, continues through the film. A certain objectivity is thus ascribed to the automatizing gaze of the camera, to illustrate things exactly as they “in fact” happen. At any rate, this presumably objective gaze, which also generates realities, can also be appropriated, and instead of being an instrument for scientific scholarship, it can instrumentalize scientific scholarship. Using this gaze I can perceive differences and similarities. I count repetitions and deviations. In doing so I can loosen the close bond between cinema and history. I can see how film alters its states. I rewind and look at the whole thing all over again. I see “images charged with movement” (Giorgio Agamben, *Difference and Repetition: on Guy Debord’s Films*, in Tom McDonough (ed.), *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, Cambridge, Mass. 2002: MIT Press.), electrified movements. What do I see the second time that I had overlooked the first time?

Laura Mulvey adds a political dimension to such work with archival material when she notes that the rereading of history and the shift within the continuum of time associated with it can already be a strategy for political change. “But the delay, the association with the frame, may also act as a ‘conduit’ to the film’s uncertain, unstable, materiality...” The question of how history materializes is thus already also a question of the history of material; “...torn between the stillness of the celluloid strip and the illusion of its movement, leading to further reflection on the

representation of time...” (Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, London 2006: Reaktion Books)

The temporal distance from storing to reproducing collapses in on itself. Film thus becomes a direct narrator, or even a simultaneous interpreter.

Almost in sync with re-animation, projection reflects what remains of people back to us. Asking about these remnants, however, already seems to be inevitably linked to the problem of representation, since “what remains of people” can only be a representation of them.

The movements that the film recorded are conveyed to us, they communicate. But they say different things to different situations. Neither coherent nor continuous, the movement of the bodies and the movement of the film crisscross one another, entering into a relation of interdependency. The movement of the body is understood on the basis of its being reproduced by film. The understanding then becomes decisive in the countershot, or it provides the beat. By seeing how they move in film, people move as they see themselves do. The dependency also arises through the automatized operation of the film apparatus. There is a resonance here with the mechanization of the assembly line in Fordist factories, their construction and unendingly flow of production has an effect on bodies, which must be subjected to the rhythms of the machines. This, at least, is the state of affairs around 1920, a few years after pictures had learned how to walk. Involuntary by-products of this chain of production are the rhythm and the noises, and also their absence, which then become visible in the images as dance-like movements or in gestures that refer to something audible. I try to find something resistant and disobedient in the movements. In Karen Barad’s concept of a post-human performativity, movements liberate the non-represented areas of history, which have become imprinted in the memory unasked. In relation to my examination of the movement of film and movement in film, this can perhaps relate to the following: “performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real.” (Karen Barad, *Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter*. In: *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. Volume 28, No. 3, Spring 2003) And calling into question this power to determine what is real can be articulated in the transitions from one movement–of the film–to the next–of the body.

*Kerstin Schroedinger*

*“Moved Images – Moving Bodies” (Bewegte Bilder – bewegende Körper), first published in Bildpunkt 3/2015, edited by IG Bildende Kunst Wien, Austria*

**Kerstin Schroedinger** is an artist currently based in Zurich, Switzerland. She works with video, sound, and text with a historiographic practice, questioning the means of production, historical continuities, and the ideological certainties of representation. She received a diploma in Visual Communication/Media at the University of Fine Arts of Hamburg in 2007, and a MRes in Aural and Visual Cultures/Art History at Goldsmiths, University of London in 2010. She is a teaching assistant at Zurich University of the Arts. Her artistic and curatorial practice is collaborative.

## Films

2004: *Das Monument* (5 min.). 2007: *anstatt dass* (11 min.). 2009: *as found* (in collaboration with Mareike Bernien, 15 min.). 2010: *Rigid things can always be moved about* (35 min.), *Translating the other* (in collaboration with Mareike Bernien, 7 min.). 2011: *Red, she said* (in collaboration with Mareike Bernien, 13 min.). 2014: *Rainbow's Gravity* (in collaboration with Mareike Bernien, Forum Expanded, 33 min.). 2015: *Fugue*.