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REALM OF POSSIBILITIES (2/4) _ Documentation

An Archive-Installation about the invention and emergence of new subject constellations in the Arsenal Archive Cinema

The Realm of Possibilities is a performative live edit for viewing visual and film archives. What will be discussed in the Realm of Possibilities is the possible statement of a cultural producer who knows the materiality of the archive. It moves neither laterally nor vertically—it is neither series nor layering, instead running diagonally between the construction plans and the segmentations of the archive, along the figures, pathologies, and arrangements in space that emanate from it. The “diagonal cut” through the archive alternates and improvises between mechanical constellations and narrative. It is this diagonal cut that is documented in the installation by means of the Realm of Possibilities.

Using a video essay and a “live digitization” at a 16mm editing table, on which films from the archive are regularly filmed at slow speed during the time of the exhibition, this installation documents the cinema-performances Realm of Possibilities 2 and 4, which were developed between 2009 and 2013 in various constellations.

The Realm of Possibilities connects up the space of the cinema, the theater stage, and the archive as a space of montage. The cinema becomes a space for editing and connecting with double projections, image and sound mixers, and piano. It becomes a post-production room, which is fed back into the space of the cinema, thus restoring the temporal structure that existed before the presentation back into the space of presentation.

The archaic function of the theater as a field of linking up different modes of speaking, gestures, and audiences becomes a psycho-technical plateau with entrances and exits connected through media. The producers of the Realm of Possibilities take on the role of the ‘new archivist,’ who, as Gilles Deleuze writes in an article of the same name about Michel Foucault, observes the “rules of transition” of a statement from one spatio-

temporal constellation to the next in order to be able to distinguish the possible from the real. The “new” archivist works with a new aesthetic paradigm. He exposes his statement to a dynamics (a film, for instance, is shown over and over again in various programs) and follows the result that links up to the statement in its movement.

The hierarchies of meaning between time-image, sound streams, audience spaces, etc. are not pre-determined. The discussion between verbal and non-verbal temporal levels of the event become part of the structure. The interpretation of the image is tied to a present audience.

The format of the Realm of Possibilities began with the concept of spatial montage. A poster installation in the still undeveloped and uncultivated strips of the Wall in Berlin’s sculpture park was edited together with the view to the surrounding architecture. Ten large posters with photographs from the military archive of the UN mission UNFICYP from Cyprus showed the houses overgrown with plants from the Cypriot Green Line and the ghostly images of the evacuated city of Varosha, which had been photographed by soldiers.

The second Realm of Possibilities was conceived for the 2010 Berlin Documentary Forum. Three archive performances on the cinema stage at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt were staged from the viewpoint of the “new archivist.” For the Arsenal-Institute for Film and Video Art, Stefanie Schulte Stratahus, Heide Schlüpmann, Karola Gramann, Marc Siegel, Nanna Heidenreich, and Gesine Strempel came to present three cinematic experiences that describe the archive of the Arsenal. The first was the “Frauenfilmseminar” of 1973 (organized by Helke Sander and Claudia von Alemann), then the 1997 festival “Count me in,” and finally the Jack Smith festival “LIVE FILM! JACK SMITH! Five Flaming Days in a Rented World” from 2009. In the 1973 Frauenfilmseminar, film practice became the basis for this cinema event about a feminist subjective. Analyzing the political conditions of exploitation showed the ever more restrictive referential space between underpaid women’s work, the patriarchal order of affective and sexual relations in private as well as public space, the direct and powerful body politics of medical institutions, and the poles of heteronormativity and economy that emerge from them. In theory since the eighties, this development of precarious working conditions has been called the “becoming-woman” of

work. It was present at the 1973 Frauenfilmseminar with films such as THE WOMAN'S FILM (Newsreel Film, USA 1970), ES KOMMT DRAUF AN, SIE ZU VERÄNDERN (Claudia von Alemann, BRD 1973), JANIE'S JANIE (Newsreel, Geri Ashur, USA 1971), SUBJEKTITÜDE (Helke Sander, BRD 1970), and LA LOTTA NON E FINITA (Collettivo Femminista di Cinema, Italien 1973), which describe the network of class, race, gender, and subjectivity in European and American space using strategies of assemblage. The documentary limits of these political films were answered with experimental films. In the projection we showed HANDTINTING (Joyce Wieland, USA 1968), CHARMING FOR THE REVOLUTION (Pauline Boudry, Renate Lorenz, GER 2009), TOSS IT, BABY (Beate Rathke, Justin Time, USA 2007), and JACK SMITH, COLOGNE 1974 (Birgit Hein, BRD 1974). We began the viewing with GRANDMA THREADING HER NEEDLE (George Albert Smith, GB 1900) and a fragment from the film DIE FILMPRIMADONNA (with Asta Nielsen, GER/DK 1913).

The network of the power relations between image and production was introduced in Realm of Possibilities 2 through the figure of silent film star Nielsen. Through her performative effect, she not only determined the conditions of production in front of the camera, but also in post-production and distribution. The network of power can be experienced in the space of the cinema, thus making our shared subjectivity visible in a real way.

The Arsenal works with the living and transitory aspects of the film image and sees each screening as an event in which the gazes, gestures, and languages of the audience contribute to defining and extending the archive and its location. The connection between the singularity of the cinema experience (every print in the archive gets traces every time it's screened, every festival creates genealogies through its own programming) and feeding back to the work with the archive creates a memory-cosmological force field that constructs relations to the institution beyond persons, networks, and documents, thus producing an agency between audience, producer, and the film image.

The visual space of imagining history as a periodic return or genealogy of film statements turns cinema and archival practice into a living meta-historical subject. The archive

contains the new in its virtual form, which can be seen when freed from the compulsive narrative obsession of past political systems of censorship. The Arsenal's realm of possibilities becomes a multivalent spatiality, the strategic space of a constantly changing political visual practice.

The Realm of Possibilities 4–Access: Diamonds, Enter, Fin examines the genealogies and transformations of the political film image through the 1972 Forum program.

In the context of Forum Expanded 2012, Constanze Ruhm and I collaborated on a cinema performance in which the architecture of the Arsenal at Potsdamer Platz was introduced into the cinema itself (the production studio of the dffb is located behind the screen of Cinema 1). The spaces of the cinema and the archive lie in close proximity, which provided the connection scheme for this performance on the cinema stage. Somewhere between a viewing at the editing table, a film screening, and the “projector montage” of the film rolls from the program of the 1972 Forum, the “new archivists” commented from the archive space on the question of access to films and their programming decisions.

Erika and Ulrich Gregor, Stefanie Schulte Strathaus, Anselm Franke, and Senta Siewert positioned themselves among the film rolls in the archive space next to Cinema 1, which was connected by video to the screen in Cinema 1. Standing on the proscenium in the cinema was a 16mm editing table, which was being filmed on video. Harun Farocki commented on the viewing at the editing table, while at the piano and electronic instruments Eunice Martins and Mehmet Can Özer extended the sonic space of the films such as, for instance, *HANDTINTING* and *BREAK AND ENTER* (Newsreel Collective, USA 1971). The live broadcast to the archive space was projected as a split screen next to the image being filmed from the editing table.

“Access” describes the political history of an institutional practice. Theoretically, access to the film archive by means of art means introducing an aesthetic paradigm into the realm of politics. The door “that closes when one chapter of film history is closed, such as the end of the *nouvelle vague*,” as Anselm Franke put it from the archive space, could also mean that new ways of viewing allow for a new temporal interweaving that work on our subjectivity and seek out access as the visual politics to come.

The ethics and politics of the film archive are linked to its living quality. Without a living ecology of the mind, the film archive would implode from its own potential. The film archive should therefore always be accessible and should allow for an everyday practice of viewing. With the Living Archive project, the “archive cinema” of the Arsenal is a paradigmatic site of reflection about the machines of desire and affect that have determined our politics and will continue to do so. It is an experimental practice in which artistic production experiences its political field. The Arsenal is, or will be a **postmodern, “sacred” site, which allows us to position out urban society beyond the rite of film projection, and which will constantly deterritorialize and reterritorialize.** “What’s political is not the film, but the cinema,” or more precisely, the “archive cinema.”