

GALERIE SANDRA BÜRGE

Valerie Stahl von Stromberg

„GALERIE VALERIE“

along with Edwin Burdis, Ariane Müller, Van Dyke Parks, Chris Wilder

Opening on Saturday, November 14, from 17h on
Exhibition November 17 2009 to January 9 2010

Every dialogue within our society of representation connected to media (apparently everybody can see everybody) holds a portion of fiction. If though one wants to relate pictures effectively with one's own existence, that is to tap one's full potential in time and movement, one must pursue the same effort like hundred years and each invention ago. The *National Geographic*, appearing in several languages worldwide on the fascination about Planet Earth - a speciality are map additions -, has spent high sums for 120 years to send photographers and reporters to unexplored places. However, the attempt to picture the beauty of Earth with its inhabitants maimed or untouched by economic interests, originally developed from the educational aim of adjusting myth and reality for a general public, nowadays sees itself confronted with the problem of a new, shortening myth production.

The *Shanghai Museum* dedicates, along with jade, furniture or coins, a space to ‚minorities‘ who are shown forthright as dressed dolls in demarcation to the Han group. Working as a photographer in the pragmatic and communist-capitalist People's Republic of China Valerie Stahl von Stromberg is often depended on translation services and patience while requesting permissions. In default of the latter originated the portrait of Zhang Bei Xing, a worker of a state-run coalmine in Central-Chinese Yima, Luoyang, who is wearing a fake Margiela suit jacket. This wasn't unusual for him. The only thing that could have been strange for him was the fact that he was illustrated on his own on the photo.

The import and export volume of China amounted to 2.6 trillion US Dollar in 2008, according to the Chinese main customs office. Present growth can no more be effectuated by people alone. In the back space of the exhibition are photos of machines that chug along in a comparatively humble manner. A music box accompanies them and plays two brief MP3 Moog Synthesizer pieces by Van Dyke Parks (written 1968 for the *Ice Capades*); human abstraction in digital form has replaced its mechanics. The machines cut steel, purify coal, mine a large part of the world's need in Ferro Sillicone and flatten Cashmere. A steel factory near Shanghai produces hydraulic jacks for 'strandjacks', heavy cranes used in bridge building and engineering that can lift up to 1,000 tons. Mining and steel industry has always been an important prop for the political power of a state, and yet the human understanding with which these machines and factories can be depicted is surprising. Some photos are taken in Ordos, a town built on desert and steppe of Inner Mongolia, in reverse town planning where the inhabitants remain to follow the still empty houses.

„Gehirnoperation“ shows the rare surgical intervention ELANA, carried out at the Charité Clinics Berlin, and leads to another unknown place, the brain. Gazi Yasargil (born 1925 Lice, Turkey) is regarded as the inventor of microneurosurgery in Europe. From 1953-1993 he trained about 3,000 colleagues at the UniversitätsSpital Zurich, and he developed, like every pioneer does, his own tools in order to treat epilepsy and brain tumours. With virtuosity Man refines his handcraft products - and he orchestrates them nostalgically, because he feels a warming attachment and amorousness for his most original, oldest tools (otherwise he could nourish himself exclusively of food concentrates).

The photo of the handmade pieces of jewellery in a shop-window display in Reykjavik is covered with a veil that feels like a farewell to the world as we knew it. The temperature aggregate of the photo cannot be determined precisely and the space depth is constructed in a flat mergence similar to a dream, a surreal passage, grown to a habit maybe or an irreversible act, detached of the object, in a phenomenological aimless, infinite space between past and new. In reality we cannot go into a photo, zoom or change angles, like Harrison Ford/ Rick Deckard did in the film *Bladerunner* with a decrytical visual machine (he thus bumps into a mirror image of a replicant).

„Average Blob“, a spawn of common today's design, was made in CNC (Computerized Numerical Control), with the help of computer software that steers and regulates tool machines. Here it is machines that produce their own components after the dictation of logical improvement. What was meant earlier as a deliberate avoidance of standards, for example in the never realised „Endless House“ of Friedrich Kiesler, now aims into one absolute version of the average.

The „Kamerahand“, based on the no more manufactured 35 mm camera Contax and a 3D scan of the artists hand, is an object lacking the prestige of futuristic geometry, but with an existence as if it would have been always possible. It gives that feeling of familiarity that often comes to us with technical achievements, for example, the two years old i-Phone with its multi-touch interface as a maneuverable connection to the geographically and mentally distant. Pictures of the intelligent hand appear already in 1833 with Charles Bell¹ as an ideally conformist limb given by the creator, which, more reliable than the eye, can give information to the brain by a physical kind of grasping. Only a cybernetic creature can be proficient in a reality that is already now overstraining engineered Man.

One may fancy the Russian controlled „Chocolate Club “ in Peking like a Hyper-Neo construction of exalted entertainment, all age and nationality meet there, prostitutes and transvestites; the old-fashioned match would be a spy novel, a bar place in the cold war East Berlin, and you don't know whether the extremities of that gaudily mixed society are daunting or inviting, but a rapprochement remains always possible in mutual contact.

¹ „The hand; its mechanism and vital endowments, as evincing design and illustrating the power, wisdom, and goodness of God.“ Charles Bell, Sir; Alexander Shaw. 8th Ed. London, G. Bell & Sons, 1885