

Mia Bailey-

## Cutting Lilies/ Repairing Lilies

Mia Bailey's video works are at first glance time-segments, small stories or narratives that have the effect of scenes from a fable, whose beginning and end remain untold. Although video has been chosen as the necessary tool for this task, what it reveals are parables about pictures and their meaning, their possibilities of expression and their mechanisms.

Cutting Lilies/ Repairing Lilies confronts the viewer already in its title with two contradictory mechanisms. In the work these appear simultaneously on two monitors and seem to oppose each other, to annul each other, rather than merging to create a chronologically coherent whole. Due to the fact that the monitors stand facing each other, synchronic time is disturbed. What ensues is a self-contradictory compass of meaning, where the endless repetition of the video loop, disassembling logic, only serves to underpin the absurdity of what we see. The faintest meaning of the events shown is taken apart just as the flowers are dissected into their botanical parts, and the act of reconstruction is rendered on every level a helpless, unfinished, and futile act.

The simple pictures are saturated with an iconographic symbolism, the over coded readability of which potentates the feeling of a futile search for meaning. Firstly we are struck by the symbolism of colour, in which the white of the lilies and of the actor's shirt are associated with purity, innocence, clarity and so on. It is underscored by the green of the leaves and of the backdrop - symbolic of life and hope. The objects themselves support this repertoire of symbols: the lily as traditional symbol of both

the Virgin and of ruling power; the one man's injured hand, the blade, and the act of dissection themselves as signs of wounding.

In this way, destruction and repair, investigation, creation - and with them the search for meaning behind or above things - are represented in a simple and penetrating manner. The work becomes a reflection on the creative process itself, whose task - to be a representation of the world - has long been lost.

Mia Bailey's work makes clear that a picture contains only the reality of the picture – yet never the depiction of another reality. Beyond this, she shows in the failing act of reconstruction that our picture of the world is a subjective one, which is continuously being newly pieced-together - but this picture is not the world itself. What remains is the uniqueness of an open structure, in which the actual continuum of time becomes perceptible- before even the concept or the substance of the world are materialised. There is no world beyond time, and there is always only one reality in a sea of possibilities, according to where we happen to be looking. With this, Mia Bailey summarises one of the main themes of contemporary art, where the picture has become so alien that it distrusts the very possibility of creation.

Ralph Melcher

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