

## Mia Bailey

'Saline', from the series 'Flight', 2007

9:38 min, 16:9, without sound

'Mobile', from the series 'Flight', 2007

11:37 min, 16:9, without sound

The two video works shown at Videocity by Mia Bailey (\*1975) belong to a seven-part series with the overall title 'Flight'. Flight is "a word that has plural meanings - it can refer to the action of flying, but also to an escape. The depicted scenes refer to abstract thought processes surrounding the idea of imprisonment and the possibility of escape. In carefully composed, colourful settings, Bailey gives the media-influenced compositions with their ritual actions a poetic as well as a surreal dimension." ( Exhibition text, "Regionale 8," Kunsthalle Basel)

Both videos, 'Saline' and 'Mobile,' deal with the feeling of isolation and being trapped inside a body or a mind. In 'Saline', a mummified body is positioned in front of a background with geometrically arranged monochrome surfaces. Two pairs of hands in white gloves cover the body with coarse-grained salt. Over time, the cotton bands of the mummified body become invisible under the salt. In 'Mobile', a blue budgerigar sits in a white birdcage against a blue background. The cage is on wheels, with straps attached to its two sides - it is pulled back and forth through the pictorial space. This movement takes place both in gentle waves and rough, fast pulls.

The bird, the mummified person, as well as the mummification process itself are art historical attributes of death. Whilst the mummified body, preserved by salt, clearly symbolises death and the endless loneliness of earthly remains, the bird, as a Christian symbol, refers to the story of Christ's suffering. Birds can also be found on ancient tombs and memorials; as inhabitants of the air, they represent spiritual elevation into heavenly realms. Similar symbolism can also be found in Egyptian mythology, where both the god of the dead and the soul detaching itself from the body appear in the form of a bird or a bird-like being. In their natural habitat in Australia, parakeets live in large flocks in wild freedom - in contrast to the caged animal in the video work.

The mummified body, which is a powerful reference to this world and the lonely physicality of humans, thus contrasts with the trapped bird as a symbol of the afterlife and the spirit. Both corporeality and spirit are trapped behind white lines - cotton sheets and bars - and are condemned to remain at the mercy of their environment. Mia Bailey's video works gain new meaning in the present time by recreating the devastating effects of psychological and physical isolation of a global pandemic. In this context, the moving bird's cage can be interpreted as indecision and uncertainty over how we will deal with the pandemic in the future. For many, the only remaining option is to flee within, and into our shells of isolation, hopefully to soon escape from captivity unscathed.

Michelle Sacher

(Translation Polina Chizhova)