

FUTURITY NOW!

transmediale.10 Video Tour

curated by Marcel Schwierin

The transmediale Award competition, featuring works across a large breadth of artistic media, is one of the highlights of the Berlin based festival for art and digital culture. Video, as a critical medium of artistic and cultural expression, plays a significant role in transmediale's 24 year history rooted in the advancement and experimental development of artistic practice. For the transmediale Award competition 2010 more than 1500 works, including many high quality and recent video works, were submitted by artists from around the world.

The programme includes works by:
Doug Fishbone, Dominic Gagnon, Hörner & Antlfinger, Adam Leech, Bjørn Melhus, Vincent Meessen, Elodie Pong, Sun Xun

This year's video touring programme is a selection of outstanding works reflecting the transmediale.10 theme - FUTURITY NOW!, examining 2010 as a year which has been synonymous with past images of the future. Writers and commentators throughout the 20th century strove to depict 2010 as a shining example of a future framed by technological progress and social harmony. But as 2010 drew nearer it became clear that global society is neither the utopia nor the dystopia traditionally presented in these fictions, architectures and theories of the future. Indeed it could be said that the future is experiencing an identity crisis! The eight videos selected for the programme use a range of performative narratives and sampling techniques to investigate what these notions of future could be.



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transmediale

festival for art and digital culture

transmediale is a forum of communication for artists, media workers and a broad public interested in the arts. transmediale includes exhibitions, conferences, live performances, artist presentations and a variety of fringe events throughout Berlin. transmediale was founded in 1988 as a video art festival and has taken place annually, in Berlin, ever since.

First conceived in close relation to the Berlinale film festival, the festival changed its name from VideoFest to transmediale in 1997/98, thus reflecting the fact that its programmatic scope had broadened to encompass a wide range of multimedia-related art forms. Since then, digital technologies have become firmly integrated into our everyday lives. Digital culture is no longer avant-garde terrain. transmediale has responded to this development by focusing its programmes not on the latest technical novelties and scientific speculations, but on the actual usage that people are making of such technologies.

As a festival for art and digital culture, transmediale presents advanced artistic positions reflecting on the socio-cultural impact of new technologies. It seeks out artistic practices that not only respond to scientific or technical developments, but that try to shape the way in which we think about and experience these technologies. transmediale understands media technologies as cultural techniques which need to be embraced in order to comprehend, critique, and shape our contemporary society.

Marcel Schwierin, Berlin. *1965. Curator, filmmaker. Co-founder of the Werkleitz Biennial and the experimental film database cinovid. Films: The Images (experimental, 1994), Eternal Beauty, documentary, 2003). Curatorial projects for: Werkleitz Biennials, Goethe Instituts, Max-Ophüls-Festival, Int. Short Film Festival Oberhausen, transmediale.08 and 09. Artistic director of the Werkleitz Festival Amerika 2008. Conception Arabshorts.net, Goethe-Institut Cairo. Curator film transmediale.10 Futurity Now! and Werkleitz Festival Fear Has Big Eyes, 2010 – www.schwierin.de

Video Tour transmediale.10

Elodie Pong - *After the Empire*
Switzerland 2008, 14 min

Vincent Meessen - *Dear Adviser*
Belgium 2009, 8 min

Sun Xun - *Heroes No Longer*
China 2008, 9 min

Adam Leech - *Speech Bubble*
Belgium 2008, 5 min

Hörner & Antlfinger - *Le nouveau OMIZA*
Germany 2007, 6 min

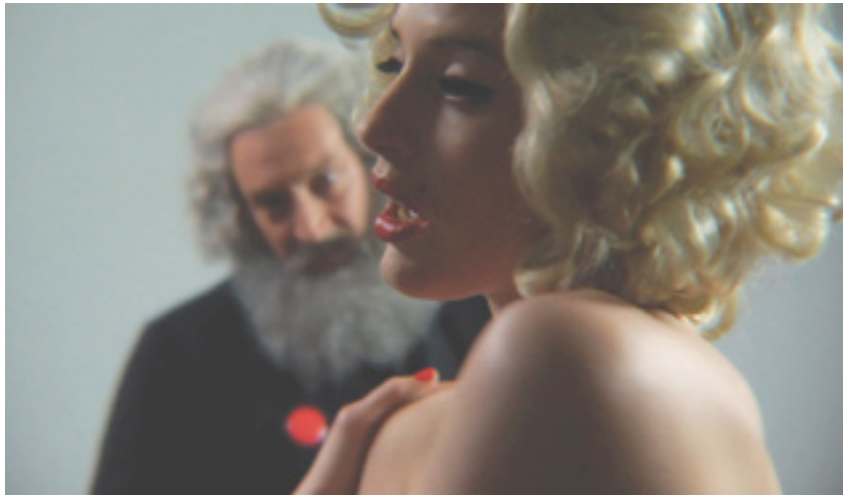
Doug Fishbone - *Hypno Project*
UK 2009, 13 min

Bjørn Melhus - *Murphy*
Germany 2008, 4 min

Dominic Gagnon - *Rip in Pieces America*
Canada 2009, 21 min

Elodie Pong - *After the Empire*

Switzerland 2008, 14 min



In *After the Empire*, Pong orchestrates face-to-face conversations between various late icons of popular culture and political history, including Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Batman, and Karl Marx. Surrounded by a post-apocalyptic set, the actors embody their character's individual and symbolic extremes, longings, and ideals in simultaneously humorous and elegiac ways.

Elodie Pong (born in 1966 in Boston, USA) is an artist and filmmaker known for her subtle, analytic works, often built as cycles or in series, which focus on human relationships, cultural codes and their impact on contemporary society. As a university-trained sociologist and anthropologist, she often deals with social structures in her artistic work. The wide-ranging oeuvre of the video artist revolves around questions of identity and collective identity construction, intimacy and separation, self stylization and unstable communication situations in a pluralistic and individualized society. Until 2004, her projects, installations and video works mainly focused on immediate visualisation of sociological structures such as intimacy, friendship, issues of gender and communication. Her more recent films can be read as multi-layered analysis and deconstruction of these very themes, where the viewer becomes part of the constellation by being offered different readings according to which the works are brought together. Elodie Pong has received several awards and grants; her work is exhibited in group and solo exhibitions worldwide. She lives and works in Zurich, Switzerland.

Vincent Meessen - *Dear Adviser*

Belgium 2009, 8 min



Meessen's work is set in Chandigarh, the paragon of the modernist city planned by Le Corbusier in the 1950's as a symbol of the new, progressive nation of India that had just emerged from its colonial past. The city's architectural structure is that of a grid pattern, at the very centre of which the 'Capitol' rises: a phantasm of centralised political power, overlooking the unfinished city. Haunted by the ghosts of modernism, it leaves plenty of room for silhouettes, voices and sounds weaving together a fable cherished by the late architect about the Raven that wants to imitate the Eagle. *Dear Adviser* is a poetic address to Le Corbusier and the in Chandigarh superstitiously as "advisor" disguised legislator.

Vincent Meessen (1971), born in Baltimore, studied journalism and cultural policies. He was active as a social worker and photographer and completed his postgraduate studies at the HISK (Higher Institute for Fine Arts) in Antwerp. His work develops mainly around the idea of "disputed spaces", dealing with territory as a political issue. Once preferring photography as a medium, he now explores a multitude of media, including video. His work has been shown internationally at a variety of festivals and exhibitions like STUK (Leuven), Netwerk (Aalst) and Muhka_Media (Antwerp) and at the Oberhausen International Film Festival, where he was awarded with the Grand Prize of the City of Oberhausen. Meessen lives and works in Brussels, Belgium.

Sun Xun - *Heroes No Longer*

China 2008, 9 min



Sun Xun about **Heroes No Longer**: The “Hero” is a kind of historical complex, a complex that lead to the transitions of our history. But they are usually ridiculous. “History” appears to us more likely as a sort of mental image, or a virtual reality.

Sun Xun, a Chinese artist born in 1980 and living in Hangzhou, creates animations that combine hand-drawn renderings and traditional materials with new media. He studied printmaking at the China Academy of Fine Arts, but a burgeoning interest in moving images led him to found his own animation studio in 2006. To create his meticulous animations, Sun Xun produces a multitude of drawings that incorporate text within the image. His subjects range from elements found in world history and politics, to natural organisms. He then films the drawings, sequentially one at a time, to create a sense of movement and suggest the passing of time, the machinations of history, and the beauty inherent in simple forms. For over a week, Sun Xun inhabited the Vault Gallery to develop a new animated, site-related video and drawing installation.

Adam Leech - *Speech Bubble*

Belgium 2008, 5 min

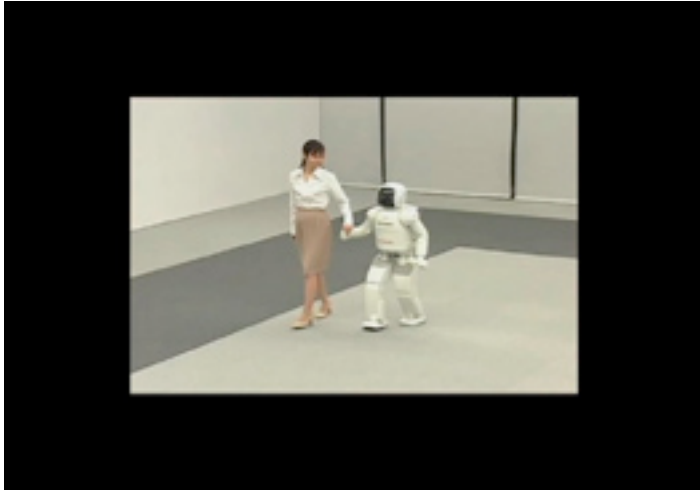


Leech’s project for Manifesta 7, **Speech Bubble**, began as an investigation into the bankruptcy of the Belgian high-tech speech recognition company, Lernout & Hauspie. Like other multinational corporations, Lernout & Hauspie was a visionary company where money, techno-utopias and the cult of the entrepreneurial personality helped to create a now ubiquitous “market bubble”. In 2001, it burst. Speech Bubble is a short dialogue between an unemployed salesman and his lover, Magdalena, who seems to be the futuristic product of artificial intelligence. Magdalena and the salesman reminisce on the times before their company went bankrupt. Their memories are cast adrift in corporate nostalgia, economic strategy and romantic love. – Manifesta 7 Index

American- born and trained at Chicago Art Institute as well as at Rijksakademie Amsterdam, **Adam Leech** is a painter and video artist combining these two techniques to create a fruitful interaction between two aesthetic paradigms. His major reference in painting is Pointilism and, in particular, Seurat’s way of creating canvasses in which ‘each point of colour has a singular, positive, individual, identity’ constitutes an important source of inspiration. Starting from the French maître’s ‘positive points’, Leech’s own practice investigates into producing ‘negative points’ thus creating a picture by erasing rather than by adding texture and contour.

Hörner & Antlfinger - *Le nouveau OMIZA*

Germany 2007, 6 min



Since the mid-1980s HONDA has been working on the development of humanoid robots for use within the human environment. ASIMO, one of the most advanced humanoids, will in the future be able to carry out such tasks as, for example, looking after the elderly. His counterpart OMIZA places himself on the other side of the mirror. In the company of a woman he learns of a well-ordered world which exists only for him and for their endless labyrinthine ventures into the heart. In **Le nouveau OMIZA** the first attempts to reconcile human and non-human beings are charted, and a new form of communication is tested. The coming-together of woman and robot is also reflected through the use of sound: Erik Satie's piano piece *Gymnopédie No. 1* is interpreted both by a pianist and by a piece of composition software. - Angelika Richter

Ute Hörner collaborates since the early 1990s with **Mathias Antlfinger** in their practice which incorporates interactive film projects as well as 3D-realtime installations and netart projects. The possibilities and limitations of internet communication, the specific way artists and scientists deal with their computer that determines their everyday life and work, or media-channeled visions of a possible self in the future are only some of the topics which concern the artist couple. Since 2009 they are professors for media art at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne. They both live in Cologne and Berlin.

Doug Fishbone - *Hypno Project*

UK 2009, 13 min



Still from Screen 1, Audience



Still from Screen 2

Hypno Project examines how people react to stimuli under the influence of hypnosis. I was interested to see how an audience would respond to one of my video narratives after their conscious state had been altered. I filmed a group of 12 people, all of whom had been hypnotised by a professional stage hypnotist, as they watched a new video work I made using a range of subliminal images and other kinds of prompts. Each member of the audience was given specific suggestions while under trance, instructing them to behave in certain ways at different visual and aural cues. They were then woken, and filmed as they viewed the video. The results were remarkable, and there are some very unusual moments where people responded without any self-consciousness whatsoever. Their reactions raise a broad range of questions about manipulation and behavioural conditioning, and the relativity of perception from one individual to the next. How natural are our responses to our environment, and how accurate are our perceptions? - Doug Fishbone

Doug Fishbone is an American artist living and working in London. Fishbone was born in New York City in 1969. He earned a MA in Fine Art degree at Goldsmiths College in 2003 and was awarded the Beck's Futures Prize for Student Film and Video in 2004. He is perhaps best known for his project *30,000 Bananas* - a huge mountain of ripe bananas installed in the middle of London's Trafalgar Square and later given away free to the audience - in October 2004. Fishbone's video and performance work was included in the British Art Show 6, a national touring exhibition held every five years to feature the best in contemporary British art. He had his first major solo project at Gimpel Fils in London in October of 2006, and performed at London's Hayward Gallery as well as Serpentine Gallery, ICA and KHOJ International, Delhi.

Bjørn Melhus - *Murphy*

Germany 2008, 4 min

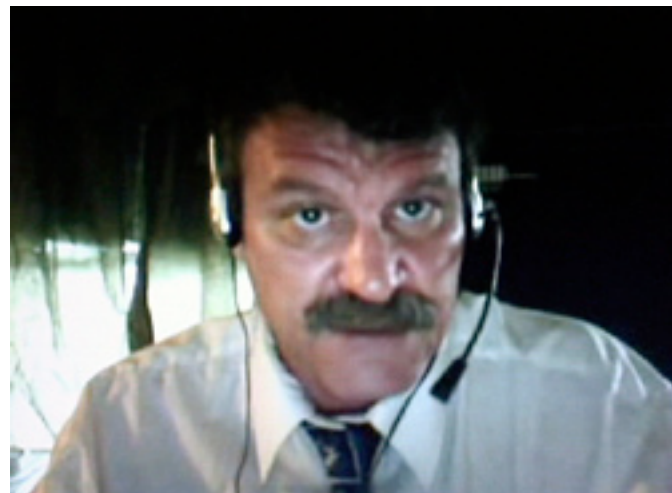


Murphy is a pure synchronised sound and light projection in which the artist consciously withdraws his own figure. Unlike more traditional Melhus pieces, in which the artist embodies different roles, *Murphy* operates a dramatic reduction to abstract fields of color and concentrates exclusively on its sound footage, which results from a collage of some of the most significant moments from mainstream war movies. The videolight sequence is based on sound snippets from the movie *Blue Thunder* (USA, 1982), which was one of the early 1980's media rehabilitations of Vietnam war veterans in civilian society. In the original movie Captain Frank Murphy is a good cop and former Vietnam war helicopter pilot with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder who fights Lt. Colonel Cochrane, an evil cop and also Vietnam veteran. By re-integrating war veterans into a civilian society, the war itself was subconsciously brought to America and turned the air space above the urban landscape of Los Angeles into a battlefield. In *Murphy* the visible stream of colored light and the absence of the image itself creates an imaginary movie. *Murphy* is a true abstract Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Born in Kirchheim in 1966 **Bjørn Melhus** studied Film and Video at the Braunschweig School of Arts. Currently living and working in Berlin, his film *Murphy* has just been recently been awarded with the 55. Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen Prize (2009). Recent shows have included a solo presentation at the Amerikan Hastanesi in Istanbul (2009) and at the Denver Art Museum in the USA (2008) among others. Bjørn Melhus works as a video artist for more than 15 years and is represented in some of the major private and public collections in the world, from Germany, the USA, Italy, Spain, etc.

Dominic Gagnon - *Rip in Pieces America*

Canada 2009, 21 min



Rip in Pieces America is an uncensored proclamation from an invisible USA. Dominic Gagnon turns no blind eye in his ultra-intense collage film which consists entirely of more or less anonymous webcam clips that due to their controversial or explicit nature have been flagged and meanwhile removed from video sites such as YouTube. Well-formulated conspiracy theorists, bad-tempered grass-roots activists and religious arms fanatics, who use the webcam as both a means to preach and to confess, have all been filtered by the censor, but stored by Gagnon, who neither comments nor embarks on any finger-pointing. For who decides what can be thought and said? And what is paranoia, if you know that you're right?

Dominic Gagnon is an inventor, director, installer and active performer on the international scene. He considers cinema as a technique for measuring the immeasurable or as a discipline of chaos. Since 1996, he has made public presentations of moving images, invent machines and concepts, performs sound works, built facilities and creates performances in various galleries, festivals and biennials around the world. To carry out his projects, Gagnon has conducted several researches about: the decline of economies (ISO, 2002), terror (*Du Moteur à Explosion*, 2000) violence and identity crisis among boys (*The Making of a Cobra*, 2004), the international adoption systems (Anchorage, 1998), information disorder and homelessness (*High Speed*, 2007), Sado-Masochism and fetishism in popular culture (*Blockbuster History*, 2005) and the family in the era of mega-entertainment (*Beluga Crash Blues*, 1997).