

Katja Loher



Sculpting in Air, Installation view, Maxxi Museum, Photo: Stephanie Cardi.

Katja Loher projects her videos onto the surface of large shiny orbs hanging in the gallery space. The thirty-one year-old Swiss artist has detached herself from the monitor and the black box whereby videos are projected onto one or several walls, opting instead to stage her works as spatial „video sculptures“, which she calls Videoplanets and Miniverses. They are created in the artist’s New York studio, in close co-operation with dancers, choreographers, musicians and designers. The Miniverses are small orbs whose insides serve as projection surfaces, with apertures that enable the outside world to look in. Like their larger counterparts, the Videoplanets, they reflect the human condition in a globalized world.

Loher’s sculptural video works address a field of tension between escapist phantasy and oppressive reality. Her surreal worlds are populated by realistic figures that tumble about virtual spaces and appear to be intent on preventing ecological collapse. Androgynous dancers evoke fairies and – in performing the artificial pollination of plants or even photo-synthesis – strive to conserve the natural basis of human existence.

The video that Loher produced on the occasion of the inauguration of Zaha Hadid’s spectacular MAXXI Museum, in 2010, addresses the new topic of the dialog between human and computer. A very basic game of questions and answers and uniformed actors are reminiscent of 1970s science-fiction movies. The artist’s exaggerated imagery underscores the fact that there can be no understanding between the sparkling eye and the rotating hard-disk, no matter how many words are exchanged.

Inspired by Pablo Neruda’s Book of Questions, since 2005 Loher has been addressing the human basis of existence. Her complex video collages demonstrate metaphorically the far-reaching consequences of poetic questions such as, „Why did the bees leave?“ Loher occasionally transforms questions into textual images by choreographing dancers to form letters which she then combines into words. And usually the words she has composed in her Video alphabet are embedded in scenographies whose arc of suspense provides a contrast to the unfolding sentence or phrase and its possible interpretation.

Unlike the textual level that Loher introduces in some of her videos, the choreographies rarely betray narrative structure. The dancers’ movements tend to be synchronic and the bodies seen from the bird’s-eye view that Loher adopts in virtually all her works form clear patterns, which she then proceeds to multiply kaleidoscopically in the course of digital post-production. The symmetrical multiplication of moving bodies in constantly changing constellations produces a rhythmically pulsating collective. Loher’s dream-like yet apocalyptic tales suggest that „Saving the Planet“ can only be achieved by joining forces in a collective.

Ruth Littman, Gallerist, Oct 2010, Zurich

Translation from German, Feb 2011: Margret Powell-Joss

Galerie Andres Thalmann: Katja Loher - Sculpting in Air, Catalogue, Zurich, 2010.

Projections onto large weather balloons (Videoplanets, since 2006), or inside circular sculptures (Miniverses, since 2008), through the colored water in three glasses (RGB Well, 2009/2010), or – in her latest work – inside glass bubbles (Bubbles, 2010) – these are just some of the ways in which Katja Loher's videos are transformed into sculptures. A skilful film editor and an artist who embarks on in-depth experiments with materials, shapes and colors, she collaborates with professionals from different backgrounds to create „planets“ or imaginary universes which mentally and emotionally embrace the audience. In a quest to „locate a new identity in space and time“, Loher's worlds are condensed into an altered global vision. Filmed from a bird's eye view, choreographed bodies come together in the post-production process to form letters that shape a new language, which the artist calls Videoalphabet. The tiny scale of the performers seen from above provides an outside view, as though through a microscope. The dancers that enter into the camera focus become part of Loher's universe where they „evaporate“ into ephemeral components, digitally controlled, engaged in embodying a „human language“ that sometimes dissolves into abstract patterns.

Questions or simple dialogues occasionally alternate with the representation of „micro-societies“, such as the one of men working like bees depicted in one of her scenes, whose existence is reflected in the mechanical tasks that assure their survival.

The key point of reference in Loher's works is the human body – even when questions relate to red, green and blue, i.e. the colors used in Videoplanet, 2010, and RGB Well, 2009/2010; or to ask, „Where is the Center of the Sea?“ (Miniverse 3, 2009); or to the relationship between man and technology (Sculpting in Air, 2010); or yet to more specifically ecological issues such as the ones raised by the surplus of waste products that are generated in the struggle to increase productivity (Collapsoscope, 2010; in collaboration with Hans Focketytn). Universes are enclosed in other universes. In Loher's planetary vision, the body, a universe in its own right where microcosm and macrocosm meet, is as far as the human eye can reach. The harmonious kaleidoscopic design of Loher's latest works provides another and more global vision of a dystopic world in which the balance between man and nature has been destroyed by the pervasive presence of machines. Synchronised movement becomes the subject of the work, and is the engine that moves kaleidoscopic geometrical compositions, alluding to the Bauhaus spirit of functionality in its pure state. Harmony and beauty are juxtaposed to – yet on a par with an apocalyptic vision of a mechanised world.

The performers' dehumanisation, enhanced by their costumes, is sometimes undermined by the camera zooming in on their facial expressions. They gaze up from

below, which establishes a strong connection with the viewer. However, that link is broken when the camera suddenly zooms out again and the faces merge back into the whole. This is just one of the complex games the artist plays with the observer who, in the role of voyeur, completes the meaning of the work.

In Videoplanets the projection onto large balloons gently invades and morphs space to embrace the visitors whose feelings of immersion are enhanced by the sound. A more subjective interaction is required when Loher's world is revealed through multiple openings in the circular Miniverse sculptures. The sense of viewing a universe is the same, but this time there is a radical change in the way the work is delivered. Having to get close to the work emphasises its voyeuristic aspect as the observer becomes more aware of his or her role. Other visitors seeing someone peering at a hole have a broader view, one that encompasses the sculpture and the audience involved in a unique performance or living sculpture.

The game between observer and observed is pushed to extremes in the site-specific version of *Sculpting in Air* realised for the inauguration of Rome's MAXXI Museum. The images from a camera that films visitors observing the work are projected onto the rear of the balloon and incorporated into the „planet“. From there, but in reverse, the images return in live-stream transmission to other observers who are watching both video and filmed visitors on the web component. Even more than Loher's other works, this piece emphasises a fragmented vision in which the circularity of the sculptural components is also conceived as a mode of observation. Collapsoscope is a sculpture created for this year's Venice Architecture Biennale. It hangs suspended from the ceiling; its apertures protrude as though in a still image of an explosion. This piece represents a new turn in Loher's explorations. Everything seems to escape from the visual field previously inscribed in her spherical planets. The expanding projection reaches the surrounding walls where the words of the human alphabets dissolve, and the images of the digital bodies collapse accompanied by a crashing sound.

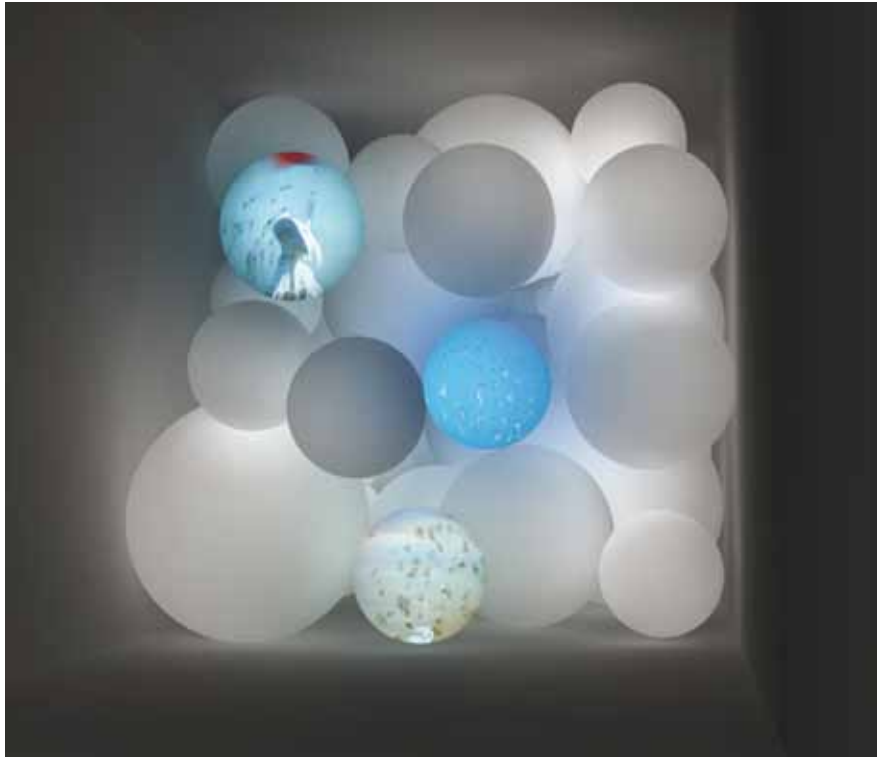
Loher takes her play with ephemeral objects and solid materials to a new level in her most recent development and vision that uses as a projection surface the bubble blown into a glass sculpture (Bubbles, 2010).

Elena Giulia Rossi Independent Curator, Rome, Oktober 2010

English version edited by Margret Powell-Joss

Galerie Andres Thalmann: Katja Loher - Sculpting in Air, Catalogue, Zurich, 2010.

04 **MULTIVERSE**
Videoinstallation 2011



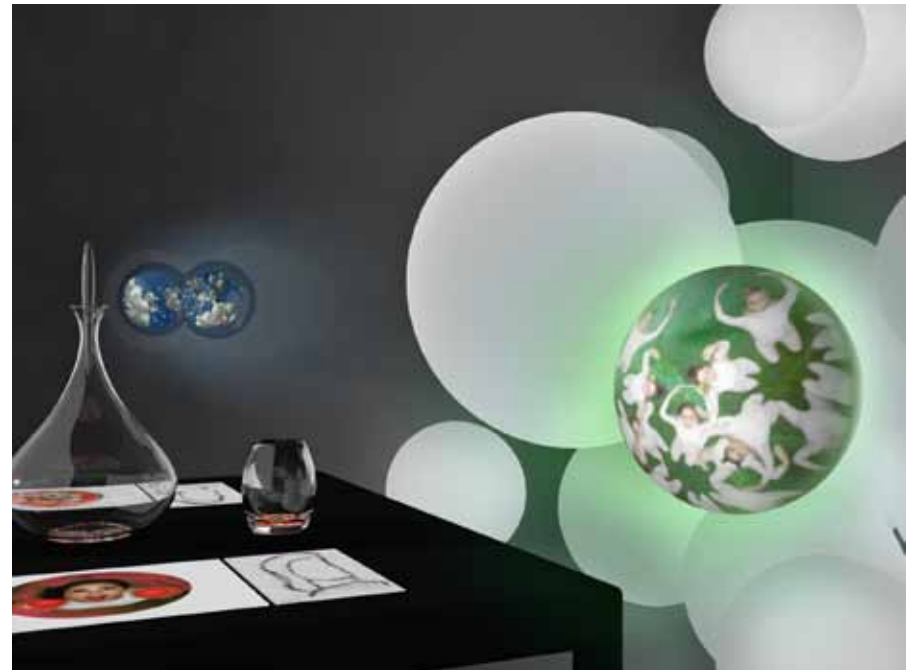
Multiverse, 3D Rendering: Andrea Liberni.



05 **MINIVERSE**
Preview of upcoming installations

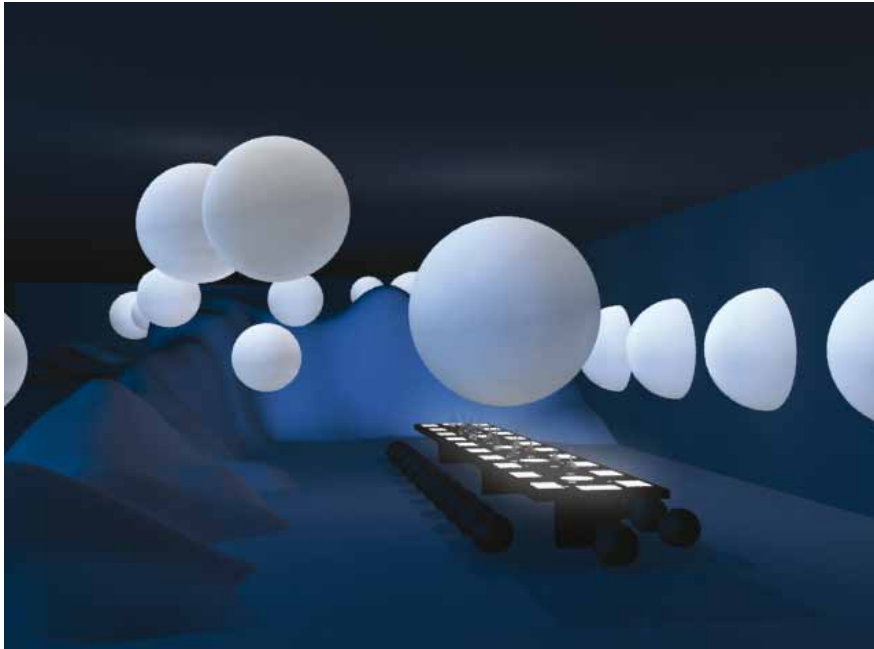


Miniverse, 3D Renderings Andrea Liberni



06 **MINIVERSE-MULTIVERSE**

Preview, solo exhibition at MuBE, Museu Brasileiro da Escultura, Sao Paulo.

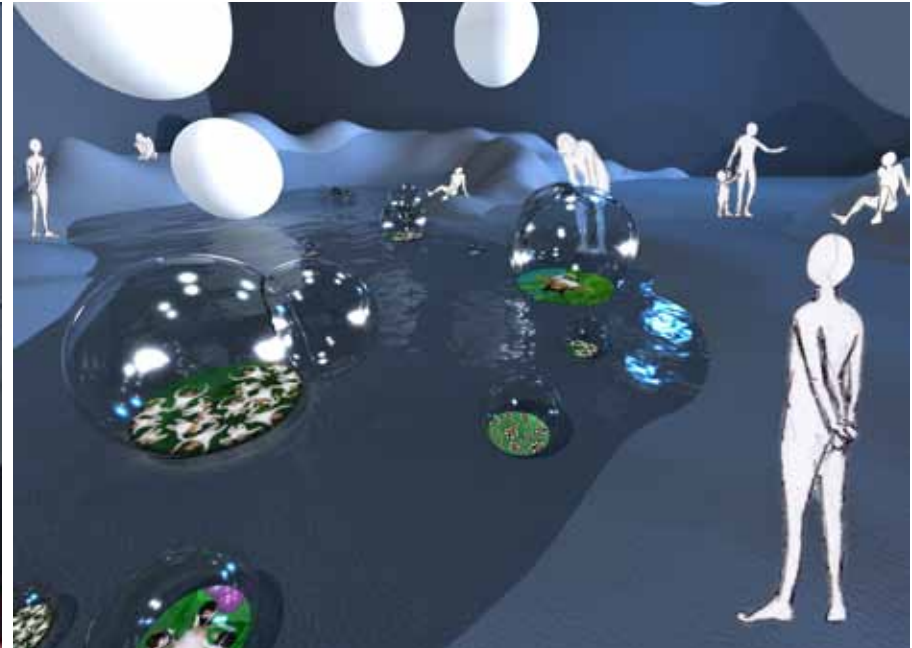
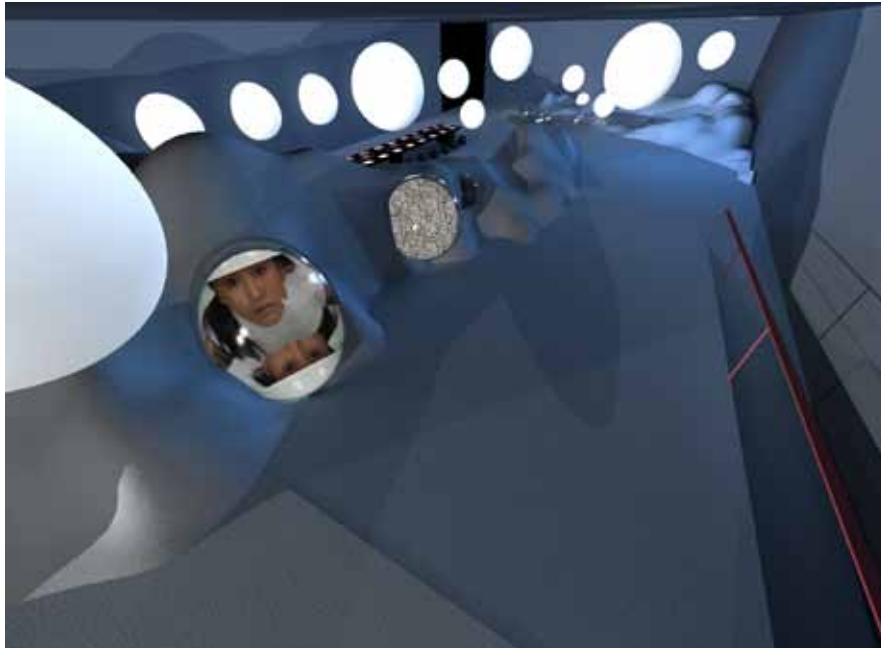


Miniverse - Multiverse, 3D Renderings Andrea Liberni



07 **MINIVERSE-MULTIVERSE**

Preview, solo exhibition at MuBE, Museu Brasileiro da Escultura, Sao Paulo.



Miniverse - Multiverse, 3D Renderings Andrea Liberni

08 VIDEOPLANETS AND BUBBLES

Press

SALONE DEL MOBILE Un'isola verde nel quartiere Isola

(...) Da segnalare, alla Galerie Vernon, la video artista svizzera Katja Loher con il suo „Why do bees leave?“ (Perché le api fuggono?). E' un mondo magico il suo che parla di un mondo sovraffollato dove la società collassa, ma anche di un mondo leggero dove gli uccelli volano alti nel cielo e dove le api cercano di sopravvivere. I filmati vengono proiettati su grandi palloni appesi al soffitto (nella foto) che invitano ad entrare dentro le scene presentate con coreografie molto curate. Katja Loher è una giovane donna energica dal grande sorriso. Le sue opere fanno ormai parte di grandi collezioni museali e private. Vale la pena andare alla Green Island per vederle. E per conoscerla.

Nicoletta Pennati: SALONE DEL MOBILE Un'isola verde nel quartiere Isola, in Donna Moderna, April 2011, Milan.

Play at Salone 2011

(...) Plastic planets and mutating species within Swiss video artist Katja Loher's "Why Did the Bees Leave?" installation provide a behind the scenes look at the lives of bees and Milanese. In an empty, open interior of a vacated house on the tour of Green Island 2011 (Fuori Salone Isola), presented by Galerie Vernon, Prague, the mutated living room installation involves fairy-tale-like synchronized dance performance art and three-dimensional forms projected within their own worlds - hidden in tiny round glass sculptures like crystal balls with tiny movies playing inside, lined up on a shelf or spread onto the surface of fragile, large, inflatable weather balloons floating high in the space.

Loher's dancers pantomime the virtual life of bees, an unknown societal structure co-existing with ours, highlighting the theme of the human condition as seen from a larger perspective.

Jade Dressler and Paul Clemence: Play at Salone 2011, in Metropolis P/O/V, April 18, 2011.

And now: Solo!

A fair that follows the tradition of Zurich, not Basel. "Kunst", Zurich's International Fair for Contemporary Art, appears surprisingly cheerful at times.

(...) The exhibition of the ZKB Art Award between the two main halls has developed into the fair's de facto backbone. The principle of single-holder booths found here is catching on among the exhibitors. Roughly ten galleries have decided to specifically dedicate a booth to a single position. The Andres Thalmann Gallery from Zurich, for example, booked an entire compartment for the Zurich native Katja

Loher. It pays to take a peek through her "looking glass": Her colorful videos, which show choreographed dancers forming words that evolve into existential questions, can be seen when looking closely at the bottom of drinking glasses. Hard to miss, on the other hand, are huge weather balloons displaying videos, which may even occasionally transform them into gigantic eyeballs.

Daniel Morgenthaler: And now: Solo!, ZÜRITIPP, Tagesanzeiger, Arts, Nov. 15th, 2010.

Planet X

On my last visit to "Fresh paint" art fair, I almost missed Katja Loher's video work. It was hanging onto a narrow piece of a side wall which not at all gave it the respect it deserves. However, once I noticed it, I couldn't take my eyes off two colorful plastic bubbles through which popped out couple of tiny framed videos. The clips showed images of different figures trapped in a mysterious world built by the artist. The special camera angle gave a unique and refreshing aspect to the occurrence.

It was just a taste. As I visited Loher's website, where she displays what she calls "Miniverses" or "Videoplanet", I discovered an artist full of imagination and inspiration whom translates fantasies, fears, aspirations and criticism on the world and the seemingly objective cold reality, into amazing works of art.

Similar to the revolutionary process that has happened to exhibition space rooms in the last decades, the transition from "conventional" to "alternative" can easily be seen at Loher's videos, as she takes them out of the "black box" and displays them on rounded three-dimensional objects.

The effect created is powerful and disturbing at once; it makes the viewer face an uncomfortable and a bit claustrophobic situation created by the fact that the figures move in a limited space in different constellations and repetitive kaleidoscopic layout.

Loher combines music, dance and visual art in her extraordinary videos. She uses the qualities of each field to create a complete and coherent piece of art. The variance choreography she composes, operates perfectly with the rounded sculptures, while everything is surrounded by electronic sounds that creates a meditative atmosphere and makes the viewer step into the world Loher seeks to create.

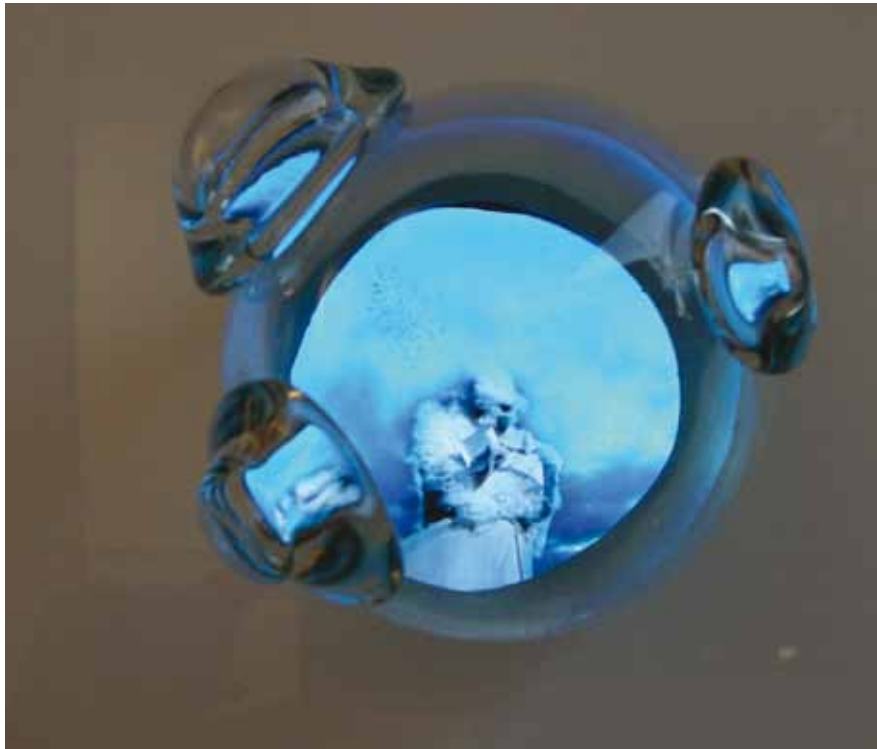
Loher's multitasking works reinforces my point of view on contemporary art - a combination of different media, abandonment of familiar boundaries and striving towards the creation of a different reality, whether better or worse than at present, are the tools through which critical and innovative art can be expressed

Lea Vene & Maya Kashevitz: Axiology Aunts, WordPress.com, April 26th, 2011, Tel Aviv.

09 **BUBBLES**

Videosculptures 2011

Handblown glass bubbles, video screens embedded in acrylic frame.



Bird Bubble, 2011, Photo: Katja Loher.



Sun Bubble, 2011, Photo: Katja Loher.

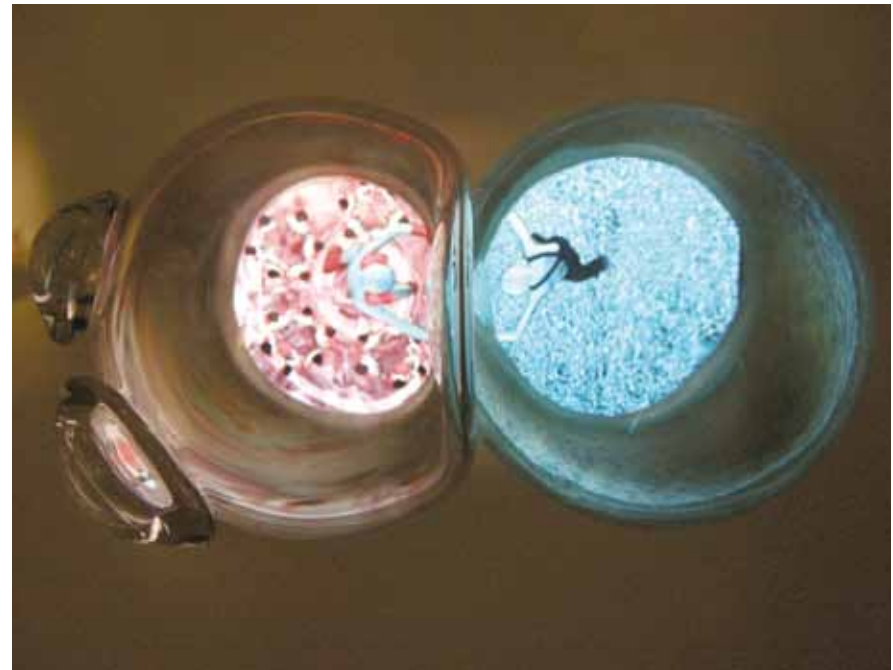
10 **BUBBLES**

Videosculptures 2011

Handblown glass bubbles, video screens embedded in acrylic frame.



Yellow-Blue Doublebubble, 2011, Photo: katja Loher.



Heidi Doublebubble, 2011, Photo: katja Loher.

11 **DOUBLEBUBBLE**

Videosculpture 2010

Handblown glass bubbles, video screens embedded in wooden pedestal.

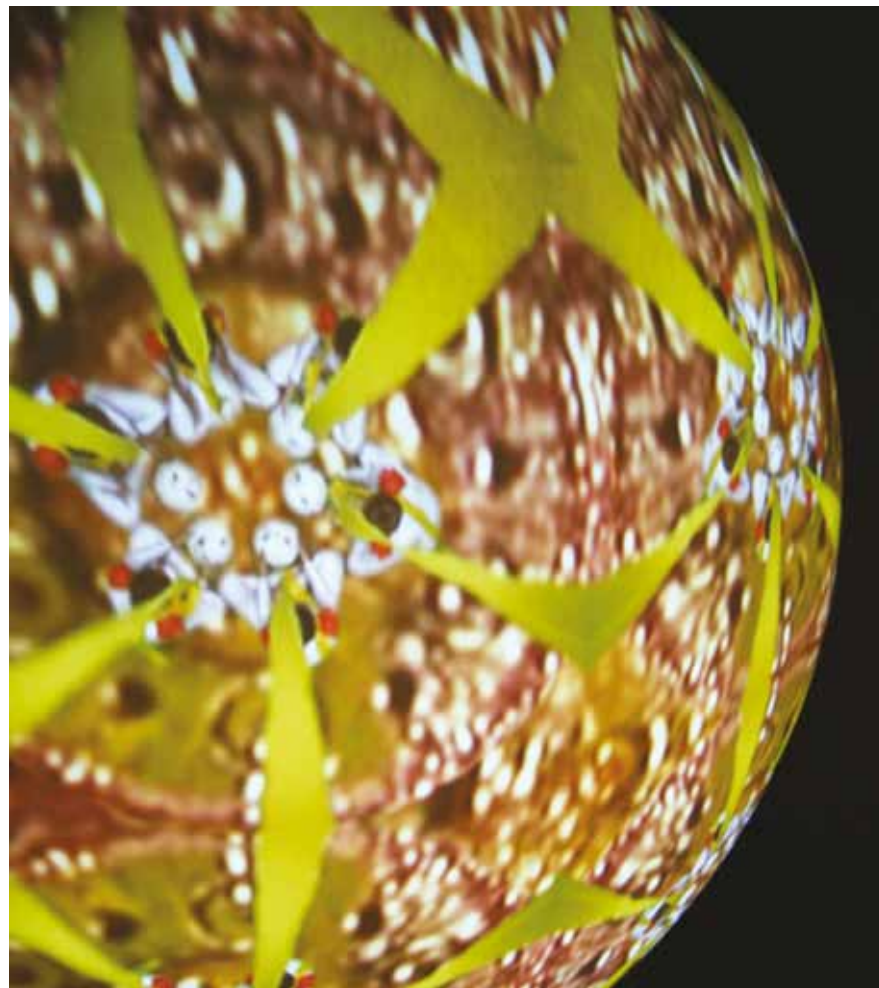
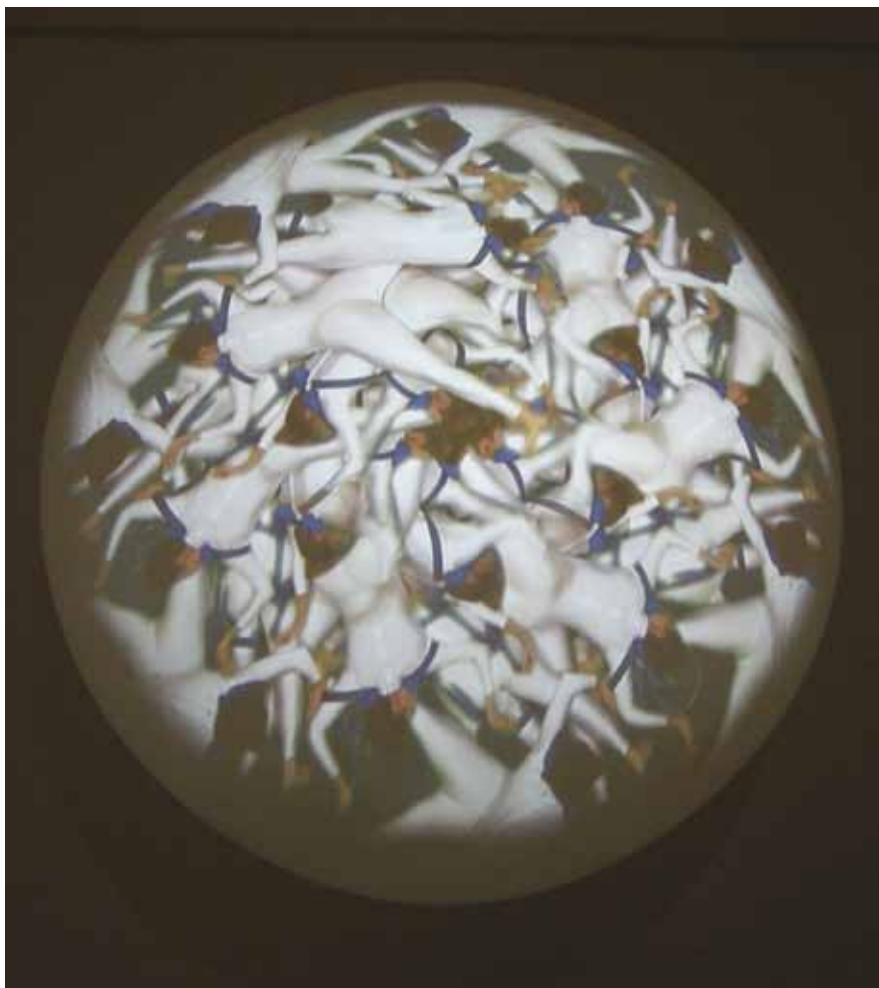


Doublebubble, 2010, Photos: Katja Loher.

12 **RGB PLANET**

Videoplanet 2010

Video projection onto floating chloroprene balloon, size variable (1-2.5 meter diameter).



Videoplanets, Installation View, 2011, Photo: Katja Loher.

13 **RGB PLANET**

Videoplanet 2010

Video projection onto floating chloroprene balloon. Selection of video stills.

Video: HD, 11:33min, loop.

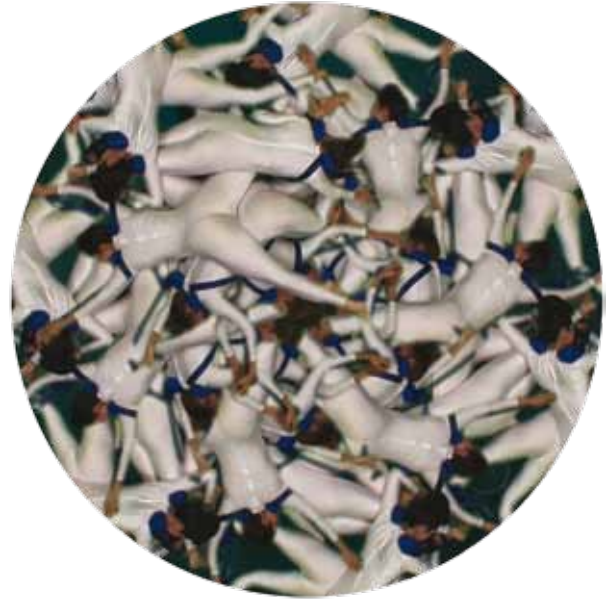
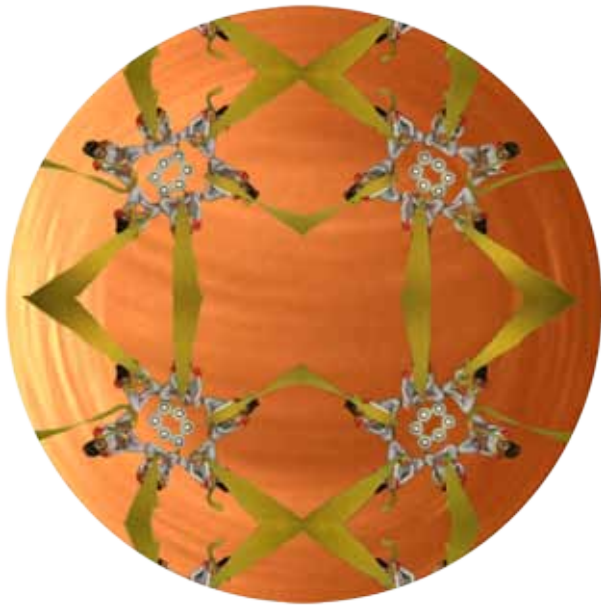


14 **RGB PLANET**

Videoplanet 2010

Video projection onto floating chloroprene balloon. Selection of video stills.

Video: HD, 11:33min, loop.



15 **BACK STAGE**

Green screen studio shooting in the bird's eye view with a group of dancers, New York 2010.



Bird's eye view shooting, Photos: Robert Whitman.

16 **COLLAPSCOPE**

Videosculpture, 2010

Biennale di Venezia 2010 - 12th International Architecture, Arsenale Nord, Venice.

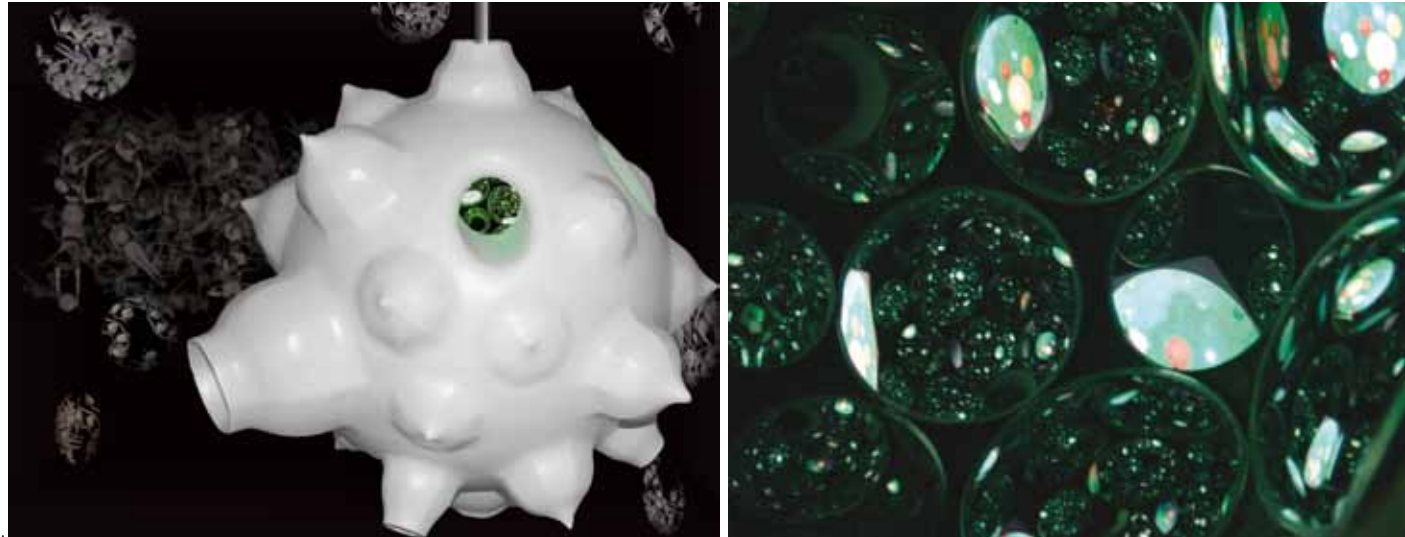


Collapsoscope, Photo: Hans Fockety.

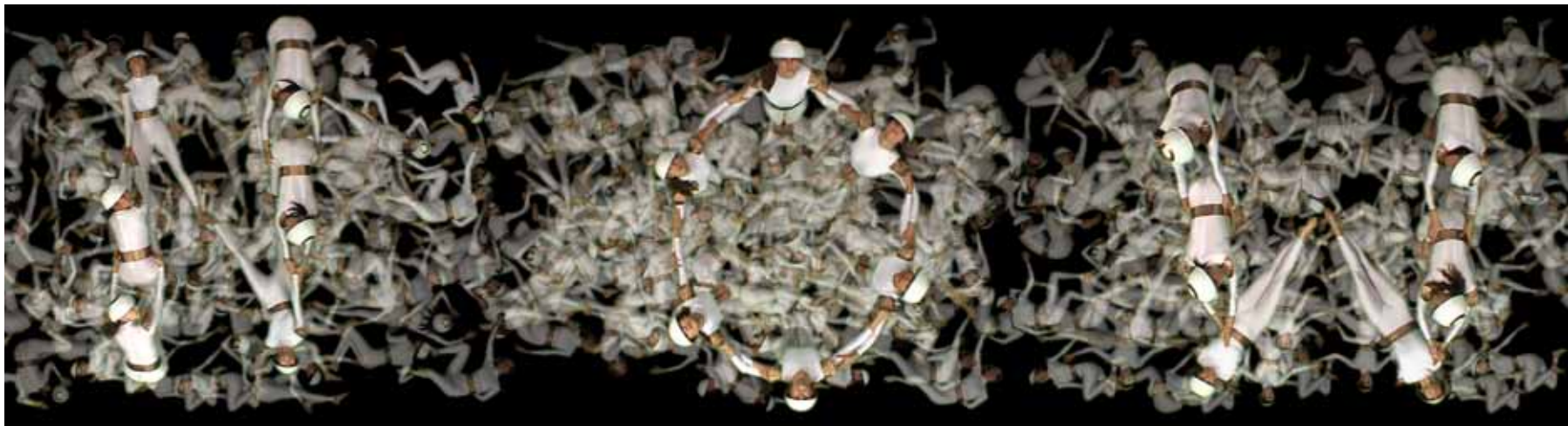
17 **COLLAPSOSCOPE**

Videosculpture 2010

Suspended object with interior video kaleidoscope 55 cm diameter, video projections on surrounding walls.



Collapsoscope, Photos: Hans Focketyn.



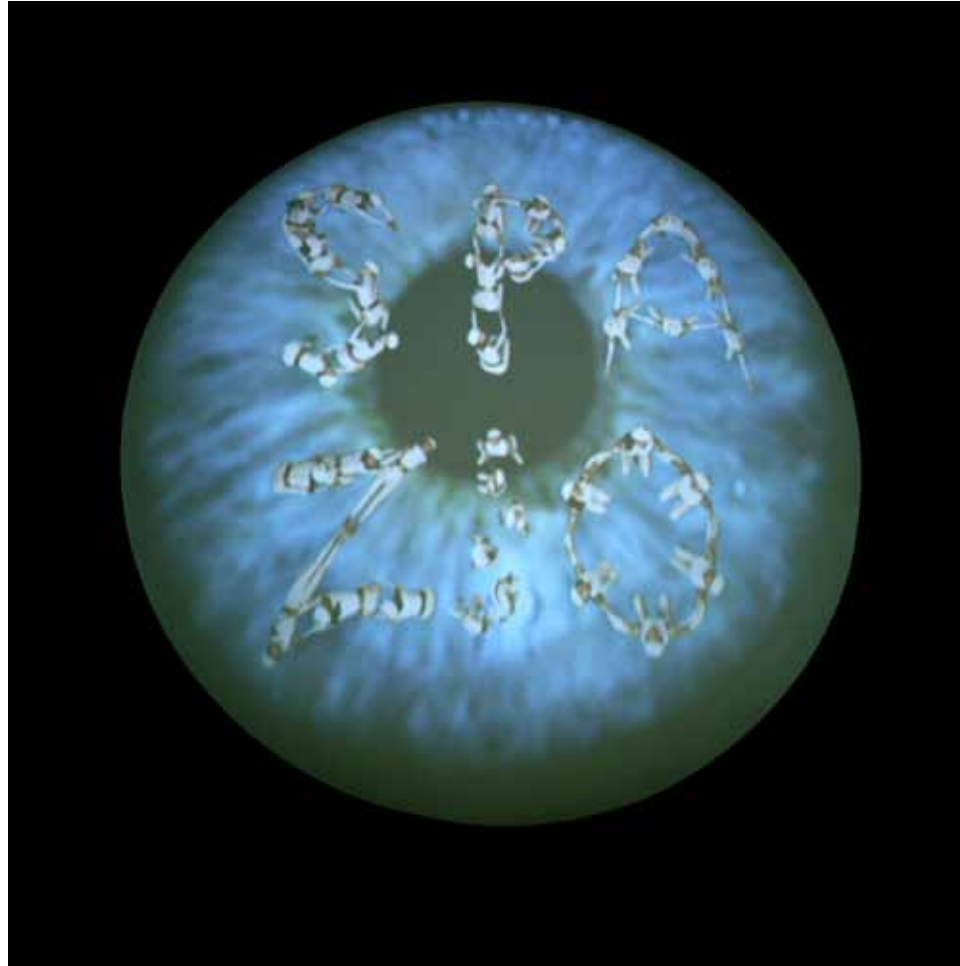
Collapsoscope, Video stills.

18 **SCULPTING IN AIR**

Videoplanet 2010

Video projection onto floating chloroprene balloon, size variable (1-2.5 meter diameter).

Opening exhibition at MAXXI - National Museum of the Arts of the XXist Century, Rome, Italy.



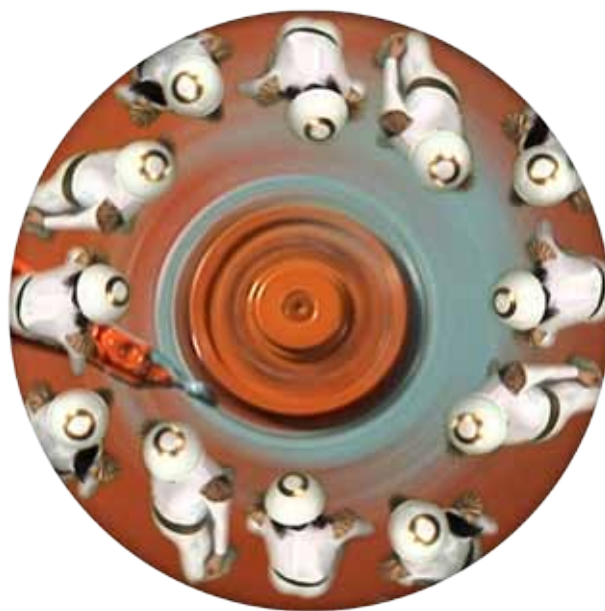
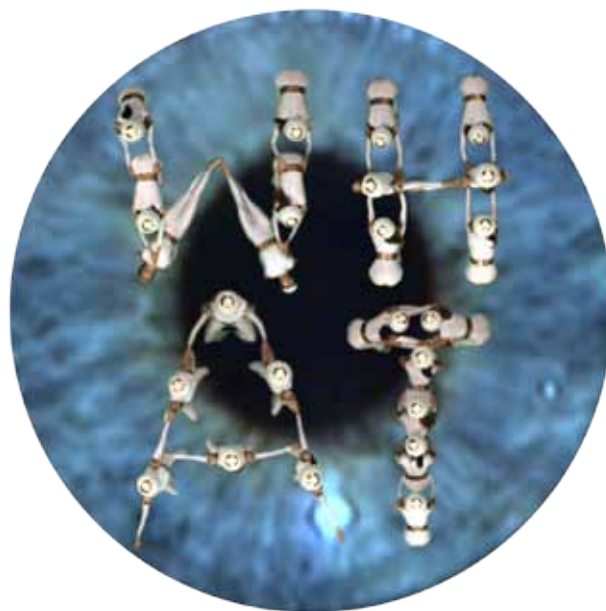
Sculpting in Air, Installation, Maxxi Museum, Photos: Stephanie Cardì

19 **SCULPTING IN AIR**

Videoplanet 2010

Video projection onto floating chloroprene balloon. Selection of video stills.

Video: HD, 6:46 min, loop



20 **SCULPTING IN AIR**

Videoplanet 2010

Video projection onto floating chloroprene balloon. Selection of video stills.



21 **BACK STAGE**

Green screen studio shooting in the bird's eye view with a group of dancers, New York 2010.



Bird's eye view, Shooting, Photos: Marco Monti

VIDEOSCULPTURES / VIDEOPLANETS

ART AND SCIENCE IN KATJA LOHER'S PRACTICE

A survey between the real and the virtual, one which inhabits the intermedia territories, is spreading across museum exhibition spaces, housing works of artists who also develop their repertoire outside the Internet. This could describe curator Elena Giulia Rossi's latest exhibition at Maxxi, Rome: NetinSpace adds to the long conversation on Net Art and its complex relationship with a museum which has housed many such works previous to archistar Zaha Hadid's fascinating exhibition.

The exhibition, open until 23rd January, has among others, the works of three artists set between physical space - inside the museum but in places of transit - and virtual space within website dedicated sections. These are the works of Miltos Manetas, Bianco-Valente and Katja Loher.

Katja Loher is a versatile young Swiss artist living in New York, who is also presently (until 26th September) exhibiting her new work Collapscope in the prestigious XII International Architecture Exhibition. Looking at her works, transdisciplinary and intermediate, one can appreciate the utopian visions of early 20th century avant-garde artists, in her attempt to fragment and reassemble a grammar that is at the heart of her work. There is likewise a taste for mixing culture, overlapping media and skills, combining

Giulia Simi / Eng: Jessica Williams : Videosculptures/Videoplanets, Art and Science in Katja Loher's Practice. In: Digimag #57, September 2010, Milan.

MAXXI, UNA SCELTA SECCA: DIETRO E DENTRO LO SGUARDO DI KATJA LOHER

Dopo una prima fase chiamata Net Space. Viaggio nell'arte della rete (dedicata ad una forma creativa che si misura con le linee generali del cyber-spazio), Elena Giulia Rossi formula per il MAXXI un nuovo progetto in cui l'arte interattiva occupa uno spazio fisico e le dinamiche del virtuale si relazionano con il tempo della vita reale per dar vita ad uno scenario gustosamente interattivo, relazionale, vibrante, obliquo e ubiquo. Con NETinSPACE (appunto, il virtuale che si fa corpo nel reale) lo spettatore è invitato, di volta in volta, a dialogare con l'opera, ad essere trasportato nella rete (è il caso dell'opera di Katja Loher), a diventare parte integrante di una

regione franca che riflette – partendo da indispensabili prefissi estetici – sui nuovi mondi (e sui nuovi modi d'interazione) che offre la vita comune. Miltos Manetas, Bianco-Valente, Katja Loher. E poi Bestiario, Hugo Heyrman, David Crawford, Les Liens Invisibles, Boredomresearch, , Stephen Vitiello. Sono gli artisti scelti dalla curatrice per questo primo appuntamento liquido, gassoso, aperto, esteticamente effervescente e frizzante. Di questi propongo – è la mia proairesi – Katja Loher (classe 1979), I cui lavori seguono cadenze linguistiche che aprono ad aree estetiche tese a progettare e modellare ambienti visivi di rara bellezza, di felice pulizia formale e di avvincente costruzione verbale. Il video e la videoscultura per dare al video, appunto, un prefisso di tangibilità. L'installazione, poi, per inserire il fruitore nell'opera e renderlo parte integrante della composizione, di un dispositivo fatto, spesso, di segni, vocaboli, suoni, vibrazioni luminose e cromatismi squillanti. A segnare e a disegnare il progetto proposto da Katja Loher – che coniuga sotto uno stesso manto visivo linguaggi di diversa natura – i sentieri delle due forme fondamentali dell'euritmia (suggerite da Rudolf Steiner in tempi non sospetti), come parola visibile o come suono visibile –Eurhythmie als sichtbare Sprache e als sichtbarer Gesang –, fanno da viatico ad un mondo magico in cui il corpo diviene strumento e artificio lessicologico, costruzione, segno e disegno grammaticale. Ed è proprio il corpo ad essere, per l'artista, territorio da raccontare, modellare e modificare tecnologicamente per dar vita a fabbricati artistici che, se da una parte investigano i canali di comunicazione e i livelli di attenzione del fruitore, dall'altra creano un messaggio che massaggia e colpisce esteticamente la mente dell'utente per portarlo in atmosfere verbovisive dure e soffici, crudeli e inebrianti. Attraverso queste particolari modalità artistiche, Loher produce, così, azioni ginniche che generano corpi culturali per esprimere, attraverso la corporatura dei performers coinvolti nelle aree di ripresa video, non solo un movimento che corrisponde a delle regole ben precise, ma anche, e soprattutto, quello che, nelle altre arti, si esprime mediante il pennello e la matita, lo scalpello, la rima e l'enjambement. *Antonello Tolve: MAXXI, Una scelta secca: Dietro e dentro lo sguardo di Katja Loher. In: TeKnemedia, ARTKEY Magazine, Torino, 03.06.2010*

23 **RGB WELL**

Videosculpture 2010

3 glass cups filled with liquid, 3 video screens embedded in a black acrylic pedestal.



RGB, 2010, Photos: Katja Loher.

Red Well:

Do fish love cats as much as cats love fish?
How can a fish tell a cat when a fish loves a cat?
How can we dance with both feet on the ground?

Green Well:

What does a tree write on the leaves it offers to the wind?
How does the wind know when and where not to blow?
How many leaves must the tree lose in vain before the wind notices?

Blue Well:

Will the moon ask the tide to swallow the land one day ?
What will the centipede do with its hundred feet once the land has been drowned ?
If there is no more mainland what will the moon use to swallow the tide?

*Questions by Katja Loher
in collaboration with Julia Sorensen*

24 **RGB WELL**

Videosculpture 2009

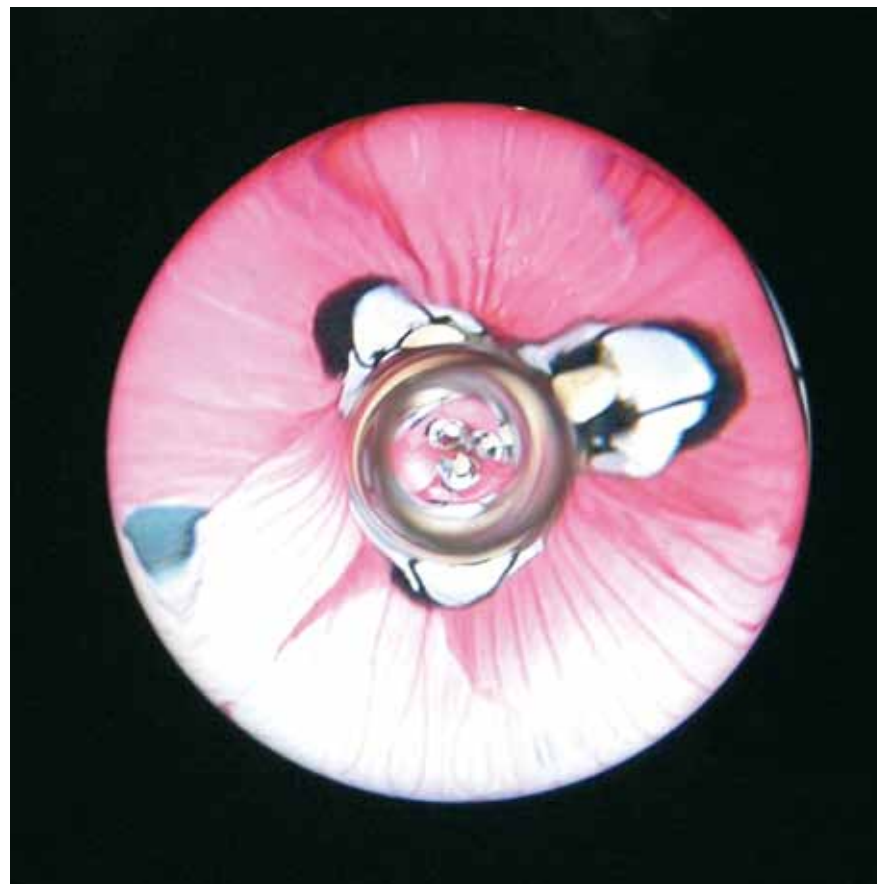
Videos: HD, 3:40min, loop, selection of video stills.



25 **WHY DID THE BEES LEAVE?**

Videosculpture 2009

Vase filled with liquid, video screen embedded in a black acrylic pedestal.



Why did the Bees leave, 2009, Photos: Katja Loher.

26 **WHY DID THE BEES LEAVE?**

Videosculpture 2009

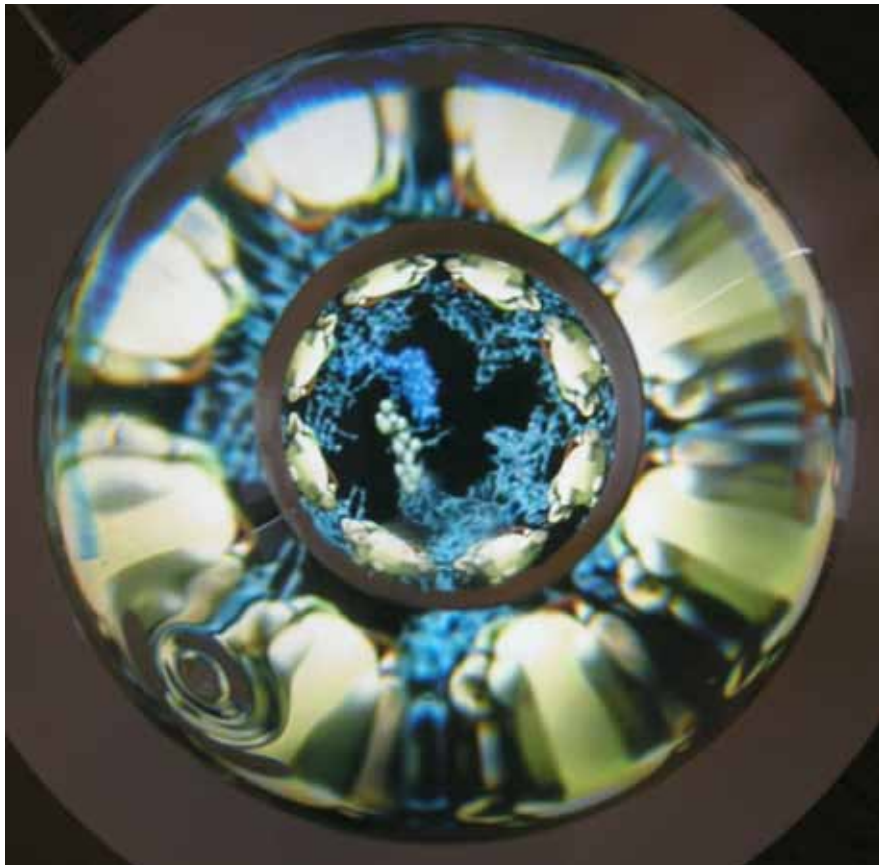
Video: HD, 1 min, loop, selection of video stills.



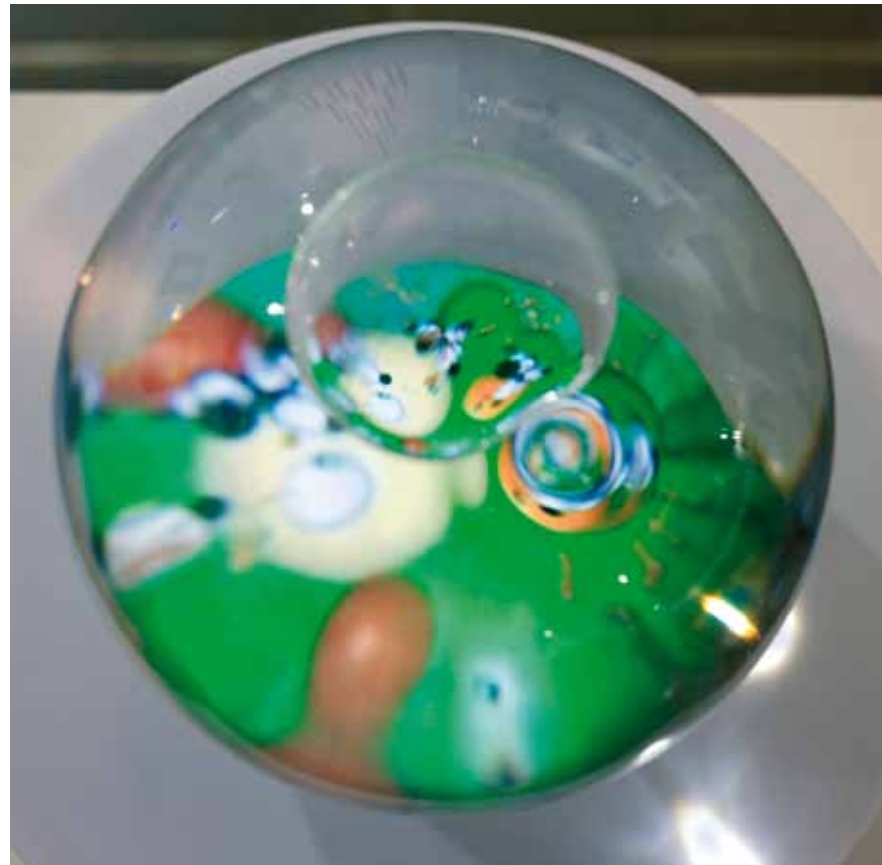
27 **WHERE WAS THE COLOR GREEN BORN?**

Videosculpture 2009

Glass sphere filled with liquid, video screen embedded in a white acrylic pedestal.



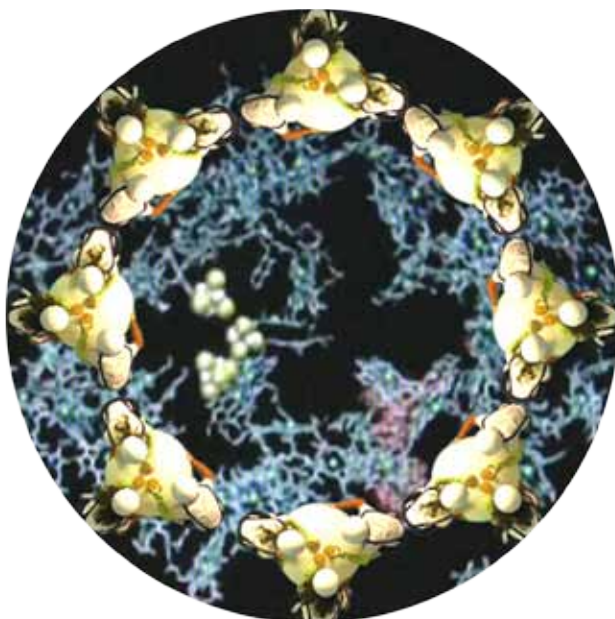
Where was Green born, 2009, Photos: Katja Loher.



28 **WHERE WAS THE COLOR GREEN BORN?**

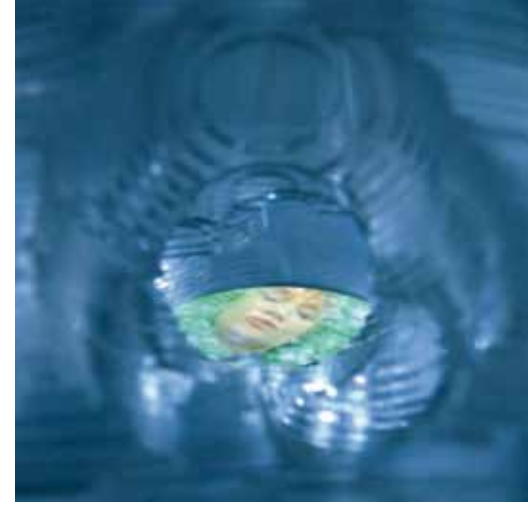
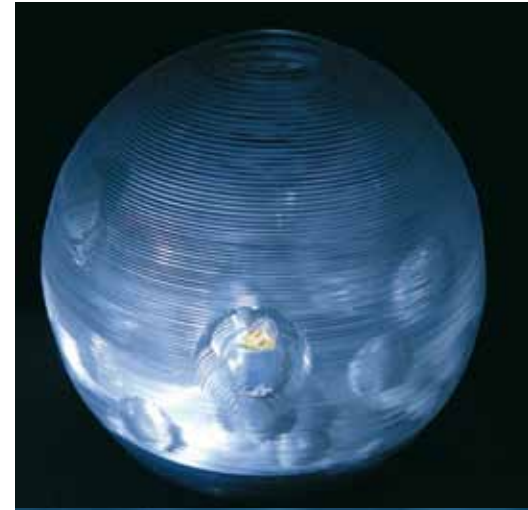
Videosculpture 2009

Video: HD, 5:40 min, loop, selection of video stills.



29 **MINIVERSE**

Series of videosculptures 2008-2010
In collaboration with Hans Focketyn.



Miniverse, Photos: Marco Monti and Katja Loher 2008-2010.

30 **MINIVERSE**

Series of videosculptures 2008-2010



Miniverse, Photos: Marco Monti and Katja Loher 2008-2010.



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Miniverse 5, Videosculture 2010.
Lacquered sphere with video screen and
kaleidoscope, 26 cm diameter.

Miniverse 4, Videosculture 2009.
Acrylic sphere with video screen and
kaleidoscope, 35 cm diameter.

Miniverse 3, Videosculture 2009.
Acrylic sphere with video screen and
kaleidoscope, 35 cm diameter.

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Miniverse 2, Videosculture 2009.
Acrylic sphere with 6 video screens,
55 cm diameter.

Miniverse 1, Videosculture 2008.
Wooden sphere with 6 video screens,
45 cm diameter.

31 **SCHACHFELD / THE CHESSFIELD**

1-Channel Video Projection, 2007

23:30 min, HD, 16:9.



Schachfeld. Photo: Galya Kovalyova

In *Schachfeld/The Chess Field* we are observing a game of chess come to life. The chess players use a computer to control their robot-like chess figures. The match is tied 2:2 and it is the beginning of the 5th game as the *White Bishop #2* attacks the *Black Pawn #2*.

The *Black Pawn #2* does not fall, but remains standing in the middle of the board, refusing to leave.

The Chess robotic figures have come to life. The *pawns* develop plans for a strike and a union of *black and white pawns* is created to overthrow the government. The *White King* invites his *Queen* to dance. The four *Rooks* in the corner pass the time playing with a ball, which becomes a deadly weapon. The chessboard has become a battlefield.

“Katja Loher (born 1979) stages a human game of chess with live figures. In doing so, she pulls the strings, like with marionettes, and thus challenges the participative role of humans. The strategic game of chess transforms into a battle between life and death and suggests an “end game” in the tradition of Beckett.”

Helen Hirsch, Historian and curator, Director Museum Thun, Switzerland

32 **SCHACHFELD / THE CHESSFIELD**

1-Channel Video Projection, 2007

Selection of video stills.



33 **SCHACHFELD / THE CHESSFIELD**

1-Channel Video Projection, 2007

Selection of video stills.



Extract from the interview in the publication of the exhibition at Kunsthalle Palazzo Liestal, Switzerland, May 2007

The performance and video artist Katja Loher (New York and Basel) talks about her newest work, *Schachfeld/The Chessfield* (2007) which she exhibits for the first time as high-definition video projection in the Kunsthalle Palazzo. The 20-minute film, staged in New York with almost 50 actors, shows two stylised groups of robot-like pieces on a chessboard. After a while, the actors become autonomous and provide an unexpected twist to the otherwise strongly regularised game.

Peter Stohler: You work like the director of "big" feature films. You shot *The Chessfield* with three cameras at a time and engaged professionals for a highly artificial sound track. *The Chessfield* is visually very exciting and perfectly stylised. Some parts remind us of the eccentric world of Matthew Barney. Has it anything to do with the fact that you mainly work in New York since 2004?

Katja Loher: It certainly has to do with the extreme potential of this city. Many are there ready to launch into something at once; this city motivates unbridled thinking. The idea to work with a large group of people came to me last year during my stay in New York. For *Video Optica* I had directed a large number of people arranged to form alphabets.

Peter Stohler: Your earlier video works have a very "atmospheric" effect: they evoke a very personal, playful world. On the contrary *The Chessfield* is more political and revolves around very grave matters like the uprising against established power structures: the chessboard becomes the battlefield. Are you now staging "world theatre"?

Katja Loher: Especially today, I consider it very important again to formulate concise statements, as we bear great responsibility as committed artists. I ask myself how we can make political statements with art and keep on trying time and time again. In *The Chessfield*, the globe is compared with the strategic war game of chess and multilayered, political challenges are provided in the narration.

Peter Stohler: *Katja Loher: Schachfeld. In: Les Jeux sont faits, Kunsthalle Palazzo, Liestal, May 2007*

Katja Loher: The world as a game

"On the following pages we present ten pieces that attracted our attention over the last few months. These works are represented by one of the main galleries located in Karlsruhe, Basel and Strasbourg. These galleries will participate in Art Basel in 2007.

In her adopted home New York, the young Swiss artist shoots big art cinema about the dialectics of freedom.

The chessboard and the battlefield are phonetic neighbors in German: „Schachfeld“ and „Schlachtfeld“. This is expressive for Katja Loher's video work, which the 27-year old recently put into reality with around 50 actors/actresses. A setting reminiscent of the spare scenery in Lars von Trier's didactic cinema-plays *Dogville* and *Manderley*, is populated by figures that could have escaped from a video by Matthew Barney. Loher reproduces relations of power and powerlessness (in German: „Macht“ and „Ohnmacht“) in the globalized world as a clear interaction between the top and the bottom echelons of society. The strict logic of leadership and oppression eventually leads to failure; the hegemony of the kings starts faltering, and the pawns go on strike and take over leadership. But they also fail because they have never had the opportunity to develop a sense of responsibility. The kings, however, have already figured out how to overcome these obstacles using logic. What remains after the failed Pawn strike is a vacuum – a threatening state for all the participants. *Schachfeld/The Chess Field* – currently on view at the Palazzo Liestal – is the most current work of the Basel and New York based media artist, who delivers precise, as well as poetic metaphors on this ambivalent topic: relationships between power, freedom, and dependency. She has produced videos on these subjects extensively for the last several years."

Dietrich Roeschmann: *Katja Loher: The world as a game. In: Regioartline, Art Magazine 15.06.2007, Basel.*

35 **BETWEEN THE SUN AND THE ORANGES**

Videoplanet 2007

Video projection onto floating chloroprene balloon, size variable (1-2.5 meter diameter).

Video: HD, 8 min, loop



Videoplanet, Photo: Andrea Liberni.

Do I go rolling without wheels, flying without wings or feathers? Pablo Neruda

Between the Sun and the Oranges is a video composition that is projected onto a floating weather balloon.

The breath of the bird lady appears in the space and we find our self in the air, in the middle of courageous circling pigeon flocks.

The eye is taken by a whirl pull of fluttering wings and exhilarating freedom. In the round of the balloon the birds fly higher and higher towards the end of the sky.

On one rooftop we hear the chant of the bird lady who wants to be able to fly like the birds. From another roof we hear the noise of military aircrafts. This sound comes from the pigeon owners who send their pigeons as soldiers in the sky.

Pigeon flying is an age-old activity. Italian immigrants brought it to New York in the 1860s and for close to 150 years it has been passed from rooftop to rooftop, evolving itself into a sort of game played from established territories, the pigeon coop, and directed via the "generals", the men or boys who keeps the pigeons. The Brooklyn Pigeon Wars, as they call it, is an aerial social casino. To play, a coop owner releases his pigeons, letting them fly freely in a flock over Brooklyn, meeting up with similar flocks released by other owners.

At a certain point the flocks turn homeward, arriving lesser or greater in number than they started out. A coop owner might lose half his flock in one night, while others gain as many. This is how birds are lost and won.

"A performance video was projected on a massive globe, to a mix of sung material and field recordings; the images featured a bird person hybrid amid flocks of pigeons, and the video, mapped as it was on a sphere, gave new meaning to the phrase bird's eye view."

Disquit, New York, Marc Weidenbaum, 13.08.2007

36 **BETWEEN THE SUN AND THE ORANGES**

Videoplanet 2007

Video projection onto floating chloroprene balloon. Selection of video stills.



37 **VIDEO OPTICA**

Videoplanet 2006

Video projection onto floating chloroprene balloon, size variable (1-2.5 meter diameter).

Video: HD, 6:40 min, loop



Solo Exhibition, Galapagos Art Space New York. Photo: Katja Loher

In *Video Optica*, the extraordinary beauty of Katja Loher's motion choreographies becomes effective in a particular way.

The ball shows, at a rapid pace, glowing green blades of grass. Garden of Eden opens up with seducing red fruit. Already, the fruit is falling into the next parallel universe, into the grey house canyons of New York. They transform into the red hats of a crowd of people moving in formation, filmed from above.

The colorful dance evokes the childlike amazement of a look into a sparkling kaleidoscope. The people group themselves together to form letters, words and questions. With a poetic lightness, the dance reproduces the lyrical game with the words, and the questions from Pablo Neruda's *The Book of Questions*//*Libro de las preguntas* fall - like the red fruit - in a blithe manner to the grey ground. The questions of life have grown out from the grassy green.

Monika Hardmeier, Art historian and curator

What did the tree learn from the earth to be able to talk with the sky?

Why don't they train helicopters to suck honey from the sunlight?

What is the distance in round meters between the sun and the oranges?

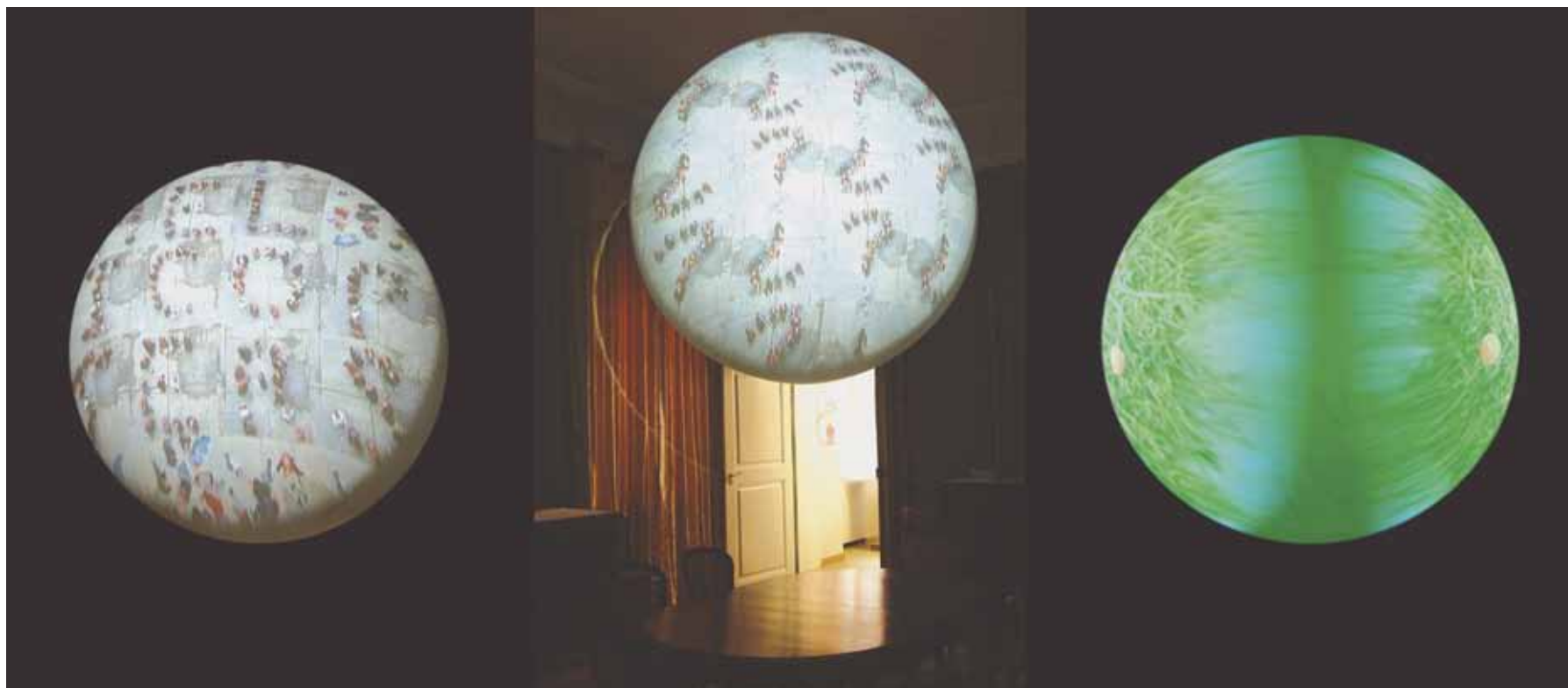
The book of questions, Pablo Neruda

38 **VIDEO OPTICA**

Videoplanet 2006

Video projection onto floating chloroprene balloon, size variable (1-2.5 meter diameter).

Video: HD, 6:40 min, loop



Videoplanets, Installation View, 2010, Photos: Katja Loher.

39 **VIDEO OPTICA**

Videoplanet 2006

Video projection onto floating chloroprene balloon. Selection of video stills.



Exhibition Text

Video Optica is a video composition that is projected onto a gigantic floating balloon inside the green room. Born and bred in the shelter of the studio space this botanical beauty blossomed under New York's skies before it was transported across the ocean to Europe via DVD. Beamed onto polyethylene skin at Wenkenhof, it now floats here in the middle of the room amidst copious opulence, video sculpture and aerial body at the same time. Ripe fruit falls from breezy heights down to the ground. When smashing onto the grey New York asphalt it transforms into red-capped people, their uniformity morphing them into groups. Filmed from the 6th floor they look like birds in flight, like amoebas under a microscope, like a kaleidoscopic shape.

Individual letters evolve from these patterns formed by human masses. The letters turn into words that make up questions from Pablo Neruda's *The Book of Questions/Libro de las preguntas*. These elementary questions about life, such as the human intrusion into the natural cycle, or questions about the human consciousness, questions about knowledge and science, have a lyrical impact. The floating weightless air-sculpture also enchants us with its lightness, its playfulness, its romantic poetry brought on by the spherical bubble shape, and the way it evokes childhood memories. Its proximity to popular culture, the funfair, to modern shapes of the spectacular makes the *Video Optica*, as balloon, a symbol for the ephemeral and the volatile. Oscillating between aesthetic effect and meaningful content the *Video Optica* is a "blow-up" representing many metaphors: the metaphor of fast paced accelerated growth, the metaphor of nature "in the age of mechanical reproduction" (following Walter Benjamin) and the "loss of aura" that is connected to it, which was supposed to revitalize art in the 90s. The giant balloon is a blow-up, it is art as simulacrum, imitating that which can be manipulated – and it is a "mass ornament" (Siegfried Kracauer). *Kiki Seiler-Michalitsi, Art historian and curator, Mai 2006.*

Honey sucking helicopters and airy dreams

Walter Pfeiffer and Katja Loher are performing, two artists from Schaffhausen that made a name for themselves abroad.

Katja Loher created a completely different dream world. Born in 1979 in Schaffhausen, she studied media arts in Geneva and Basel, currently works in New York and is expecting to exhibit in Poland and China. In the dark south room, video loops are being projected on to four hovering weather balloons. Seemingly from the dark space, the visitor is looking at the planets and the strange things happening on them. While on one planet, there seems to be a war happening through a martial chess game performed by people as characters, the inhabitants of another one change to the windswept world above them; between them the underwater world with its perfidies.

Being viewed from the bird's eye view, the inhabitants of the third one shape letters, which form sentences from Pablo Neruda's *Book of Questions*, posthumously published in 1974. For example, one can read: "Why don't they teach helicopters to suck honey from the sun?" On the fourth planet, one becomes the object of observation after all. It is because there is a camera installed into a peephole built into the wall, which projects approaching objects, like a huge nose to the balloon, visible to everybody else but the one peeping. That way, the direction of the view is suddenly about-facing, and the plants, we suspect, may just as well be huge eyeballs, which are watching us, just like we watch them.

Peter Pfister, AZ Schaffhausen, Switzerland, November 2006.

1979 Born in Zurich
 2000 – 2001 ESBA, Fine Art Academy Geneva
 2001 – 2004 FHBB HGK, Fine Art Academy Basel
 2004 Diploma Dept. of Art and Media Art, Art Academy Basel, FHBB HGK
 Since 2004 Lives and works in New York

Awards & Grants

2010 Art Credit Award, Basel-Stadt.
 2009 Artist in Residence, 6 month Beijing, China. iaab: International Exchange & Studio Program, Basel-Stadt.
 2008 ValiART-Award by Valiant, Bern.
 Audiovision and Multimedia Grant, Canton Basel.
 Artist in Residence, 6 month Berlin, Germany, Cultural Department Schaffhausen.
 2007 O-1 Artist Visa, Artist in Residence, New York.
 2006 Alexander Clavel Foundation Cultural Development Prize, Riehen, Basel.
 Artist in Residence, 6 month New York, iaab: International Exchange & Studio Program Basel-Stadt.
 2004 TPC CreaTVty Award for new media, TPC Production Center Zurich.
 Art Credit Award, Basel-Stadt.

Solo Exhibitions

2011 MuBE, Museu Brasileiro da Escultura, Sao Paulo, Brazil.
 Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, Colorado, USA.
 Braverman Gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel.
 Galleria Tiziana Di Caro, Salerno, Italy.
 Anya Tish Gallery, Houston, Texas, USA.
 Galerie Vernon, Prague, Czech Republic.
 2010 Galerie Andres Thalmann, Zurich, Switzerland.
 2009 Galleria Tiziana Di Caro, Salerno, Italy.
 Anya Tish Gallery, Houston, Texas, USA.
 Galapagos Art Space, Dumbo, New York, USA.
 2008 Christinger Contemporary, Zürich, Switzerland.
 A.I.R. ONE, Substitut, Berlin, Germany.
 2007 Planète, Scène2, Senones, France.
 Tony Wuethrich Galerie, Basel, Switzerland.
 Kunsthalle Palazzo, Liestal, Switzerland.
 2006 Forum Vebikus, Schaffhausen, Switzerland.
 Dublin Fringe 2006, Dublin, Ireland.
 The Artist Network Gallery, New York, USA.

2005 Love.com, The State Hermitage Museum, St.Petersburg, Russia.
 Switzerland Festival Rose D’Or, KKL Luzern, Luzern, Switzerland.
 Switzerland Festival Rose D’Or, KKL Luzern, Luzern.

Group Exhibitions

2011 Index Festival, New York, USA.
 Art at James Bond Villa, Zurich, Switzerland.
 Going Places, iaab-Projektraum “Basement”, Basel, Switzerland.
 2010 NETInSPACE MAXXI, National Museum of the Arts of the XXist Century, Rome, Italy.
 Biennale di Venezia - 12th International Architecture, Arsenal Nord, Venice, Italy.
 TINA B, Festival for Contemporary Art, Prague, Czech Republic.
 TINA B, Porsche Center, Padova, Italy.
 Convergences - New Sculptural Media, Armory Center for the Arts, LA, USA.
 Post Dimension - A Journey in the Contemporary Art, Torrione Passari, Bari, Italy.
 2009 Siggraph Asia 2009, Yokohama, Japan.
 Light Switch, Anya Tish Gallery, Houston, Texas, USA.
 TINA B, Festival of Contemporary Art In Prague, Czech Republic.
 Modern Art Gallery Taichung / Found Museum, Beijing, China.
 Biennale Chongqing, Chongqing, China.
 Dialogue of the Generations, Kunsthalle Palazzo, Liestal, Switzerland.
 Wondering Where the Ducks Went, Galleria Tiziana di Caro, Salerno, Italy.
 2008 SUMMERTIME 08, Galleri Christoffer Egelund, Copenhagen, Denmark.
 Primacy, Threshold Art Space, Perth, UK.
 Art Is My Playground, Tershane, Istanbul, Turkey.
 2007 New York City Panorama, Flux Factory, New York, USA.
 Biennale Parallel, Tershane Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey.
 798/Dashanzi Art Festival, Beijing, China.
 NO1 Artbase, 798 Area, Beijing, China.
 Forum & Elzbieta Koscielak Gallery, Lesnica Castle, Zamek, Poland.
 2006 iaab Choices, Kunstraum Riehen, Basel, Switzerland.
 Alexander Clavel Stiftung Kulturförderpreis, Villa Wenkenhof, Basel, Switzerland.
 2005 Art Digital 2005, M’ARS Centre of Contemporary Arts Moscow, Moscow, Russia.
 Ernte 2005, Museum zu Allerheiligen, Schaffhausen, Switzerland.
 Regionale 6, Kunstverein Freiburg, Freiburg, Germany.

Art Fairs

- 2011 Houston Fine Art Fair, with Anya Tish Gallery, Houston.
 Loop Barcelona 10, with Braverman Gallery, Tel Aviv.
 Vienna Art Fair, with Gallery Vernon, Prague.
 Fresh Art Fair, with Braverman Gallery, Tel Aviv.
 Art Fair Roma, Out of Range, with Tiziana di Caro, Salerno.
 Art Stage Singapore, Solo Exhibition, with Galerie Vernon, Prague.
 Artefiera, International Art Fair for contemporary Art, Bologna, with Galleria Tiziana di Caro, Salerno.
 Salone Internazionale del Mobile 2011, Design Week, Milan, Solo exhibition, with Galerie Vernon, Prague.
- 2010 Kunst 10 Zürich, Solo exhibition, with Galerie Andres Thalmann, Zürich.
 Artissima 17 International, Fair of Contemporary Art in Torino, with Galleria Tiziana di Caro, Salerno.
 VOLTA Basel, Lightbox, Solo exhibition, with Vernon Gallery, Prague.
 SCOPE Basel, with Vernon Gallery, Prague.
 MIART, Milan Contemporary Art Fair, mit Galleria Tiziana Di Caro, Salerno.
 Salone del Mobile 2010, with Vernon Gallery, Prague.
- 2009 Art Verona on Stage, Solo exhibition, with Galleria Tiziana di Caro, Salerno.
 MIART, Milan Contemporary Art Fair, with Galleria Tiziana Di Caro, Salerno.
- 2008 Art 39 Basel, with Tony Wuethrich Galerie, Basel.
- 2007 Istanbul Contemporary Art Fair, with Tershane Gallery, Istanbul.
- 2006 Diva Digital & Video Art Fair, New York, with theartistnetwork, New York.

Collections

- Credit Suisse Collection, Switzerland.
 eN Arts Collection, Tokyo, Japan.
 GC. AC - Galleria Comunale d'Arte Contemporanea of Monfalcone, Italy.
 Sara Lahat Private Collection, Herzliya, Israel.
 Horsecross Collection, Permanent Collection of Digital Art, Perth, UK.
 Private Collectors in Belgium, Israel, Italy, Russia, Switzerland and USA.

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 Vernon Fine Art International: TINA B 2011, Group Catalogue, Prague, 2010.
 Siggraph Asia 2009: Digital experiences, Siggraph Asia Art Gallery 2009, Group Catalogue, Yokohama, 2009.
 Biennale Chongqing 2009: Your Discourse, Group Catalogue, Chongqing, 2009.
 Peter Stohler: TOMOGRAPH, Interviews with artists, Book, Arnoldsche Art Publisher, Stuttgart, 2009.

- Tershane Gallery: Art Is My Playground, Group Catalogue, Istanbul, 2008.
 Juni 2007. Flux Factory: New York City Panorama, Group Catalogue, New York, 2007.
 The Artist Network: 798/Dashanzi Art Festival, Group Catalogue, Beijing, 2007.
 Tershane Gallery: Biennale Parallel, Group Catalogue, Istanbul, 2007.
 M'ARS Centre of Contemporary Arts Moscow: Art Digital 2005 Moscow, Digitalized Love, Group Catalogue, Moscow 2005.

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 Pietro Gasparri & Gianna Fabbrizi: DispenserTV, Interview with the Artist, Milan, April 2011.
 Jade Dressler and Paul Clemence: Play at Salone 2011. In: Metropolis P/O/V, Milan, April 18th, 2011.
 Nicoletta Pennati: SALONE DEL MOBILE, Un'isola verde nel quartiere Isola. In: Donna Moderna, Milan, April 2011.
 Lea Vene & Maya Kashevitz: Axiology Aunts. In: WordPress.com, Tel Aviv, April 26th, 2011.
 Daniel Morgenthaler: And now: Solo!. In: ZÜRITIPP, Tagesanzeiger, Arts, Zurich, Nov. 15th, 2010.
 Christian Fluri: The Chase Is On. In: Basellandschaftliche Zeitung. Basel, June 2010.
 Giulia Simi: Videosculptures/Videoplanets, Art and Science in Katja Loher's Practice. In: Digimag #57, Milan, September 2010.
 Roberta Bosco, El MAXXI sitúa a Roma en el arte contemporáneo. In: El Pais, Madrid, July 24th, 2010.
 Antonello Tolve: MAXXI, Dietro e dentro lo sguardo di Katja Loher. In: TeKnemedia, ARTKEY Magazine, Torino, June 3rd 2010.
 Kelly Crow: Rome Turns to the Art of Today. In: The Wall Street Journal Europe, New York, May 5th 2010.
 Yida He: Katja Loher's Videoplanets. In: VISION, International Art, Design and Architecture, April Issue, Beijing, April 2010.
 BIT, Brooklyn Independent Television, Neighborhood Beat, featured artist, New York, February 2009.
 Robert Elmes: Art Primer, YRB JUMP OFF, June issue, New York, June 2008.
 Yonina Chan: Verses, Universes, Inverses. In: Imagine, Manila Bulletin, October Issue, 2008.
 Robin Blanck: Aufbruch am Ende von Raum und Zeit. In: Schaffhauser Nachrichten, July 5th 2008.
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Alfred Wüger, Between the Sun and the Oranges, Schaffhauser Nachrichten, November 2006.

Peter Pfister: Honey sucking helicopters and airy dreams, AZ Schaffhausen, November 2006.

Ann-Katrin Harfensteller: The special look through a peephole Basellandschaftliche Zeitung, Basel, August 2006.

Muriel Schlup: Hertz neben Herz. In: Berner Kulturagenda, Nr. 07, Bern, April, 2005.

Bea Hauser: Each Video is a Form of Invention. In: AZ Schaffhausen, March 10th 2005.

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Andrei Vorobei: Swiss video installations on show at the Hermitage Museum. In: St.Petersburg Times, Dec. 23rd 2005.



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