



BOXWALLAHS, The DeEgo-Cube, Indo-Austrian Art Projects in Public Space, Gurgaon, India 2000

POWDER ROOM 1999/2000 (installation still)

Single channel video/sculpture installation  
3 minute with sound

M.W: In painting you have been working on various sorts of rooms since a long time. Now you have shifted into a new media, using video in your work.

R.K: I don't think that changing to a new medium or using technology in my work has greatly shifted in what I have always been interested in. You rightly mentioned rooms. Most of my earlier paintings did consist of interiors. It took me a long time to venture out of that interior where I introduced the landscape. But that landscape also in many ways is like a large and closed space. That space does interest me. Again as a space of an event, and that's a psychological event. And the actual happening of the event, when art happens, that happens outside of the frame of the painting. There are indications, there are gestures, there is a trajectory from the eye travelling from one point to the other. But if we need to experience as to what is happening, then we have to close our eyes and let the event happen.

M.W. In our installation *Powder Room* (2000) which was initially conceived for a specific situation in Public Space within the *Boxwallahs* series<sup>2</sup> you intensively explore this event of perception.

R.K. What has interested me is the juxtaposition of the self and the space, which one creates for oneself. Even the way we are sitting interests me greatly, how we occupy that space and where we draw a circle around ourselves and also how much we transgress into the other space or how much we allow somebody else to enter our space, with their gestures, with the trajectories of our eyes and – also when we come to video – with the nature of our sound, the tonality of our voice.

M.W. Most of all, I think, it's an investigation into the relationship between 'self' and 'other'?

R.K. When we look at our own image in the mirror we are non-critical at one level. But we are also critical at another level when we look at our own image in relation to other images, other faces, other human entities that we are aware of or we have looked at. I wanted to see how we would respond when we are looking at our own image and the same brain chemistry applies which applies to us in our intimate moments of looking at ourselves and suddenly if the same space without refocusing our eyes is replaced by the image of the other. What happens?

A. F. Some reactions to this experiment were quite different from what we had expected. Do you think that Indian notions of 'self and other' differ from let's say more western notions?

R.K. I was told of two gentlemen who went into this installation, two Indian gentlemen, and as they came out they were asked what they had experienced. So they both replied that they saw their future. They were younger men and they saw an older man, their image being replaced by an older man. But there was also a young girl in the images which were replaced. So they were asked: "What about the young girl?" "Oh, that's our next birth! It's our after life". So for them the other wasn't really the other they were still looking only at themselves.



MAN WITH COCKEREL 2001-02  
2 channel video, 19 minute loop



installation still  
MAN THREADING A NEEDLE 1998/1999  
Single channel video projected on 59 x 91 cm, (23.3 x 35.8 inch) oil painting. 6 minute loop with sound

M.W. If the other is reflected as part of oneself, would that mean that every Indian is an artist?

R.K. A lot of Indians would claim that there is no distinction between what they do or what they experience as art and some of the other experiences, be they religious or say musical in nature. This has been slightly problematic because the term installation has come from the West to the Indian scene. What has often been said was that we have installations all around and they are art. The way the man selling vegetables sets up his vegetable cart or any other person on the street, even if he has no home, the way he set about arranging the space around him-self is a kind of installation. Or the cow pads which are dried up made into sculptural forms. But they sometimes miss out that there is in installations, as we understand it now as art practice, a conscious generation of meanings.

A.F. Even though narration plays a very important part in your work you don't introduce film as a narrative element.

R.K. When I use video I do not set out to do something which could be described as , 'video art'. I have been interested in cinema. That's the medium I have been familiar with. I know that through cinematic forms meanings can be created. And then I find video accessible. So I use the tools which are available to me but my interests remain the same.

Using light to create an image and watch what the aura of an image created through light is, that interests me. That is different from a painted image. Even a photographed image, which is created by using light, has a different presence. Using something like holograms for a greater presence of an object or a different kind of presence of an object, that would interest me. Not so much that it's a development in scientific terms. Also that's fascinating. I always like to follow it up. But only because it will allow me to reach areas of meaning which for me do not seem to be accessible through the painted image or the photographed image or the video image.

#### Notes

- 1 Conversation with Michael Wörgötter and Angelika Fitz, New Delhi, January 2000
- 2 Boxwallahs. *The 'DeEgo Cube' Facing an Indian Petrol Pump, Interventions in public space..*

#### Angelika Fitz

is a cultural theorist. She works on interdisciplinary projects in the fields of art, architecture, film and cultural studies. Together with Michael Wörgötter she has realised different art and film projects with Indian artists and theorists, e.g. Boxwallahs (New Delhi 1999/2000).

#### Michael Wörgötter

is an artist and founder of the art and theory network DeEgo, Vienna. His main focus lies on the requirements and possibilities of art production relating to different contexts.