

Marianne Gathe 2009

Urban observations, on Bjørg Taranger and her video projects

Urban observations

Bjørg Taranger (b. 1953) works mainly with video and photo-based installations. Her documentary material is recorded both locally and as a result of residencies in South America, Berlin and Paris. Taranger's projects are often formulated over a number of years and are developed by continuous processing and re-contextualization. Regular travel, new experience and new recordings result in a dynamic weave of images and events. When seen together, all Taranger's projects provide the impression of a unique presence, which reflects her method based on participation as well as observation. Sometimes she appears in her own recording as a genuine figure, while at other times she works from a distinct distance. This method supplements the material with a distinct authenticity that also displays the ethical and aesthetic approaches Taranger practices in her artistic work.

One particular work that reflects this approach is a recording from a subway in Berlin: The recording shows Taranger and her partner waiting on a subway platform, nothing in particular happens, they don't talk to each other, no one in particular walks by or even seems to attract their attention, there's no hint of any especially positive or negative atmosphere, we quite simply watch the two characters take a few restless steps, they are simply waiting for a train. What is distinct is that Taranger films herself via a surveillance camera, which in turn has filmed Taranger and her partner. Is the recording intended as an aesthetic motif or is it ethical reflection over our surveillance culture. Probably both.

Three projects contributing to the definition of Bjørg Taranger as an artist are *City Angel* (2000-), *Curing Walls* (2007-) and *Human Walls* (2008-). *City Angel* examines social care in the welfare state. Indifference converted to professionalized care becomes both celebrated and challenged with humour and sincerity. *Curing walls* is a series of pharmaceutical crosses filmed in Paris. The individual crosses are organised into video sculptures with 9 blinking crosses in one image, edited into a continuous loop. Found on every corner in French cities and villages, this neon sign stands as both an aesthetic, familiar form and as a signal for an accessible pharmaceutical depot, for the relief and concern for us as human beings. The pure and clear lines of the pharmaceutical cross can be understood as a contrast to the users' physical condition. The blinking in Taranger's loop doesn't help; is the situation alarming?

Human walls is of a series of film clips from urban situations developed into different patterns. A mechanical, hypnotic sound accompanies the loops and the knowledge that authentic people make up each surface pattern, which would seek to make real life and stories disappear...but not quite...

These works, in all their simple complexity, provide ample insight into Taranger's method and also display her considerable ability to present a reality for the observer that's both completely real and reflective of social development. However these works also provide observers with a series of tableaux vivants, for evaluation on the basis of individual aesthetic norms and pleasures.

Since *Kunstakademiet i Bergen* 1998 (*Bergen National Academy of the Arts*), Bjørg Taranger has exhibited nationally and internationally in a series of solo exhibitions; amongst others, *Centro Municipal de Exposiciones SUBTE* in Montevideo, Uruguay, *Galleria Jangva* in Helsinki, *Ralf Rosowski* in Düsseldorf, *The London Institute Gallery* in London and *Aalesunds Kunstforening* in Ålesund. She has also participated in a series of significant group exhibitions from which the following are selected - *ArtGendabiennale2000* in Helsinki, several of *Statens Kunstutstillinger* - latest in 2007, *Video tour- 6 artists*, Kabuso, Nordheimsund in Norway and the most recent in summer 2009 "*Nordiskt sommarljus-4 Nordiska kvinnor*", Konsthallen in Hishult, Sweden.

Since 1997 Bjørg Taranger has received a series of national and international grants/awards and several prizes for her work. She has been purchased by among others, *Stavanger Tingrett* and *Haukeland Universitetssykehus*, Bergen.

In 2009 and 2010 Bjørg Taranger will exhibit solo exhibitions in *Galleri Gathe* in Bergen and in *Christiansands Kunstforening* in Kristiansand.

Marianne Gathe, Bergen, September 2009

Translated from Norwegian by Gillian Carson