

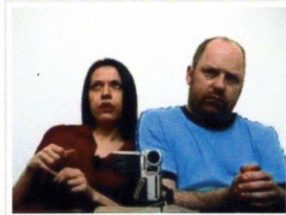
CURATING DISCOURSE

A SELECTION OF THE MOST UP TO DATE WRITINGS FROM THE MFA CURATING COURSE AT
GOLDSMITHS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

THURSDAY, 13 MARCH 2008

Tim Etchells and Vlatka Horvat - Sophie Risner

Tim Etchells & Vlatka Horvat
'Insults & Praises' & 'Promises &
Threats'
Art Sheffield 08 (Sheffield
Biennial)
'Yes No Other Option*'



16.02.08 – 30.03.08

Millennium Galleries
Sheffield

Four white smallish seats sit neatly in a square formation around 4 TV sets. Each TV set has a pair of headphones attached as is gallery protocol when showing 'video art' within the context of the gallery space. Amid the various video pieces within the show the work of Tim Etchells and Vlatka Horvat stands alone as an intriguingly honest re-presentation of the core theme at play throughout this years Sheffield Biennial. The two artists sit next to each other staring at the screen engaged in the moment of what could only be described as a dialogue of ideas, thoughts, rouses and contemplations. Not once do Etchells or Horvat look at each other throughout this torrid exchange - a wonderfully choreographed love affair enriched through a strong linguistic dynamic.

This years title of Yes, No Other Option sheds light on constructs of expectation, performance and failure. The readiness needed to live within a world dominated by a 24 hour work ethic alongside expectations to succeed and do better slip side by side with moments of abject failure, isolation and professional redundancy as tropes within contemporary Fine Art production. Occupational success and failure current idioms that dominate cultural production, resurfacing every now and then as we are expected to work harder, get up earlier and work later. The arrival of the digital age is also significant moment on the passage of this framework; as the Internet adapts the home into an office and visa versa.

To surface this through the work of Etchells and Horvat we can only but see how such images of expectation can mirror and reflect back onto the discourse of a contemporary relationship. Etchells and Horvat spend this digital journey abusing each other in vast extremes then adoring each other all through sharp

one liners considerably and exquisitely performed. Often with the recourse of a sly smile or giggle planted between the lips of the two protagonists - these moments are the only insight into the mounting tension in the room. A portrait of the constant pressure unseen within the maintenance of a relationship. The trick of this pieces intriguing introvert qualities lies in the notion of the unseen - the comments normally ushered behind closed doors to each other in moments of rage, lust and exhaustion. The statements within this piece said so convincingly to one and another have the knock on effect of a representation of closeness but in truth this complex play lacks a coherent plot.

Etchells, a director for experimental Theatre company 'Forced Entertainment' is acutely aware of irony and the importance of a well conceived dialogue, or in this case a well placed monologue. As this play unwraps Etchells wit forms a clever moment from mere individual statements to a charged linguistic collaboration, that unites over dividing Etchells and Horvat. It's a love affair of the most peculiar kind - but yet stands as an impressive feight of direction and even more impressively a formidable observation of society.

Here, the theme of the Biennial must be re-evaluated, Etchells manages to look deeper into this concept of failure, it necessarily being the moment of success engrained within a work ethic nor is it our ability to function in a world which commands and demands more, far away from this stands Etchell and Horvats comprehension of this years Sheffield Biennial as a moment of success through communication at a very basic level. The two video pieces sat innocently in the middle of the gallery space do more than just look into the Biennials core them it attempts to strike a blow at our ability to actually talk to each other another and this, it does, with extreme success.

For more information please visit.

<http://www.artsheffield.org.uk/as08/index.html>