

Conflict Room #39: "Body Fluids"
Liv Bugge + Johanna Kirsch + Emily Roysdon
Curated by Alan Quireyans

Conflict Room is an exhibition space at the Turnhoutsebaan in Borgerhout, that's showing artists every week during three months. The selected artists work around conflict and this can be uttered in different ways: for example in the work itself or in the communication to the public. Due to the fact Conflict Room has a big store window, there is a difference between the visitors that go inside the gallery space and the passers-by that also see what happens and form a personal opinion about it. By inviting every week different artists these fields get investigated and from time to time certain sensitivities are discovered.

"Body Fluids" is an exhibition that includes works of three young artists: Emily Roysdon (USA), Liv Bugge (Norway) and Johanna Kirsch (Austria). Emily Roysdon made a film in 2004 called "Social Mouvement". It shows an amateurish constructed scenery with a small stage and a rusty pink silk cloth set as background. In the left corner of this scenery also a pillar is put there, but it seems like it has been added in the edit. The point of view of the camera doesn't change during the whole film (which takes about 7 minutes). It starts with micro-stands appearing on stage. This is alternated with a person in tight clothes crossing the stage from the right to the left. This happens a few times with different persons, alternated with the microphone-stands. Now these stands are also manipulated by these people and set at the good height, ready to really use it. In the end of the film all microphone-stands and all people are on stage, as some sort of a group composition (like a tableau-vivant).

"Social Mouvement" was the first work selected for the exhibition. Johanna Kirsch and Liv Bugge saw the film before they started working on the show. With this film Emily Roysdon is investigating the way the body changes from a private into a public body (the stage). The clothes are also important. Instead of a covering role, they seem to underline the fat of some of the figurants. For some of the persons it is also difficult to find out their gender. Women will hide their breasts and deny their femininity. In that way every figurant takes in a position against the commercial ideal of beauty. It is an anti-aesthetical film. It's not pleasant to view it (for example there is no

sound). The montage is also very rough and the colours are not realistic. The film looks artificial and it is also filmed out of one angle.



The film was projected in the backspace of Conflict Room. The connection with the space in the front was made by the installation of Liv Bugge. This was made out of a birch tree leaned against the wall, combined with a projected text in black on white. On the top of the birch tree Liv Bugge attached a bundle of human hair. The tree becomes a relic. Liv Bugge was inspired by the images of totems, as they are used in primitive tribes. These sculptures function as an object for rituals and also as a medicine. On the other side it refers to barbaric actions where the hair or heads of enemies are attached on a stick, this to get the enemy afraid. The hair also can refer as a symbol for power (like primitive tribes the skin of a leopard is a powerful object). This ambiguity between blood shedding and healing becomes clear in the projected text. It refers to a form of "reversed healing" in which, instead of healing, wounds are made. This text explains a barbaric method that is only used in extreme hard circumstances (war, wild

nature) and the patient is deadly poisoned, or in a problematic operation where fast action is necessary. In these conditions it can be inevitable to make the wound bigger, in order to prevent the poison entering the central system. Another method is the burning of the wound with a small explosion of gunpowder. A human life can from time to time be saved by these spectacular actions. Liv Bugge named the work "Exterminate all the Brutes" where she is referring to an image of primitive healing. Within this healing the body is handled in a different way. This is then again attached to spiritual healing. Both ways show images that are experienced as being barbaric and primitive by western civilization, but is a daily reality in other cultures.



The birch tree connects the work of Liv Bugge with the piece of Johanna Kirsch "Tyranny of the Should". Four photos are shown on a red table. She took them when she was moving/travelling (a bicycle ride from Antwerp to Brussels organized by Design Your Own Utopia, and a congress in France organized by the Performing Art Forum). These photos show places (a concrete tower, a stranded boat, a car park and a forest) where Johanna Kirsch includes her own body as

a research on concepts like freedom and autonomy. She tries to make her body part of the landscape or the context. These images were accompanied with four quotations that refer to the "Tyranny of the Should", which is a psycho-analytical theory that is part of the Inner Conflicts Theory of Karen Horney. A lot of people suffer from stress caused by things they "should" do. This also includes other persons: she should have done this. Certain expectations are put in what other people do and when they can't fill this in there is also stress. Johanna Kirsch takes this theory as a possible and recognisable breeding ground of conflict. A possible solution could be a different formulation of the sentence where is used "should" and also to reflect on the necessity of the should.

"Body Fluids" is made around a "different" approach of the concept of the body. The formal aspect of the exhibition is where the conflict of the whole exhibition lays in. It communicates in a different way. The visitor finds a formal harmony, but also thinks it's difficult to catch the content of the whole exhibition.

The passers-by didn't have any reactions on the exhibition, except when Lulu entered the exhibition space. This is the husky of Liv Bugge. The moment the dog was in, everybody saw her and wanted to know what she was doing there. The dog made possible what still images can't always accomplish.

Alan Quireyns
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