

## **Anna Jermolaewa. Never Stop the Action!**

One of the recurring topics in the video and photographic work of Anna Jermolaewa deals with the functioning of society, its social relationships and everyday habits. The bodies of humans, animals and even toys form an interface for those investigations that extend beyond the mere visual expression.

Thus, in her video entitled *On / Off*, reflecting an ironic take on her subject, the artist approaches the symbol of the phallus, replete with all its connotations of power, strength, and hierarchical predominance. The domesticated phallus, in this instance, acquires the ability to operate a light switch, which it manages, not unlike Sisyphus, to keep flicking on and off in permanent repetition. Thus in an act of seallike training the phallus becomes a performing penis. It can playfully shake off the role society demands and all the other socially imposed requirements to function in a given way. In addition, the perception of the feminine also changes. It can no longer be freely associated with the traditional focus of the 'in /out-game', without reservations.

The feminist angle that informs this video, does not look at exposing the male, but it does seek liberation from the traditional role limitations ascribed to each sex. The compulsive frontal view of which Harald Szeemann spoke in connection with the video called *Chicken Triptych*, and which can be confirmed in her other video works, as well, tends to switch the focus of perception towards the external. At the same time, the impression develops of a presence of something that remains invisible in the video image itself. In the end the viewer imagines a person present in the room, who influences or directs the action on the screen, a fact that is, however, not explicitly referred to within the video as such. In this operation the directness of the formal organization, which interacts with the directness of the surface message, pushes open the doors of perception towards the external.

So, too, in the video work *3' Survival Attempts* the frontal view of the images, the reduction of the selection of topics to just one central motif and its repetition are factors that play an important role in the mental rechanneling towards what lies behind the given image. Fourteen 'stand-up men' start to move about by means of an unknown power and can no longer be stopped. With ever increasing speed they drop directly into the unknown and disappear accompanied by the loud noise of explosions. 'Stand-up men' are not merely toys for children; they symbolise the capacity of the individual to cope with problems. Whatever happens - a 'stand-up man' cannot be bowled over by anything and will always get up again, to start from scratch.

The video takes up this motif in a literal sense by means of a loop procedure. The intense, almost shot-like banging together of the figures beyond the line of visibility does get 'under one's skin' and is physically perceived. The dolls as size-reduced representatives of human beings imitate the physical sphere and create an image for comparison of human actions within social contexts.

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