

...This exhibition seeks out images of culturally determined values, such as love, belonging, security, wealth or knowledge: values which, because of their selective effects, tend to divide people into haves and have nots, and moreover can determine a matter of existence or non-existence.

Take a guided tour in a crowded place you will not only follow the words of a tour guide, but also a visible signal, often a little flag or an umbrella held aloft or a scarf or handkerchief attached to a stick. The cut-to-size knowledge transmitted on such tours, usually in the form of a descriptive narrative, is also a waving signal, an unquestioned series of signs to follow. Anna Jermolaewa shoots her videos in cities such as Prague, Budapest, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Paris, and Istanbul: places where the swarms of tourists merge and the little coloured flags above their heads help to manage the confusion. The scenes with the crowds following their standard bearers or marching behind banners evokes the image of political parades and demonstrations proclaiming ideological hopes and struggles. It is as if Jermolaewa's video *Umbrella Demonstrations* (2004-2005) records the vestiges of this image in the behaviour of tourists.

There are those who aim to realise their dreams of wealth and their thirst for power through exploitation and oppression. There are others who would escape by any means possible from the bonds of poverty or political persecution, and, with the hope of a better life — of a personal Eldorado — embark on uncertain journeys. So, in her video 'Go ... Go ... Go ... Go ...' (2005) Jermolaewa puts three battery-powered toy dolls produced in China for the consumer world on a little bamboo raft. To the scary sound of the repetitive fragments of music produced by the dolls, they drift past the beach and palm trees to an uncertain future.

In the video piece *Research for Sleeping Positions* (2006) Jermolaewa experiments with a variety of possible sleeping positions on a bench of the type of a growing number of public benches constructed so as to prevent people lying down or sleeping. The bench in the video is located at Vienna's Westbahnhof, the place where in 1989 Jermolaewa spent her first week as a refugee in the West.

In her video *Kiss* (2006), Jermolaewa lets love play in the shape of two Mickey Mouse masks, who, initially kissing each other fondly, start, with growing exuberance, biting off little bits from the others' faces until eventually they tear whole pieces from the others' bodies. A process of loving, opening-up, producing dependencies, and consequent possibilities of hurting or getting hurt is emotionally dissected through a concentrated use of imagery.

The works in the exhibition do not claim any great novelties. In fact, their quality lies in dealing with the familiar. But familiarities they might evoke seem to be easily put to the test. The works hint at the phenomena of public and private life, making them visible through signs and surfaces at once seductive and repellent, intimate and alienating.

*Excerpts from the texts by Karin Pernegger and Lene Leicht written for mezzanin gallery*