

Boris Groys

Thinking in Loop

Three Videos on Iconoclasm,
Ritual & Immortality

Opening reception
February 20, 6-8pm

Talk by Boris Groys
February 29, 7pm

Tribeca Grand Hotel
Screening Room
2 Avenue of the Americas

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Miscellaneous images from videos in exhibition.

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Three Videos on Iconoclasm,
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The Immortal Bodies, 28:40

The Religion as Medium, 24:10

Iconoclastic Delights, 19:45

The videos that are presented in this exhibition were produced between 2002 and 2007. Each of these videos combines a theoretical text that is written and spoken by the author and film footage – fragments taken out of different movies and film documentation. At first glance these videos remind the spectator of the videos and short films that are used today to transmit knowledge, to comment on the news, to spread religious and ideological propaganda, or to be used in the framework of education. One can assert that in our time video, instead of text, became the leading vehicle for transmitting information of any kind. Not accidentally the contemporary radical religious movements use

video and not text to present their programs and ideas. The videos that are shown on CNN and other comparable channels are the main source of political information for the greater audiences. MTV videos are central for the development of contemporary pop culture. And YouTube made video the chosen medium for anyone who will communicate certain ideas or images to the whole world.

The three videos shown in the exhibition seem to fit in this pattern because they give the impression that the text has a more prominent role than the image. But the film footage that is used in these videos has no direct relationship to the spoken text. There

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are associations and parallels between text and image, but also there are contrasts and breaks. The image is not used here as an illustration that has a goal to make the text more comprehensible, to make certain theoretical positions more evident. Rather, the videos produce a certain gap between what we hear and what we see – they even make it especially difficult for the spectator to follow the text and image simultaneously. In this way the presented videos problematize the relationship between text and image that usually seems to be guaranteed by the structuring of the video material. In fact, these

videos transmit no information – rather they reflect on the difficulties of such a transmission. These difficulties are the main topic of all three texts – and these difficulties reflect themselves in the shape of the videos themselves. Text and image correspond to each other, but they remain heterogeneous.

This heterogeneity is underlined by the fact that the videos do not inform the spectator about the films or documentaries used as sources for the film footage. The reason for this is simple enough: The film footage takes on here a completely different function – it is integrated in a

completely different whole – so that it becomes completely cut off from its origin. Here the author uses the technique of appropriation that is well established in the art world but is not as widespread in the film industry. The reason for this different approach to the technique of appropriation is obvious enough. Film traditionally was, and to a certain degree remains, a mass product. It is destined to be seen by big audiences in film theaters. But in our time the social place and use of film have changed: Increasingly, film gets digitalized and, as a video, film becomes archived and shelved in personal video libraries. Or it is shown in the framework of an

art exhibition. In other words: Film begins to be used like a book or an artwork. The three videos presented in the exhibition reflect on this shift in the social functioning of film that makes possible the application of the appropriational technique to film. The functioning of film as a book or as an artwork opens namely the possibility of using appropriation under the same conditions as it is used regularly in the framework of contemporary art and literary practice.

BORIS GROYS
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