



On
Arte

Spazio per l'arte
contemporanea
con videolounge

Martedì — Sabato
14.00 — 18.00
Lunedì e festivi
chiuso

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● The Screen, the Mouse, the Air, and I Introduction

This summer Heyer Thurnheer asked us if we could imagine an exhibition with our most recent issue of FGA, *Fucking Good Art New Existentialism* (FGA35, Oct 2016) as a starting point. This was exactly the kind of question we were waiting for, as the space of an exhibition, we thought, could serve as a perfect “test-ground” for the claim we make in the introduction to the publication: that it is, first and foremost, through cinema, literature, and art that Existentialism influenced every single one of us having grown up in the West since the 1950s.—even those who are opposed to it, or believe its ideas are irrelevant and out-dated.

The Screen, the Mouse, the Air, and I, has largely become a cinematographic exhibition, a tentative unfolding of ideas in moving images that explore several existentialist concepts. Existentialist thought considers all human interaction as conflict, making lonely, competitive individuals of us all. And yet it is also a philosophy of freedom, emphasizing human agency, emancipation, and responsibility. As ideas travel and mutate over time, we wonder if it is possible that a “bad copy” of these values of freedom, competition and responsibility have become the popular values of *homo economicus*, ideas that help justify today’s harsh neoliberal society of winners and losers.

The title of this exposition is taken from our conversation with artist and theoretician Alana Jelinek (FGA#35, *New Existentialism*, pages 111–165). If philosophy deals with the questions and moods of its time, and we see existentialism in the light of the crises of the two world wars, then which—and whose—ideas about existence are developing right now, in the light of the big crisis of *our* time, which is an ecological crisis? It might be a philosophy in which humans won’t take central stage any longer, a philosophy that recognizes the interconnectedness of all things: between, for instance, the screen, the mouse, the air, and I.

In our video-installation we explore existential issues in a contemporary context on the basis of fragments from cinema, personal observations from our archives, and *Parallel IV* (2014), a video essay by Harun Farocki, in which the “heroes” of several computer games explore the boundaries of the game and the viewer discovers how these heroes are programmed. Heyer Thurnheer’s own contribution consists of his book-object about the school he co-initiated, a lived pedagogy experiment that took place in Ticino. *Images of an other modernity*, the title of the book-object, refers, in Heyer’s words, to modernity as an “artist-run-space-praxis, revolving around the idea of self-revolution in an unfolding of personality and environment.”

Heyer Thurnheer also invited Ingeborg Lüscher, whose extraordinary video work *Die Andere Seite* (2011) adds a deep emotional charge to the subject. It shows people in Israel and Palestine who have lost loved ones in the ongoing conflict (in all its present day’s disaster) and who are are filmed while being asked to think about respectively their own lives, about what has been done to them, and about the possibility of forgiveness.

With the exhibition as test ground in place, we come back to that introductory statement about Existentialism as, perhaps, a culture or “way of life”, fuelled by cinema, books, and art. How can we make use of our agency and participate responsibly, in the art world but more so, in the every day? How do we reflect the times we live in, and what programmed *us*? These are questions that concern everyone taking part in this exhibition. Being an artist is not just making pretty things; it is a way of thinking. It is about existence, and about bringing into existence: art is a trigger, a way of making something happen. “There are no alternatives,” Margaret Thatcher famously said. But art is always about alternatives. And though no single person or art institution can singularly define art, together and collectively we each contribute to its definition. This is art’s agency, this is our freedom.

the editors of *Fucking Good Art*, Rob Hamelijnc and Nienke Terpsma