

Foreword: Re-Translating *Der Prozess*

by Sunshine Wong

A lot of what I do seems to revolve around translation. It has been a few years since I left my home turf of Hong Kong, adapting to new languages, diets and cultural decorum to varying degrees of success / failure. When I first moved to San Francisco, my detailed account of the weekend was awkwardly received. The appropriate Californian response to "how are you?" should be a non-committal "fine". And in Berlin, the Aufachtsguard at a Berlin museum shouts "hallo!" as a prohibitive warning to keep trigger-happy tourists from taking pictures.

In the run-of-the-mill greeting of "how are you" or "hello" lies other subtle connotations which are apparent only when one is accurately tuned in. Going through the selection of *Der Prozess*, it occurs to me that I am doing precisely that -- "tuning in" to new associations made by artists / curators Enda O'Donoghue and Gregor Stephan.

My task is to provide some thoughts about the project. It mirrors the one which the eight artists set for themselves: translating subjective perceptions into a form of communication. While they have the larger context of reality as a basis for their artistic endeavours, I have their processed version as told from eight separate vantage points. Each one tackles the problem of how things (could) appear(s) by proposing a certain way of understanding reality. So for me, it's a matter of sussing out their individual methods and idiosyncrasies.

At this point, I could describe what they are. But they would be my direct translations, personal conjectures that would alter the viewer's experience. Perhaps a more interesting exercise would be to take a cue from the project's title, *Der Prozess*: instead of handing in a report about each artist, I would give some insight on how I made sense of the curators' selection.

From the start, I was searching for a common thread. It began with the *Gesamtsbild* of the exhibition, with seeing the eight as components of a larger body. I saw snapshots, daily spectacles, urbanisation, maps and clips from mass media in the form of photographs, paintings, graphics and installations. Amidst the disparate associations I made about surveillance cameras, everyday banalities and over-mediatisation, there was eventually an inkling of cohesion: a curiosity for reality, what it is comprised of, and how it can be broken down to tangible, single units.

With these as building blocks, the artists can go about setting up a process in which reality is reconstituted piecemeal. And how each artist handles the problem is the question being posed in *Der Prozess*.

The evidence of labour, of physical engagement, is an integral part of this show. Indeed, the artistic merit here can be based on whether the work delivers an adequate simulation -- or disintegration -- of reality, considering the artists' explicit concern for it. But I find the most poignant achievement to be in the transparency of the process. Like being privy to the backstage workings of a theatrical production, the mechanics of the art is plain to see. The paradox is that we still suspend disbelief: unmistakably, it is a football stadium (Matthew Davis), icebergs (Gregor Stephan) and a quiet landscape (Manfred Peckl). We accept the illusion despite being able to see how it is created.

Or -- *because* we know how something is realised, it actually highlights the deeper tension of our imagination and creativity. *Der Prozess* is art as work: demystified, but no less fascinating.