

About the artistic practice of Katharina Sophia Hüttermann

By Dr Tobias Muno

Hüttermann's mixed-media studio practice brings video and drawing together, focussing on the shared terrain between moving image and drawing. She qualifies these fundamentally different media - the first is nomadic, the second more sedentary in nature - as predestined memory apparatuses for the reproduction of the gestural body. To this end, Hüttermann pursues a practice of performance. In doing so, she addresses the post-modern fragmentation of the subject, having to remain between movement and standstill, as a homeless restlessness. Through the combination of drawing and video, she reproduces this restlessness and at the same time maps the movement of her own body, which opens up a new place and gives it a home. Her studio absorbs her restlessness and makes it home as an exemplary movement of arrival.

Studio

Hüttermann, who felt a connection to performance art during her studies at the Bauhaus University Weimar, now sees herself as a studio-artist due to her focus on video and drawing.

William Kentridge, a prominent representative of an interdisciplinary, artistic studio practice, characterizes this place as follows: 'The studio is an enclosed space, both physically but also psychically, an enlarged head; the pacing in the studio is the equivalent of ideas spinning round in one's head, as if the brain is a muscle and can be exercised into fitness, into clarity.' The studio is an expanded head, a training space for the brain, which expands and grows like a muscle.

The studio is therefore a kind of training room, an artistic fitness studio, to develop the strength to endure this art, this reflection of our lived, fragmented and broken subjectivity, but also to be able to continue practicing it. Certain exercises must be repeated to do this and thus establish and make a home in a place, in a city, in a country.

Video: *Welcome to my gym* (2024)

The immediate control and recording of the image in the video-art enables an intuitive connection to performance-art. She re-appropriates her image through a self-referential gesture by performing fitness exercises in the studio, in front of a camera. Through these 'exercises' she negotiates her image with the camera and appropriates it. Video-art has become a central means of expression for feminist artists such as Carolee Schneemann, Valie Export and Ulrike Rosenbach, because the camera can be attacked as a representation of the gaze and becomes a means of negotiation.

The exercises Hüttermann presents in *Welcome to my gym* include shadow boxing (*Boxing to the front*), skipping (*Running on one point*), waves (*Battle rope I*), slams (*Battle rope II*), hip circles (*Hip Circles, Riding my pony*) and muscle relaxation (*Release*). Hüttermann negotiates her appropriation of the image aggressively with the camera by hitting it with her battle rope or provoking a pop-out effect by boxing in its direction. In an ironic climax (*Dancing*), she finally dances with a naked torso, stretches her middle fingers towards the camera and repeats the word 'tits' with a coarse intonation to clearly expose the male gaze.

With her body-emphasizing series, Hüttermann is moving on tried and tested terrain. The 8 video works are reminiscent of Bruce Nauman's *Live-Taped Video Corridor* from 1967-68, which he also recorded alone in his studio. In this series, Nauman dances in a square and repetitively pushes himself out of a corner of a room - these works ultimately led to the performance *Corridor* (1969), a solo performance without an audience; Nauman alone in front of the camera, placing his body in relation to his studio, appropriating it and making it his body.

The solitary impression left by these video works, their rigid framing and the motionless camera are characteristic of this solo performance in the studio, in which the artists appropriate their working space. Hüttermann's drawings now correspond directly with this character of a locked-in movement, a motionless video image depicting a moving body. In a certain sense, every drawing treads on the spot, every drawing is sometimes a training session that utilises repetitive movements so that the artist develops the strength not to perish on the long road of art.

Drawing: *Eliminato* (2023/24)

The expansion of the body into the studio, which finds a clarity of self-empowerment through video works such as *Welcome to my gym*, is also reflected in Hüttermann's drawings as an appropriation of new language and new surroundings. The central gesture of her drawings is the crossing out of text. Here, too, she can look back on a proven strategy of artistic engagement with writing.

Two famous examples of work with blackened text are *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira Le Hasard* (1968) by Marcel Broodthaers and the *Redaction Paintings* (2005- ongoing) by Jenny Holzer. The first is an artist's book, the second a series of paintings on panel. What they have in common is that they use selected texts as the material for their work. And to use the redacted text as a means of visual expression. Hüttermann also uses found texts for her drawings, which she calls "found footage".

She finds her way to the image through a process of erasing text. She follows a classic trope of drawing, namely constructing the image by removing, subtracting and reducing. By crossing out, she follows the impetus of performance. She thus moves within the framework of a 'set of rules' that turns her reading into an action that is reflected as a drawing.

Their *Eliminato* are less about making something disappear, rather they attempt to form a sublation as crossings out. To annul means both to disappear and to preserve; to cross out means to make reading legible as a trace and thus to spatialize its temporal process. Her daily reading practice in the studio of forgotten or discarded text, of waste paper that she found in a copy shop in Naples, is read and at the same time records its reading. In this way, Hüttermann cards herself in the text, by erasing it as a reader, she simultaneously erases it graphically and reduces its meaning to a single word that summarizes the page. Her cross-outs frame the title of the drawing at the end.

It is a job to be done in the studio, it is something for Hüttermann to do, namely to arrive, to relate to the world, to learn a language, to create frames with black strokes until the unmanageable reality has shrunk to a manageable word. It is a gesture to repeat, to read and draw not only with the eyes, but with the arm, the hand and the fingers. It is to inscribe oneself in what one finds in order to assert oneself, to confirm oneself in the new. It is to preserve this work as a drawing and video. It is the struggle with 'staying there and not leaving' as a work of art in the service of staying there and not leaving.