

TELLING STORIES



Kon TRUBKOVICH, No Exit (2008) Courtesy of the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York

Invitation au vernissage • Invitation to the opening
Jeudi 4 février 2010 à 19h • Thursday, February 4, 2010 from 7pm

Films de • by Adam Vackar, Bruce Conner, Christoph Draeger & Reynold Reynolds, Kon Trubkovich, Melik Ohanian
Commissariat • Curated by Cathy Larqué

Exposition 5 février - 6 mars 2010 • Show February 5 - March 6, 2010

Séance de projection le 11 février, 2010 à 16h • Film screening on February 11, 2010 at 6pm, carte Blanche à • to Jakob Racek
(Curator, Center for Contemporary Art - Plovdiv, Bulgaria)

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"I think that any actor from Hollywood could be elected provided that he has a story to tell; a story in which he could tell to people how his country is and in which way he sees it."*

"Good stories" first appeared in politics in the 1980's under Ronald Reagan's presidency — after the Watergate Scandal — with a view to controlling information and its use by the media. Official speeches became packed with anecdotes and stories which, little by little, began to be substituted for real facts or statistics, paving the way to our current paroxysm of dramatisation and *mise en scène*.

First developed in marketing and advertising, "storytelling" evolved into a genuine political way with the Clinton and Bush administrations which was endowed by advisors, Hollywood scriptwriters, spin doctors and advertisers. The Monica Lewinski case, Clinton's marital life, 9/11, the Iraq War, Hurricane Katrina... basically any event is good enough to be turned into narratives depicting heroes, victims and bad guys, characters in tales of love and hate, tragic dramas, twists and turns, happy endings.

Through the use of interpretation, stories take the place of historical facts and become the exclusive communication mode shared by spin doctors and journalists, who are themselves subdued to the pressure of breaking news and media glitter. "Storytelling is a way to seduce and convince, to grab the attention of an audience. It is also a way of sharing and spreading information or actual experiences, outlining knowledge and know-how, formalizing texts and providing a subjective aspect to points of view or reports. It is a discursive frame-work and, to quote Michel Foucault, a "discipline". This discipline is today like the paradigm of a cultural revolution of capitalism, a gripping tale to feed and format the greater part of human activity."**

In a context whereby the borderline between information and comment has become rather blurred, art films re-establish reality by creating a counter story. These works, sensitive to the unremitting flux of image and information, use the form and technique of the narrative machine but incite us to challenge and revise the "facts" produced by it. Thus they create a release, and the feasibility of a narrative thinking and use made by mankind for mankind.

Adam Vackar employs the language of art film to address consumer society's superficiality and quasi-fascist aesthetic obsession. In the way *Improvement* (2009) is filmed it is switching between a "making-of" style and reality show-like style movie.

Bruce Conner's work is often metamedia in nature, offering commentary and critique on the media — especially television and its advertisements — and its effect on American culture and society. In his film *REPORT* (1963-65) he has used newsreel footage and radio tapes of President Kennedy's assassination to produce a thirteen minute movie that captures unbearably, yet exhilaratingly, the tragic absurdity of that day.

More recently, *The Last News* (2002) by Christoph Draeger & Reynold Reynolds, dismantles the spectacular event of September 11th by turning the over-media-covered fact into its most extreme and ironic extension.

Melik Ohanian matches the duration and intention of pre-existing films he reviews, blurring or re-inventing the image and narrative. In *September 11, 1973 Santiago Chile, 2007* (2007), Melik Ohanian uses the soundtrack that has become the historic archive of the second part of *The Battle of Chile* (1973), Patricio Guzmán's famous documentary film. With it, he associates a series of sequences he filmed in the Chilean capital in May 2007.

Ant Farm (2007) and *No Exit* (2008) by Kon Trubkovich invert the flux of the stories process. The visually hypnotic videos makes some reference points get out of hand that we constantly watch on TV news and we are bound to consider as usual. In Trubkovitch films we can perceive how absurdity can be an efficient tool for an interminable inmate activity and in formatting any mind.

* James Carville quoted from Francesca Polletta, *It was like a fever. Storytelling in Protest and Politics*, The University of Chicago Press, 2006.

** Christian Salmon, "Une machine à fabriquer des histoires", in *Le Monde diplomatique*, Novembre 2006