

Alfred Hitchcock at Berggasse 19

- Film installation “Phoenix Tapes” by Christoph Girardet and Matthias Müller
- 5 December 2007 through 2 February 2008 at the Sigmund Freud Museum

In its special exhibition space, the Sigmund Freud Museum is presenting the installation “Phoenix Tapes” by Christoph Girardet and Matthias Müller. Six video monitors show sequences from films by Alfred Hitchcock involving recurrent motifs in his work.

From forty well-known films, the German artists distill details that at first seem fully insignificant, using them to develop a six-part encyclopedia of obsessions. By showing sets, close-ups of objects and little gestures as well as encounters between characters who never met in the original Hitchcock films, the installation develops a parallel film, which in the style of a thriller builds up tension and steers toward a tragic end. Girardet and Müller’s translation exposes Hitchcock’s films to the tradition of “found footage” as it developed in experimental film.

Alfred Hitchcock and Psychoanalysis

Hitchcock’s films have often been understood as invitations to make psychoanalytic interpretations. His cinema has proven to be a polyphonic resonating space for basic Freudian constellations ranging from obsessive action to uncanny mother relationships. For scenes in “Spellbound” the director even engaged psychoanalytic advisors.

Girardet and Müller challenge the beholder to reflect independently on the films: they provide no didactic instructions regarding how and with what theoretical instruments Hitchcock’s works are to be read. In their film installation Hitchcock analyzes himself. Thus the artists’ method takes an approach similar to psychoanalysis – it is left up to the viewers to make their own interpretations.

The exhibition has been developed in cooperation with the Austrian Film Museum, which is presenting a special focus on Alfred Hitchcock beginning on 1 December. On 24 January 2008, the Sigmund Freud Foundation has invited English film scholar Laura Mulvey to present a lecture at the Film Museum. It will deal with Hitchcock's psychoanalytic scenarios and provide a theoretical bridge between the work of these two institutions.

"Hitchcock makes use of numerous psychoanalytic scenarios in his work. Girardet and Müller's installation provides a concentrated look at his films by showing essential sequences of the famous Hitchcock horror in six different loops," explains Inge Scholz-Strasser, director of the Sigmund Freud Museum.

In their 1999 installation, the two German artists translate Alfred Hitchcock's cinema into the media framework of an exhibition. While the spatial situation of the movie theater directs the gaze toward temporally related action sequences, the installation's use of multiple video monitors and the relationship between them and the Sigmund Freud Museum's exhibition space facilitates new perceptions.

Phoenix Tapes – the individual sections

#1. Rutland: a montage of scenes almost devoid of human presence. Erased passages show relationships between people and places.

#2. Burden of Proof: A collection of close-ups. A tribute to the beauty of detail in Hitchcock's films.

#3. Derailed: A dreamlike sequence of images dominated by shots of racing trains; a monstrous dream machine for releasing primal human fears.

#4. Why Don't You Love Me?: A freak show presenting Hitchcock's eccentric psychopaths – special attention is given to their relationships with their domineering mothers.

#5. Bedroom: A "short story": Hitchcock's tantalizing women are locked in, humiliated, tied up, tortured, raped and murdered.

6. Necrologue: A mute, frozen heroine in a state between agony and apathy, dream and death.

Prizes and Awards for “Phoenix Tapes”

Initially developed in 1999 for the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford (GB), “Phoenix Tapes” has garnered a number of awards:

Selected for the 56th Mostra Internazionale d’Arte Cinematografica di Venezia.

Best International Film/Video, The Images Festival of Independent Film and Video, Toronto 2000

Best German Experimental Film/Video Production of 1999, Preis der Deutschen Filmkritik

The Artists

Christoph Girardet, born in 1966 in Langenhagen, has been working as a video artist since 1989. Participation in numerous group shows at institutions such as P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York and Nikolaj Copenhagen Contemporary Art Center; solo shows at Kunstverein Hannover and Kunsthalle Bielefeld et al.

Matthias Müller, born in 1961 in Bielefeld, has since 1980 produced numerous films and videos that have been shown at various international festivals. Participations in group shows at Centre Georges Pompidou, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago et al.; solo shows at Neuer Berliner Kunstverein and Tate Modern. Since 2003 he has been Professor of Experimental Film at the Akademie der Medienkunst in Cologne.