Daniel Egg
Box 3 "Dialog" (2003)
1997
installation /mixed media: mirror, monitor, DVD player, cassette recorder
dimensions: 180 x 60 x 80 cm

The media construction of reality is one of the central themes of avant-garde art. Precisely at the end of the twentieth century, as such is the continuation of a process that began in the 1960s in the analysis of the social construction of reality in a text from 1986 about his "Minus Objects," Michelangelo Pistoletto makes reference to his mirror paintings, outlining the contemporaneity of the depiction with the moving reality that is thereby reproduced. One of the inherent qualities of the mirror image is its simultaneousness with the real image. Daniel Egg extends this reproductive and temporal duality between mirror image and reality to include the dimensions of media and space. The opponent of the mirror image is neither the photographic reproduction nor any living body, indeed, the mirror image is replaced by the virtual appearance of a moving video image, which in turn is opposed by a real, three-dimensional object (the tape deck) image and object in perfect temporal and spatial congruence. A videotape player and a horizontally installed monitor have been set into a box, in front of which (but not visible or otherwise perceptible) is a semi-transparent mirror tilted at an angle of 45 degrees. The moving images from the videotape are superimposed on the real tape deck through the video monitor. A virtual hand (a reflection of the image from the monitor onto the real deck) inserts a virtual cassette, yet the real deck appears to begin playing as if it has actually been switched on. The visual images of the real and the imaginary tape decks are perfectly superimposed. At the same time, a telephone conversation between a man and a woman in one shot is not shown, but only the woman's voice heard over the man's voice at the end of the telephone line. The man shows the woman and her voice and the man's voice at the end of the line in the film version, the cut between shots signifies a change of location, which Egg here reproduces as a change of tape. A male and female hand take turns in changing the tapes according to the cuts between shots in the film (change of location). The woman begins to speak by stopping the tape with the male voice and inserting her tape (her voice, that is), and vice versa.

Man and woman as the classical pair of opposites are thus assigned to those of present and absent, real and virtual—the primary elements of cinematic culture—importantly, not in the form of an image but as sound. Egg observes the function of the voice in film in her 1988 book with its revealing title The acoustic mirror: The fameule voice in cinema and film cinema, showing it to be a key method of gender construction. Egg is thus following the acoustic mirror of media reality rather than the visual mirror of cinematic reality. This distinguishes him as an artist of the 1980s from an artist of the 1960s. The relationship between the subjective (or sensed) therefore has a strictly dualistic structure based on a technical device that is a Lacanian sense and a reminder of the real, an "experiment," a remnant, yet constitutive of the symbolic order. In this symbolic order the relationship between the sexes becomes a "dual mirror" relation (Zeeck) built upon elements of presence and absence, reality and virtuality.

Egg's film is therefore not only an analysis of media reality (an analysis of Hitchcock's film) but also an analysis of the relationships between the subjects, nevertheless in the mirror of the real (by achieving the perfect superimposition of the material organization of communication, the economy of the cut, and the "bodily economy" [Jean-François Lyotard]), Egg sheds light on the mechanisms of the media construction of reality and symbolic order.

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