

Erik Bün­ger

Even the Prompter Dies

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GALERIE
M29

RICHTER

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Öffnungszeiten: Mi–Fr 14–18 Uhr

Sa 12–16 Uhr u. n. V.

In his exhibition **Even the Prompter Dies**, Swedish artist Erik Bün­ger presents a video trilogy that explores the relationship between language and image. The three videos — **Nature See You** (2022), **The Mime and the Ape** (2023), and **Even the Prompter Dies** (in collaboration with Manuel Saiz, 2024) — deal with the various levels at which language and image intersect and come into conflict. They reveal how language attempts to organize, influence, and control the image. The word intervenes in the image, determines and alters the visual process, but ultimately fails in the difficulty of translation and in making history and its interpretation comprehensible — and eventually loses control itself.

Nature See You (2022) is an indictment that describes the impossibility of finding balance between nature, animal, human, and machine.

In November 2015, at the eve of the UN climate change conference in Paris, a video was uploaded on the internet, in which Koko, a gorilla trained in the use of American Sign Language, addresses world leaders directly. She chastises humanity and calls for immediate action to save herself and the nature she is part of. In his video essay “Nature See You”, Erik Bün­ger invites a sign language avatar to comment on Koko's use of words. The avatar tries again and again to reformulate the impossible position which Koko finds herself in, as a spokesperson for nature: to communicate her message to us she has to use words. But in order for this message to remain true to nature she has to remain wordless.
(Erik Bün­ger)

The language in **The Mime and the Ape** (2023) interrupts the narrative in a completely unexpected, paradoxical, and absurd moment. With the word “NO”, a mime in a silent film speaks, and an ape verbally resists its captivity. The word expresses refusal, and at the same time, contradiction and a new beginning.

In the film *Silent Movie* (1976) a film director places a phone call to Marcel Marceau to ask him to star in a silent film. The world famous mime picks up the phone and shouts “No!”. Thirty-five years later the exact same stunt is repeated by Cesar, the chimpanzee protagonist in *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* (2011). Previously a speechless animal, he suddenly grabs the cattle prod out of the hands of his human prison guard and shouts “No!”.

In the two-channel video installation *The Mime and the Ape*, a narrator returns again and again to these two scenes treating them as two origin stories. If one scene takes us back to the origins of sound film, the other scene takes us all the way back to the origins of human language. With the help of the two scenes, the narrator weaves a winding tale about the inability of language to articulate its own origin. (Erik Büngrer)

Even the Prompter Dies (2024, a collaboration with the artist *Manuel Saiz*) presents a nested sequence of a repeated statement that attempts to control the image by defining and limiting it through a rhythm of stopping and letting it continue. Frames are built within frames, increasingly restricting the image and dissolving into an endless loop, caught in the question of the uncontrollable nature of human existence and vanishing into depth.

Even *The Prompter Dies* is an experimental video essay investigating the power of speech over images. Multiple voices—all belonging to the two filmmakers—wrestle for control over the footage from various positions inside and outside the screen. As the video progresses it becomes increasingly difficult to tell who is winning; who is speaking from that ultimate meta-level that gives the image its final framing. (Erik Büngrer)

This layering is a game of confusion, an eternal loop of sameness, in which meaning is driven ad absurdum—like in Wittgenstein’s image of the solipsist, whose spiral of thought about self and world circles like a fly in a glass.

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