



most elaborate of the three installations, *Clamor*, 2006: a gray, ruinlike bunker whose jutting shape evoked the ice floes painted by Caspar David Friedrich as well as Berlin's Mies van der Rohe war memorial. From this hybrid sculptural shell, one heard live trombones and trumpets echoing the music with which the Janissaries had once terrorized Vienna, the Viet Cong's hymns of resistance, the ballads of the Russian October Revolution, and "We're Not Gonna Take It" by Twisted Sister—a jumble of tunes and rhythms that sometimes intensified to ear-shattering volume.

During quieter moments, one could hear singing. This seemed distant, but actually came from *Sediments Sentiments (Figures of Speech)*, 2007, a sculptural mass of tunnel-like pipes that each held a singer within. Half-hidden and half-exposed, these men and women were sitting, squatting, or lying in symbiosis with the shapeless structure, interpreting in song various excerpts from speeches by Martin Luther King, the Dalai Lama,

gradually emerge from the white nothingness of what seems to be drifting smoke. These days, smoke-filled streets in the Middle East are more likely associated with bomb attacks, but when both the fog in the film and its ideological associations have been cleared away, we see that we've been following a small truck spraying pesticide. In *After the Empire*, 2008, Elodie Pong takes the black-and-white "afterimage" of a bombed-out factory in Hiroshima as the backdrop for a filmed sequence of individual icons from the past two hundred years, including Marilyn, Elvis, Karl Marx, and Martin Luther King. The unobtrusively threatening historical background gives these idols a strange ambivalence: They are neither figures we can identify with nor caricatures.

Blurred boundaries are also thematized in multimedia installations like those by Pamela Rosenkranz (*Unfencing*, 2007) and the group RELAX (*Shake the Dust*, 2008), while David Hominal's six paintings with political motifs verge on the abstract. These recent contributions to the Swiss scene were placed side by side with works by renowned international figures such as Mark Manders, Paweł Althamer, and Nedko Solakov. In Adrian Paci's video *Centro di Permanenza Contemporanea*, 2007, we gaze down at an airfield from a control tower: One by one, would-be passengers ascend an airplane staircase until it is full; the camera then pulls back to show that they are stranded, with no aircraft for them to board.

"Shifting Identities" didn't aim so much to label and explain as to render its own boundaries porous. *From the series Flowers, Fruits and Portraits*, 2008, Shirana Shahbazi's gigantic still life featuring fruit

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George Bush, and Saddam Hussein. Reminiscent of opera, their artificial diction and force of expression became a parody of the hollow but cleverly staged verbal explosions typical of such speeches.

This cacophony was augmented by more trumpeting, which emanated from the third installation, *Wake Up*, 2007, consisting of a simple white partition from behind which emerged not only sound but light: Variations of reveille, revised and enriched with references to musical history, were linked to a lighting system, so that depending on volume and rhythm, lights went on and off as during an air raid. Quivering lights, clarions, expressive—almost screaming—women's voices, a bunker with partitions that evoked barricades, coupled with the Romanticism of heroic songs and Friedrich's ice floes—seldom in contemporary art does one encounter spaces of such intensity, spaces that thrust back into consciousness things that have been buried. This is the seductive, alarming, menacing power of sound.

—Noemi Smolik

Translated from German by Laura Hoffmann.

ZURICH

"Shifting Identities"

KUNSTHAUS

About every ten years, the Kunsthaus Zurich exhibits an interpretive cross-section of the newest contemporary Swiss art. In "Shifting Identities," the institution's curator, Mirjam Varadinis, set out to capture yet another turning tide in the country's art scene, using sixty-seven artists as points of reference. Along with the mobility of many Swiss artists, whose studios are now located in Berlin or elsewhere, the inclusion of a number of international figures with no relation to the country—but whose works address the notion of identity—made it difficult to categorize these pieces simply in terms of nationality. "Shifting Identities" responded to developments in society but also in media: Thus *Vektor*, 2008, a video sequence by Goran Galić and Gian-Reto Gredig, takes us through side streets in Cairo that only



Goran Galić
Gian-Reto Gredig
Vektor, 2008
from a colc
22 minutes
"Shifting Id"

and a skull, hung like a Bollywood billboard on the exterior wall of the exhibition hall, an entertainment-industry memento mori for museum and city. One also found satellites of the show scattered among the rooms of the permanent collection of the Kunsthaus and across the city itself: Isolated suitcases and bags lay about in the museum's rooms as if casually set down and forgotten. With this work, *Battlefield # 19/ if you see something, say something*, 2005, Jérôme Leuba is consciously playing with the anxiety called forth today by unattended luggage, even in a country that hasn't been regularly confronted with terrorist threats. At the Zurich airport, Gianni Motti's *Pre-Emptive Act*, 2007–2008, commented ironically on the security precautions that now accompany all global migration with the silent performance of a security officer assuming the lotus position. Calmly reflective and profoundly subversive, this work ventures into a territory of shifting borders against which Switzerland, as a sort of political fortress, is still attempting to defend itself.

—Hans Rudolf Reust

Translated from German by Oliver E. Dryfuss.