

Project summary

In 2010 I am exploring rhetoric techniques, which have been developed to both foster and control the process of communication in groups. like the "The Debating Club Format" or the "Open Space Technology".

The results will become part of the comprehensive video project titled "no more words, no other thoughts. About the rituals of speaking", which can be described as a "grammar " about the visual gestures and phrases used in communication today.

Project proposal: no more words, no other thoughts. About the rituals of speaking.

Introduction to the subject matter: Rhetoric

In 2010 I am exploring rhetoric techniques, which have been developed to both foster and control the process of communication in groups. I believe that the desire to control and establish new rules to communicate with each other has increased and will be of further importance in the future as I read its development as a by-product of a fast-growing social insecurity (in Europe).

Debating Club format and other techniques

While I am currently examining the issues of permanent controversy (as it can be found in the Debating Club format), I am interested to compare the history and current use of "The Debating Club Format" with techniques, which seek after consensus.

Oftentimes these techniques demand the inclusion of arising problems or conflicts into the discussion immediately. People often understand communication based on these characteristics as "ideal communication".

The plan

I am interested in writing down a script and / or a score, which describes and analyses the different gestures and phrases used to underline spoken words in speech. My research shall be based on examples taken from literature, politics and other (also historical) documents etc.

I wish to elaborate both ways of persuasion as precise as possible (that is to argue for or against something) and to also examine the issue of true consensus.

Simultaneously, I will research how rhetoric is taught in German universities today. For this, I plan to accompany (with the video camera) both the faculty and the students at the Rhetoric Institute at the University in Tübingen during their practice.

Based on the insights I will gain during this time, I will organize a series of workshops, which will be open to everyone who wants to improve his / her communication skills (taught by an expert, who will be invited as well). Lectures and discussion rounds shall accompany the project to critically examine the subject matter.

The results shall become part of the multi channel video installation titled “no more words, no other thoughts. About the rituals of speaking”, which may be described as a “grammar“ about the visual gestures and phrases used in communication today.

Current state of affairs

Within the past months, I regularly have been visiting the weekly training sessions of the students from the Debating Club Union Berlin. Additionally I participated in a workshop (duration: 24 hours), which trained high school teachers to teach the techniques of the Debating Club Format to their students.

In April 2010, I will be traveling to Tübingen to meet with the faculty of the Rhetoric Institute from Tübingen University in person and to further discuss the possibilities for a possible cooperation.

An article about my theoretical research on the subject matter shall be published on the website of Sparwasser HQ, Offensive for Contemporary Art and Communication in Berlin (<http://www.sparwasserhq.de/indexENG.htm>) in May 2010. For the residency period at the BANFF, I plan to scrutinize some of these theories in practice.

Time line 2010 / 2011

January - April 2010: theoretical research

- texts and literature about rhetoric, logic (language) and speech act theory
- comparison of different communication methods (their aims, history and techniques)
- analysis of various speeches (texts, films, documentations)

Categorization and interpretation of arguments (phrases) and expressions (gestures), their overlaps, differences and variations. The source material will be based on selected texts, transcribed and video taped speeches and discussions.

May 2010 – August 2010: writing a score and first interviews in Tübingen

Once I have finished the analysis, I wish to write scenes, which I will use to re-enact the “distilled “ gestures and phrases in front of the video camera. These scenes shall not only dissolve speech into fragments (phrases), but also investigate the possibilities for another way of speaking and become part of the workshop series I will organize

- video documentation and participatory observation at the Institute for Rhetoric in Tübingen: Interviews with faculty and students
- preparation and organization of the planned workshop series (workshops and lectures)

August – November 2010: workshop-series and evening lectures

- workshops (together with participants, an expert for rhetoric, camera team)
- 3 – 4 public lectures to deepen the critical research on the subject matter

November 2010 – March 2011: video and audio- editing, video post production

- editing, color correction, audio editing.

April 2011: public presentation of the installation

Artist statement

I like stories, but I don't like telling stories. Although I like pictures, I find it almost impossible to take one. Though I am interested in the individual, I do not wish to use anybody's story for my purposes. To me, the recurrent question is: How can I visualize and describe complex situations of interpersonal or social nature?

Over the past years my work has been a series of inquiries into social and cultural patterns. For this I initiate and examine social situations with practices familiar to us from an educational or psychological context. With the aid of specialists I carry out experiments based on surveys, field studies, brainstorming workshops and therapeutic methods. Throughout the process of making I radicalize these scenarios to explore the limits and possibilities of human communication and interaction.

Finally, my work takes the form of a mixed media installation, a short film or a text, which allows the audience to delve into the procedures retrospectively.

Biography

Juliane Zelwies

1976 born in Berlin, studied Fine Arts / Sculpture in Stockholm and Philadelphia and graduated in Media Arts at the Berlin University of the Arts.

The artist deals in her video installations, short films and drawings with social and cultural phenomena of our society. In her performances, she initiates and radicalizes social situations to explore the limits and possibilities of human communication and interaction.

She has been exhibiting her work world-wide, lastly at Galerie Sans Nom, Moncton, Canada; 59th Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale), Berlin, Germany; Shedhalle Zürich, Switzerland; ZAIM Art Center, Yokohama, Japan; Temple Gallery, Philadelphia, USA.