



Talking about the future is no aid for the unresolved present.
For the present is not an end!

Resistance to the Vocabulary of Established Reality

Yilmaz Dziewior



Book cover: O.T. (Wöhring), 2009, 16mm, 90 min, 40 min.

Yesterday is yesterday, and every day is the last day of the present. Every day, every hour, every minute, once elapsed, becomes the past. If it were that simple, there would be no present, and the redoubtable period of time between the past and the future would not exist. According to the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, the simultaneousness of every hundredth second exact definition (including that of the present) is directly connected to the measuring apparatus applied, and to the problem that when observing a whole consisting of many parts a dispersion or standard deviation must arise which is described as uncertainty. Such uncertainties arise as much in taking the measure of the present and of numerous simultaneous events as in looking into the past. Only in retrospect can specific characteristics be retrospectively traced through a relation of complexity. This is the way history is predominantly written. Important here is the point in time and the position from which the analysis is made, and which method is technically applied, which "apparatus" is used. And the results are as exactly determined by the objective investigation as the relation with which the analysis is carried out.

Applied to Andreas Bunte's installation Die action Tage der Gegenwart (This Last Day of the Present) (2006), which consists of two films, several sets of typewritten and eight collages, a film seems advisable to take look at its apparent subject matter. The present release here. The background to the presentation is an interest in the German literature of the 1930s, particularly with its mirror figures, such as Margot Schuber, who was less motivated by radical political convictions than by the search for meaning and group solidarity. For her, however, underground reality largely consisted of friendship, isolation and resistance in prison, and very few high-gate questions. "So the theme of the installation is a chapter of German history that is still familiar and only barely experienced as a myth. The knowledge about it is of necessity second-hand. Yet it is understandable that someone like Andreas Bunte, who was born in Germany in 1970, would have a closer relationship to these events than someone socialized at a different time in a different country. His starting point, then, is both received and deconstructed.

Die action Tage der Gegenwart originated in 2006, which is at once too early and too late. Bunte's work narrowly escaped flagging time: The RAF exhibition and the film it created at Berlin's Kunstlerhaus in early 2005, but had been around too long to become part of the 20th anniversary commemoration of the "German Autumn" of 1977. It is interesting that also appears in the present publication Bunte describes how his curiosity about the RAF was not awakened by the exhibition but by an article with the work by a book. The story of the terrorist Margot Schuber was interesting to him in its mundaneness, which was entirely at odds with the radical ideal of normally denigrated by the RAF.

This contrast between the banality of a bourgeois existence and the continual state of emergency of terrorism is dealt with in various ways in Die action Tage der Gegenwart. In one of the two films—O.T. (Wöhring) (2009) (2009)—the camera carries over the rooms of a seven-block flat that has been carefully arranged by the artist. Their layout and an increasing number of clues indicate their conspiratorial use. A typewriter, scissors, glue and other materials laid out on the production of anonymous, freewriting letters or fliers. A casually placed wig in the bathroom and a briefcase containing several passports complete the impression of a hideout. The way in which these items are registered, the objective distance to what is shown, raises the question of who is actually doing the filming, but a question behind the camera, collecting evidence? Has Andreas Bunte found this material? In this case, like that of the collages, remains ambiguous.

Despite the sober gaze and the avoidance of direct dramatic effects, the obvious absence of the flat's inhabitants creates a tense, threatening atmosphere, it seems as if they could turn up at any moment, interfere with this observation and enforce the unwanted visitor—for this is how one feels when watching the film. But these depicted occupants can be interpreted metaphorically as the absence not only of danger and resistance but also of political consciousness, giving the work a complexity beyond its historical dimension.

The shots are prefabricated—in the film's looped presentation interrupted and at the same time strengthened in their atmosphere of latent violence—by superimposed fragments of text. Similar to those in the collages, they are a mix of quotations from Walter Benjamin, Guy Debord, George Agamben, etc. that the artist sometimes borrows exactly, but other times uses as a starting point for statements rewritten in the same linguistic mode to suit his context. Because neither the film nor the collages attribute the quotation exactly, all the texts appear to be equally authentic and seem peculiarly antiquated in speech. In the collages the relationship between text and image is more immediately referential, as both are reproduced simultaneously, not successively as in the film. In these works Andreas Bunte adds text and drawing in a commentary manner to pages from mirror-image and other magazines from the 1960s and 70s, a then modern, now perhaps totally obsolete, being soon to be superseded by quotation from Guy Debord—"reference has made the world, but cannot live in it" (1967)—and becomes a statement about an entire generation. The collage technique not only refers to an early 20th-century artistic current with often directly political aims, but it also used here much as the right image is being applied to a historical context. One example is the pressure-down outline of a building, only recognizable as a second glance.

The respectivity of the installation's individual elements is variously formulated: interior shots from O.T. (Wöhring) can be understood as a commentary on the exterior in O.T. (Anatomie) (2009) (2009) (Anatomie), while the collages have a direct relationship to both films. In relation to the conspiratorial apartment the collages raise questions of authorship, as they deliberately alternate between Bunte, anonymous letter or claim of responsibility, and thus may also be interpreted as a comment on the disappearance of the author—here in a dual sense, as not only do the putative terrorists conceal their identity, the artist himself also withdraws behind his own variation. The deprofessionalization of the material here is central to the work, which according to the press release proceeded from a concrete (strategic) person. It is not only the author who dies here in Roland Barthes' sense, the unprofessional subject also loses significance, which takes the questions raised by the work onto a level that goes far beyond 1970s Germany.

In O.T. (Wöhring) the buildings are frequently shot from low angles and awaken a subtle, chilling impression. The heroically filmed response to Ernst Thälmann, for example—a former chairman of the Communist Party of Germany—strengthens and dilutes the radical message of the text fragments. The same can be said for the facial architecture of the Palazzo into Civita Italiana, whose political iconography Andreas Bunte tracks precisely in his, although without giving it any clarity. Other buildings, by contrast, give the impression of being potential targets, or can be seen as places frequented by the terrorists who live in the flat.

Andreas Bunte's previous work May the Circle Remain Unbroken (2005) also dealt in a certain way with exceptional figures (but here it is O. Thomas, the Chancellor and Frank Lloyd Wright), but the argument of Die action Tage der Gegenwart comes much more against the background of his own history, or that of momentous historical events in his home country. Although in both installations the individual is set in relation to a self-organizing group defined by strict hierarchies, and even if the reference to the hermetic circle around the architect Frank Lloyd Wright can perhaps be associated with Bunte's personal situation as a student of Gerhard Mack, with his intense interest in architectural history and strict call for allegiance. In Die action Tage der Gegenwart the ambivalent status of identification and distance is adopted by someone who is himself affected by the matter. A strange feedback mechanism comes into play that primarily results from the moral cost of the events. The apparent emotion of the awaiting lost passages in film and collage is understood by empirically objective and tabulating elements. Despite the concern the artist can be assumed to have for the history there is a marked detachment in both image and presentation. The apt group gestures of the collage and the textual inserts in O.T. (Wöhring), for example, are held in an atmosphere of reserve, which is brought about by the temporal distance evoked through language and technique (colleges: film: film). Yet the mood of the installation is hard to suspend in each both an emotional and a rational response.

All elements of the work are pervaded by the political, social and psychological significance of architecture in Die action Tage der Gegenwart and space as both theme and method. There is no loss of interior and exterior shots of buildings, and method in the installation's precisely placed text elements, which not only define a suggestive space for the collages and film, but are themselves an important part of the formal and thematic setting. The physical experience

of the installation is primarily determined by these provisional-seeming elements, which despite creating open questions, direct the reception of the film and collages. Their appearance, height, exterior, and if still under construction, underlines the effect of the collages, which also do not conceal their production process. The use of filmic film is notable in this context, too, as it not only creates the already mentioned sense of temporal distance, but also seems less immediate or further than digital images, for example. Similarly to collages, which in their very nature are a more constructed depiction of reality than photographs, digital film has a greater potential for distance and thus—despite the discussion on the manipulation of images—a greater authority than collage, which has per se a historical base. The fact that Andreas Bunte operates very precisely on the self-reflective, media-theoretical level is shown among other things by the film magazines in the apartment—they are meticulously placed, but noticeable to the careful observer. They refer on the one hand to the publication that took place at the time among terrorists such as Sabine Wimmer, Frankfurter, Alexander Kluge and Volker Schlöndorff, who in 1977 along with eight other colleagues produced their film collage Deutschland im Reich (Germany in a Reich), which investigated the relationship of the Federal Republic to the RAF terrorists. But like a reporter the magazines also dilute the medium of film by evoking a time in which digital television was as yet unimaginable.

The discussion on the status of artistic production and means of production is complicated by Andreas Bunte's deliberate blurring of the relationship between fiction and reality. In the gallery situation, documentary content and mode of exhibition are attributed to their original production of fiction, and it is precisely such breaks and inconsistencies which widen the discussion about this period of German history and take it onto an abstract level. O.T.—as Bunte put it in the writing to this text, takes from one of his collages—"the vocabulary of reality is confronted with a distance of resistance. And this can also be articulated as artistic production."

Photo installation: Die action Tage der Gegenwart (This Last Day of the Present), October 2006, Kunstlerhaus Berlin, Berlin-Museum für Moderne Kunst. The installation consists of two films (O.T. (Wöhring) and O.T. (Anatomie)), several sets of typewritten and eight collages, a film seems advisable to take look at its apparent subject matter. The background to the presentation is an interest in the German literature of the 1930s, particularly with its mirror figures, such as Margot Schuber, who was less motivated by radical political convictions than by the search for meaning and group solidarity. For her, however, underground reality largely consisted of friendship, isolation and resistance in prison, and very few high-gate questions. "So the theme of the installation is a chapter of German history that is still familiar and only barely experienced as a myth. The knowledge about it is of necessity second-hand. Yet it is understandable that someone like Andreas Bunte, who was born in Germany in 1970, would have a closer relationship to these events than someone socialized at a different time in a different country. His starting point, then, is both received and deconstructed."

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Andreas Bunte // May the Circle Remain Unbroken and other Works with Film

In his 16mm films, Andreas Bunte (*1970) "skilfully mixes facts with newly produced material, uses original source texts and invents characters (...). The production of his films is preceded by extensive research. But it is not only an interest in history that moves him: by working with the power inherent in utopian projects he makes the almost superhuman will to change society perceptible in an impressive way." Silke Hohmann, Monopol 2/2008

Andreas Bunte's artist's book was designed in the style of a film magazine of the 1960s (Film) that has become a classic because of its large-format film stills and sequences as well as its beautifully simple typography. Numerous images from Bunte's archive of research material supplement the texts, which discuss four of his film installations.

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