



Studio Prekär: Marie-Luise Lange & Jeroen Singer
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Rhythmifying Existence
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The word is incapable of breaking the pattern of identification. In the video opera *Prekaria*, when the figures begin speaking about their past under the GDR regime, a web of personal memories emerges, coupled with sensations of circumstances, modes of behavior and images of a reality that is fading away more and more all the time. If one were to consider the interview passages of the work its core, the rhythm of language with its contexts of meaning would move to the foreground. This becomes clear in the form of speaking exhibited. The two artists place their partners in conversation at the table: it has the feel of a questioning, even an interrogation. The questions are precise, exposing aspects of the socialist regime, and often target the views of the individual. Reflections refer to a reality whose legitimacy was born by a state structure that no longer exists. What remains, one would like to think, are personal fragments of memory that contradict a discourse of truth, as maintained by other state structures as well. The answers show that all forms of individual or collective memory are either too large or too small to do justice to the totality of the lived period. This totality is usually coupled to the totality of political regimes and their relationship to language as the dominant site of inscribing meaning. The questionings move in heterogeneous temporalities. On the one hand, there is the time of bodies present with their own memory. On the other hand, temporal layerings of lived inscription surface repeating with small differences forming a whole, albeit fragmentary. If these fragments of reality were tied solely to language, the identity of the subject (human and linguistic) could not be removed from the grip of the regime—of any regime.

The proximity between the past of the socialist regime and today's political regimes becomes clear in the language itself, the subject in language that grants identity and stability. The political regime here always becomes a linguistic regime and beyond that a discipline of the body. *Prekaria* has made it its task to counter language's claim to truth in memory with a different version of the reality of experience. If the interview is understood as a territorial practice that subjects memories to a rhythm of language, the musical and color aspects of the three-hour video work form a starting point for the multiplication of rhythms or signs of deterritorialization. *Prekaria* counteracts the language of memory as a dominant rhythm of identification with visual effects and with singing.

The interviewees are defamiliarized by way of video effects and become diagrammatic distorted images, charged with color intensities. These queered figures break with the seriousness of the situation, or the trained seriousness with which regimes are normally addressed. The goal is not to loosen the statements of their seriousness or to make fun of them. The distortions and intense colors add a non-merely linguistic access to the content of what is spoken and open an expanded space of perception.

By divorcing perception from the subject, the goal is to break through temporal hierarchies of the present. The same thing happens when statements about the GDR issue forth from beings that refuse a visual identity and thus tear the spoken word from the context of memory. The identification of the individual person with a



regime, even if in rejection and critique, no longer functions. There are no longer any clear references that can be divorced from the lived present and thus pretend a linearity of time. The captivating rhythm of language couples with new visual rhythms distributed across three projections to deterritorialize the clarity of statements in the sense of a linguistic regime. This does not mean that the statements are false or of no interest: quite on the contrary, *Prekaria* makes clear that we have to ask “what more there is” beyond language to avoid returning to the grasp of its regime. The effects of de-familiarization are in this case not de-familiarizations of figures that are actually clear, but refer to a diversity of forms of expression that accompany the gestures, languages, bodies, indeed a whole range of minor movements. Only on this level and not on the level of collective memory (trauma) do the more-than-linguistic dimensions of a regime become clear. They are the formations and formatings that have been inscribed in new regimes and their forms of life, not just their memory. In their obsession and perfidious inscriptions, they anticipate the future, as a strategy of repetition without difference. It is this pattern of identification that *Prekaria* counters with new rhythms.

The division of the work onto three projection surfaces dehierarchizes the gaze and at the same time opens participation from various perspectives. The rhythmification of the arrangement is expanded by the element of song. The amateur chorus sings from a never-ending list of abbreviations used by the East German secret police, the Stasi. The image of the chorus is kept gray as a relief effect, as if the chorus were resinding between the monotonous wallpaper of an interrogation room and the interior of a devotional site. The abbreviations are a coding of language unique to the regime, reduced to its symbolic significance only known to those initiated. There is something grotesque about assigning this pure form of exclusion and attribution of power to a chorus, the ultimate Dionysian element. For as the chorus, just as Nietzsche saw in Greek tragedy, seems to subvert the composure of the language, its linguistic content remains an expression of the regime. A similar multiplication of rhythms can be found in the two opera signers whose mouths are superimposed onto one another, creating a hermaphroditic dual image shaped by the singing of individual interview questions. There is no synchronization between sung question and image. Instead, the songs are the refrains of the work; they surface repeatedly, like the chorus, and yet their content becomes secondary alongside the play with pitch and infectious repetitions. Both, chorus and individual singers, break the flow of statements and add new rhythms, going to the limit of the bearable with their litany and repletion. It is almost painful to see these refrains of brief words or questions surface over and over, and yet they distinguish the work from a mere teaching piece (*Lehrstück*) of memory. In a very subtle and indifferent way, without having to be explicitly political, the video opera finds its way to a politics of perception that encloses language, but deterritorializes it again and again. Through the play with rhythms, existence becomes sensual but also temporally multiplied, opening new points of entry to reality beyond regimes of identification.