



MANON DE PAUW  
SYLVIE LALIBERTÉ  
PIPILOTTI RIST  
KATLEEN VERMEIR

November 1 – December 1, 2006

MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL  
Québec

Video made its appearance in the visual arts world over forty years ago, at a time when artistic production was becoming interdisciplinary and multimedia. Video offered artists new creative means. Right away, some began using it in a critical discourse directed toward the media culture and television, which had taken a pervasive hold in Western households; some focused on its technological aspect and its potential for manipulating the image; and a number of other artists employed video as an extension of their bodies, as a witness or partner in recording or staging a performance. < < <

In the early 1970s, when Vito Acconci filmed himself with his outstretched arm pointing at his own image on the video monitor (*Centers*, 1971), American critic Rosalind Krauss saw “configured... in that image of self-regard a narcissism so endemic to works of video,” as she wrote in the inaugural issue of *October* magazine in spring 1976, that she found herself wanting to “generalize it as *the* condition of the entire genre,” and titled her article “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism.” This strong term has remained associated with video works in which the artist performs before his or her camera. However, between the experience of self-awareness, exploration of identity and the gesture made to convey a thought, the range of performance video is vast and mixed. Somewhere between presentation and representation, in an experience of a connection to time, place and the world that is both physical and emotional, a great many artists from different backgrounds and different generations have chosen to slip into their own images. < < <

“There are those who call it narcissistic... Why not call it generous?” says Sylvie Laliberté in *Bonbons bijoux*, her first video piece, made in 1996, which she herself describes as “a very self-filmed, very narcissistic video made up of brief sequences of chatter because the truth is brief.” Originally a performance artist, she simply stepped in front of the camera to speak in an innocuous way about everything or nothing at all, with whimsy and, above all, wit. She portrays an ingenuous character — half woman, half child — who, in a succession of short tableaux, relates stories and sings in a droll yet poetic way. Laliberté adopts the intimate, private nature of video as a new narrative form. Fully knowledgeable and aware of the history of art and the critical gaze, she defuses the narcissistic trap and makes a game of it. < < <

Early in her career, Pipilotti Rist produced a series of videos in which she set out to deconstruct the aesthetic of the commercial video clip and the depiction of women in pop culture. In (*Entlastungen*) *Pipilottis Fehler*, 1988, which translates into English as (*Absolutions*) *Pipilotti's Mistakes*, she makes use of the slips and misses of the video image, such as its lines, scratches, bright colours, blurriness and shakiness, as well as of a certain saturation and dissonance of sound, combining rock music, electronic manipulation and performance. Rist suddenly appears and crumples to the ground, falling



over and over as if to physically and emotionally echo the defects in the image. The soundtrack is taken from a recording of a concert by Les Reines Prochaines, the musical group which Rist founded and performed with for several years. < < <

In *Corps pédagogique*, a work produced at the very beginning of her video explorations, Manon De Pauw starts with a definition of the term “performance” which she proceeds to write on a blackboard, as if she were giving a class on the aesthetics of performance. “The term,” she says, “applies to any artistic manifestation in which the performative act or gesture has value in itself and gives rise to a distinct aesthetic appreciation.” In her video work, Manon De Pauw seeks to establish new connections with the world, to take a position, physically and poetically, with respect to what she describes as “that vast realm of concern and questioning of the everyday.” She uses writing — the gesture of writing — as a choreographic element in the act of performing. < < <

In *Waterdrawing*, a similarly early video work, Katleen Vermeir appears drawing a line on the ground. She traces a geometric figure, fills in details, adds other marks... What is it all about? No sooner do we begin to catch on that she is outlining the plan of an apartment than the first line fades from view. The inspiration for this work came to her on a trip to China. “Early one morning, in a public park, I saw a man writing poems in Chinese calligraphy on the pavement... with water. Before the sentence was finished, his writings had already evaporated.” Vermeir took this idea home and created *Waterdrawing*, in order to “make tangible the passage of time.” She draws a room she has actually never seen, a room her boyfriend found for himself in New York and described to her in words that she also incorporates into her drawing. This was a way of keeping close to him, of silently entering his space for just a moment. The sun turns the lines in her drawing white and bright, but then the heat gradually makes them vanish into thin air. < < <

Video helps capture a sense of immediacy, a presence here and now, in real time. In *Self Portrait*, 2002, Chloe Piene catches one of those unique moments “when life gushes forth.” For 35 seconds, she bodysurfs on top of a group of young people, giving herself over to the ritual of “crowd-surfing” at rock concerts. The artist’s body is held up at arm’s length by a group of dozens of young men. “We had a spot on me,” she says, “so that my upper body would overexpose and you get a glowing, ethereal figure supported by all these metalheads.” Suspended, bathed in an intense, artificial light, she appears like an illumination in certain religious images. <

LOUISE SIMARD-ISMERT

## MANON DE PAUW

Born in 1971 in Vancouver, Manon De Pauw lives and works in Montréal. She is a graduate of Concordia University and earned an M.A. in visual and media arts from the Université du Québec à Montréal. Since 1997, her work has been presented in numerous group shows, events and festivals in Canada, Europe and Latin America, notably at the Centro Nacional de las Artes in Mexico City, in 2006; at Gallery g39 in Cardiff, Wales, in 2005; and in *Ils causent des systèmes*, at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, in 2004. She has had solo exhibitions at galleries including La Chambre Blanche in Québec City, in collaboration with Michel Laforest, in 2006; Centre d'exposition Expression in Saint-Hyacinthe, in 2005; and, in Montréal, Sylviane Poirier art contemporain, in 2004, and DARE-DARE, in 2003. Alongside her artistic practice, Manon De Pauw teaches in the Photography Department at Concordia University. <

## SYLVIE LALIBERTÉ

Born in 1959 in Montréal, where she continues to live and work, Sylvie Laliberté has been a practitioner of performance since 1985. A multi-disciplinary artist, she incorporates video, photography, printmaking, drawing and singing into her practice. A singer/songwriter as well, she has brought out two albums: *Dites-le avec des mots*, in 2000, and *Ça s'appelle la vie*, in 2004. *Bonbons bijoux*, her first video work, produced in 1996, was an award winner at the 44th *International Short Film Festival* in Oberhausen, Germany, in 1998. In addition to the City of Montréal's Louis Comtois Award, which she won in 1999, Laliberté has garnered many other honours, including the AQCC-Telefilm Canada Award in 1998 at the 16th *Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois* in Montréal for her 1997 work *Oh là là du narratif*. In 2001, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal gave her a solo exhibition, *Œuvre de politesse / Polite Art*. On the international scene, Laliberté has taken part in group exhibitions in France, Belgium and Luxembourg. <

## CHLOE PIENE

Born in Stamford, Connecticut, in 1972, Chloe Piene lives and works in New York. After graduating from Columbia University, she earned an M.F.A. from Goldsmiths College, London, in 1997. The body is often the subject of her art, both drawings and videos. Her work has been featured in such major group exhibitions as *The Armory Show*, New York, in 2006; *Nouvelles fabriques d'images et de sons*, at the Frac du Limousin in 2006; *Ars06*, at Kiasma, Helsinki, in 2006; *Masculinities*, Berlin, in 2005; and the *Whitney Biennial*, New York, in 2004. Solo exhibitions have been held at galleries including Sandroni Rey, in Los Angeles in 2005; Klemens Glasser & Tanja Grunert, in Bern in 2004 and in New York in 2003; and Profounders Gallery, Helsinki, in 2001. <

## PIPILOTTI RIST

Born in Grabs, Switzerland, in 1962, Pipilotti Rist lives in Zurich and Los Angeles. She studied at the Hochschule für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna and the Schule für Gestaltung in Basel. She started her performing career as leader of the group Les Reines Prochaines, which she founded and sang with for a number of years. Her earliest works were conceived as “video clips” in the spirit of the MTV aesthetic. Rist composed the soundtracks herself, often reinterpreting familiar tunes. She quickly developed an international reputation for her work combining music, pop culture and playful manipulations of the image. Her videos have been shown in many solo exhibitions, including one at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 2000, and at such prestigious events as the *São Paulo Bienal*, in 1994, the *Lyon Biennale*, in 1997, and the *Venice Biennale*, in 1999 (at which she won the Premio 2000 award) and 2005. <

## KATLEEN VERMEIR

Born in Bornem, Belgium, in 1973, Katleen Vermeir lives and works in Brussels. She followed up an art degree in Ghent with graduate studies in Antwerp and participation in programs at the Academy for Fine Arts in Tianjin, China, Ateliers 63 in Amsterdam and P.S. 1 in New York. From her earliest works, Vermeir revealed her interest in architecture and in recording movement in space. She has shown her work in a number of group exhibitions, among them *Freestate* at the Militair Hospitaal, Ostend, in 2006; *Paysages: Constructions et Simulations*, at Casino Luxembourg, in 2005; and *Listening to New Voices*, at P.S. 1, New York, in 2002. Her solo exhibitions include *Art Brussels*, in 2006; *The Passing of a Perfect Day*, also in Brussels, in 2005; *Cadavre exquis*, in Louvain, in 2004; and *Eindproject*, in Amsterdam, in 2001. <





## Program

This program consists entirely of works by artists from different backgrounds and generations who are also the featured players in their videos. These artists — who all happen to be women — slip into the picture to tell a story, make a gesture, draw a line, or experience an extreme or intensely poetic action.

### Sylvie Laliberté

*Bonbons bijoux*, 1996, colour video, sound, 12 min 25 s

Collection of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.

### Pipilotti Rist

*(Entlastungen) Pipilottis Fehler*, 1988, colour video, sound, 11 min 10 s

Music: Hans Feigenwinter, Les Reines Prochaines, Pipilotti Rist.

### Manon De Pauw

*Corps pédagogique*, 2001, colour video, sound, 6 min 7 s

Courtesy the artist.

### Katleen Vermeir

*Waterdrawing*, 1999, silent black-and-white video, 21 min 26 s

Courtesy the artist, Koraalberg Art Gallery, Antwerp, and Galerie Thérèse Dion, Montréal.

### Chloe Piene

*Self Portrait*, 2002, colour video, sound, 1 min 31 s

Courtesy the artist and Klemens Gasser & Tanja Grunet Gallery, New York.

This program is presented in a loop that runs approximately one hour.

We wish to thank all those who worked on producing the program, in particular Sophie Green, for her biographical research during her internship at the museum in summer 2006.

---

The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal is a provincially owned corporation funded by the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec. It also receives financial support from the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts.