



FRÉDÉRIC MOSER PHILIPPE SCHWINGER DOSSIER 1998–2004

**KOW
BRUNNENSTR 9 D-10119 BERLIN
+49 30 311 66 770
GALLERY@KOW-BERLIN.COM**



UNEXPECTED RULES
2004

The project

The script is based on the “Clinton-Lewinsky Affair”, which arose from the nexus between power, sex, and globalized media and shows how multifaceted levels of interest, along with public images, ultimately render the “true” interpretation of an event impossible. Moser & Schwinger’s version of the affair does not follow a linear storyline that is shaped by causality and rational behavior. Rather, their cinematographic and scenic adaptation of the actors’ contradictory emotions, interests, and strategies creates a complex plot that forces the viewer to accept paradoxes as a part of reality. These different layers are integrated into a popular form of representation – a cross between a TV show and puppet theater.

Artists’ statement

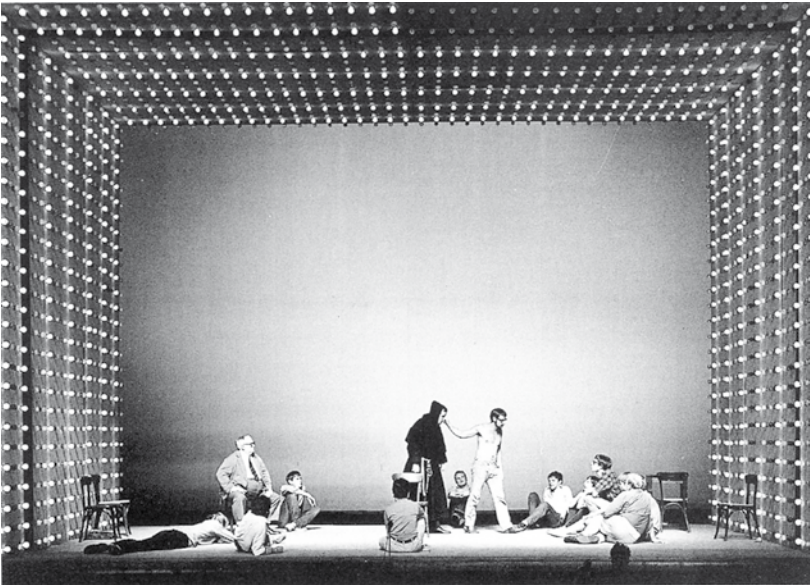
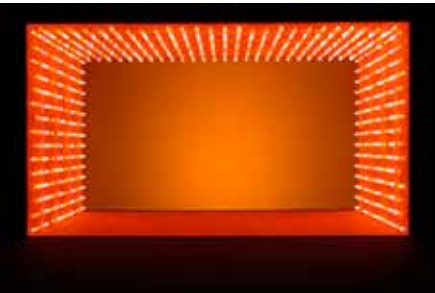
We conceived the lightbox as a place where politics stages its own performance. The fact that all protagonists are constantly on stage makes each character even more lucid. By distorting the facts in a plausible manner, we are attempting to set the characters’ spoken lines within contexts that, in the real world, exclude one another.



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Unexpected Rules, 2004

Text by Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger

Production shots at Babelsberg Film Studios,
Potsdam



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Unexpected Rules, 2004

35 mm film transferred to HDCAM
16'06 min

Lightbox; wood, metal, 1.300 coloured light
bulbs, light dimmer, projection screen
335 x 610 x 420 cm

Archive image from Maß für Maß, directed by
Peter Zadek, stage design by Wilfried Minks,
1967

Production shot at Babelsberg Film Studios,
Potsdam



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Unexpected Rules, 2004

35 mm film transferred to HDCAM
16'06 min



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Unexpected Rules, 2004

35 mm film transferred to HDCAM
16'06 min

The film was first shown at the Biennale de São Paulo 2004 as part of a video installation in which visitors enter the reconstructed film set (a wooden lightbox lined with 1,300 colored bulbs), stand very close to the projection screen, and become first-hand witnesses of the negotiations within the intimate setting of the presidential family.



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Unexpected Rules, 2004

Lightbox; wood, metal, 1.300 coloured light bulbs, light dimmer, projection screen
335 x 610 x 420 cm



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Unexpected Rules, 2004

The Puppet Version, 2004 - 2006
Puppetry; wood, wooden bulbs, projection screen, 168 x 177 x 95 cm



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
 Unexpected Rules, 2004

35 mm film transferred to HDCAM
 16'06 min

Credit Line

Unexpecte Rules
 2004

Set and video projection. Film 35 mm color
 transferred to HD video, 16'06'' min

English speaking

President (Roy): Roger Tebb
 First Lady (Heather): Ilya Parenteau
 Intern (Amanda Cook): Fernanda Farah
 Prosecutor (Jerry): Peter Cotton
 Secretary (Melinda): Katie Mullins
 Diplomat: Hans Haasis
 Daughter (Sunny): Leslie Alina Schäfer

Written, directed and edited by
 Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger

Production manager: Ulrike Mantel / Camera:
 Anne Misselwitz / Gaffer: Günter Berghaus
 Sound: Johanna Herr / Set construction: Se-
 bastian Kulisch / Costumes: Sybille Gänss-
 len-Zeit, Carola Ruckdeschel / Make-up: Ma-
 rion Greiter / 1. Camera assistant: Christoph
 Lemmen / 2. Camera assistant Marc Lontzek
 Grip: Bernhard Kühn / Sound assistant: Marc
 Witte / 2. Gaffers: Johannes Neumann, Chri-
 stof Stemmberger / Script continuity: Barbara
 Gebler / Catering: Ingo Biermann / Volun-
 teers: Lea Gryze, Paula Redlefsen / Post-pro-
 duction provided by: Schwarz Film AG, Berlin
 / Koppfilm GmbH, Berlin

Produced by: Swiss Federal Office of Culture,
 Berne, and Academy for Film and Television
 Konrad Wolf, Postdam-Babelsberg

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Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
 Unexpected Rules, 2004

Installation view





ACTING FACTS

2003

Acting Facts tells a story of a massacre that resulted in the deaths of several hundred unarmed civilians, murdered by American soldiers on the morning of 16 March 1968 in the Vietnamese village of My Lai. When the news of this bloodbath finally came out late in 1969, it caused widespread incredulity and shock. This was the first report of a war crime that had been committed by American soldiers, and even those who were violently opposed to the war in Vietnam would have never thought such an atrocity possible. In 1970, the events at My Lai were officially investigated by the Peers Panel and the findings were widely publicised and discussed. At home, the support for military action in Vietnam began to waver.

The text of Acting Facts is composed of different testimonies presented before the Peers Panel; it is an account of what happened in My Lai drawn from the public recollections of eye-witnesses and perpetrators. These memories are mediated through an actor who at times recites the text, but who also falls into acting it out, taking on the different personae – the bullying officer, or the grenadier who straightens up when addressing his superior. (...)

For Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger, theatre is not about enacting fantasies, but about the investigation of information transfer. They use theatrical form and its mediation in film as an approach to furthering knowledge about communication and about cognition. Their films concentrate on the performative aspects of introspection (...).

Moser / Schwinger work with non-narrative narratives; their films do not present a full story, they do not elaborate a linear development of one theme, but are rather elliptical and at times also decontextualised. Acting Facts therefore cannot only be seen as a film about Vietnam or about My Lai, as these places are never even mentioned in the spoken text, but as a pathology of armed conflict, as a study in dehumanisation and the methods of coming to terms with it.



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Acting Facts, 2003

Digital video, 9'40 min

Review by Axel Lapp

Credit Line

Acting Facts
2003

One channel video,
Digital video, 9'40 min

English

Performer: Roger Tebb
Camera: Frédéric Moser
Sound: Michael Grub, Tobias Schultz
Written, directed and edited by
Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger

Produced by Fine Arts Unternehmen Film AG

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Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Acting Facts, 2003

Digital video, 9'40 min



CAPITULATION PROJECT 2003



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Capitulation Project, 2003

Wooden stage in form of a wave (80 x 800 x 300 cm), wooden screen (255 x 340 cm)

16 mm black and white film transferred to Beta SP and DVD, 21'34 min

Exhibition view, Kunstraum Walcheturm, Zürich 2003

The New York-based Performance Group staged their piece *Commune* for the first time in February 1971. The play included a short scene referring to the My Lai massacre. If members of the audience refused to participate actively in what was happening on stage during this scene, the actors interrupted their performance - sometimes for as long as three hours, depending on the audience's reaction. The group experimented with several variations of the scene.

Starting with photographs of the performance and the notes of Richard Schechner, the theorist of environmental theatre, we came up with a new version of the My Lai sequence. We worked with the statements of soldiers involved in the massacre, criminal investigation reports, and contemporary articles in the press. In the process, we developed a scenario that enabled us to translate the historical documents into a form suitable for the stage.

We aimed at representing an event of war without using any of the film industry's spectacular devices. What means do we have, as ordinary citizens, to come to terms with an act of terror? We followed the trail of the Performance Group. Their attempt to create a platform for self-criticism within the context of a theatre performance motivated our dramatic intentions. For this we reconstructed the stage set of *Commune*: a wave, evoking a landscape and also functioning as an agora, and scaffolding around the stage with seating for the audience.

In 1971 the performers were inspired by rituals: they danced and they sang. We did not attempt to recreate this authenticity in our production. Although we do evoke the symbolic level of their representation, we chose to develop our play with the actors on two different levels. Each of the performers takes on a function, for example, as a reporter, but they can also intervene at any time in their own name. Thus, there is a constant back and forth between the actors and the characters they are representing. This method of dramatic framing enabled us to establish an analogy with film.

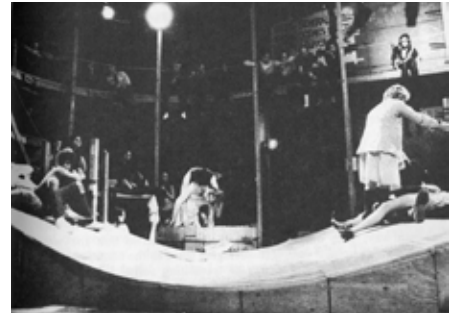
There is no live performance in *Capitulation Project*. The scene was filmed in about 30 sequences during two night shoots, with extras as a 'fake' audience. The distance from the performance that is created through the process of filming is comparable to our detachment from current political events. We intentionally moved back a few steps in time. We evoked the massacre by means of a contemporaneous artistic form in order to demonstrate that the grasp of an event of war is tied to its medial transmission.

Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Capitulation Project, 2003

Artists' statement by Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger

Archive images from "Commune" by The Performance Group, 1971

Production shots





Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Capitulation Project, 2003

Exhibition view, Kunstraum Walcheturm,
Zürich 2003

Archive image from "Commune" by The
Performance Group, 1971

Capitulation Project, film stills

The terror and the irrational dynamics of war challenge representation. One of the American traumata of the Vietnam War, the massacre of My Lai, was "staged" by the Performance Group in New York in 1971. Instead of addressing the inconceivable terror with theatrical coherence, the public was invited to interact on stage in order to create unforeseen scenarios.

Following historic documents that recall this legendary theater practice, Moser and Schwinger recreated the original stage design from 1971 and reenacted the play, but with a different methodology and a rewritten script: in their staging - performed for a 16mm film production - the usually dissociated perspectives of victims, offenders, witnesses and commentators meet their ability to coexist as theatrical representations.

"Capitulation Project", Moser and Schwinger's reaction on Iraq War II, supports Jacques Rancière's proposal that fiction does not oppose the real, but that "the real must be fictionalized in order to be thought". In their films, the Swiss artist duo uses fiction as an instrument to appropriate the real and to contribute to its public reflection and debate.



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Capitulation Project, 2003

Text by Alexander Koch

Production shot

Archive image from "Environmental Theater"
by Richard Schechner, Applause Books, 1994



Photograph 12. Eleven spectators in the Circle during the My Lai scene of *Commune*. They are waiting to see if four other spectators will join them or if the play will stop. (Frederick Eberstadt)

at My Lai. Fearless herds spectators into the circle. He plays cowhand and kicks spectators with his feet and shouts, "Get a move on, move along now!" until he gets about fifteen people inside the ten-foot-diameter circle. The interview is played as soon as the audience is settled. They are not told why they are brought into the circle or what to do after the scene is over. Some people stay in the circle until the end of the play; some



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Capitulation Project, 2003

Exhibition view, Mamco, Geneva 2008

Credit Line

Capitulation Project
2003

Set and video projection

Film 16 mm black and white transferred to video ; 21'34 min; English speaking

Performers: Steffen Boje, Jean-Theo Jost, Robert Lyons, Julie Randall / and with Birgit Asshoff, Joachim Bergmann, Arne Friedmann, Uwe Metzenthin, Eliana Salinos, Sabine Souza de Avellar Pires, Ilka Willner / Production manager: Ulrike Mantel / Camera: Stefan Runge / Sound: Johanna Herr / Gaffer: Günther Berghaus / Production Designer: Volker Rehm / Costumes: Sybille Gänsslen-Zeit / Make-up: Martin Turansky / Camera assistant: Sibylle Grunze / Sound assistants: Uli Scuda, Frederik Haupricht / Costume assistants: Mahela Rostek, Carola Ruckdeschel / Construction crew: Niels Müller, Martin Petersmann, Torsten Schimmer, Uwe Stindt, Barbara Schaefer

Written, directed and edited by
Frédéric Moser & Philippe Schwinger

Produced by Fine Arts Unternehmen Film AG
Supported by Academy for Film and Television
"Konrad Wolf" / Potsdam-Babelsberg HFF /
Bildhauerwerkstatt Berlin im Kulturwerk des
bbk Berlins GmbH / das werk novalisstrasse,
Berlin

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Exhibition view, Württembergischer Kunstverein,
Stuttgart, 2002

INTERNMENT AREA
2002



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Internment Area, 2002

Archive images from Theater of Psychodrama,
Beacon NYC, 1960

Exhibition view Kunstmuseum PasquArt, Biel

Circular stage; wood, mahogany wood, metal,
358 x 800 x 700 cm

Digital video, 28'18 min

Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Internment Area, 2002

Artists' statement by Frédéric Moser and
Philippe Schwinger

The starting point of "Internment Area" is the therapeutic technique of the psychodrama, which was developed by Jacob L. Moreno in the 1930s. In its clinical application we try to discover the leading signs which have become one of the most important parameters of today's media production: The spread of intimacy in a spectacular dispositive.

The basis for the artistic work is the replica of Moreno's conceptual design of the scenic area. Through maximal visibility, free spaces, and the sparse usage of Helping objects, the stage is characterized by chairs and a mattress. The signs of an architecture which has extracted much from the 19th century and at the same time foreshadows the TV studios of the 70s shall be made visible. In this dispositive, a group of five protagonists portray a meeting according to the role playing technique constructed on the basis of real meeting protocol. The meeting was filmed with five actors and lasted 28 minutes. The video focuses on a boy who has fled a boarding school and has been caught. Now, a team of therapists is supposed to help him to work out his conflict situation. His mother accompanies him. At first only taking part in the meeting as an observer she nevertheless becomes involved in the play and enters the stage. In the corner of the stage is the director who functions as the preferred contact person of the protagonists. He asks questions, stimulates the play, and initiates the emotional outbursts. He is surrounded by two helping egos of the patient who take on the same attitude as he in order to express that, which he hardly dares to express.

In contrast to a conventional production in which the director the predetermined text and the parts clearly distributes, the actor directly becomes the author of his own fate, a situation which today is regularly exploited by TV entertainment. This is the technique of the confession. Because the architectural dispositive (scantiness, visibility by 360°) and the human dispositive (the players divide the two stabilizing modes of operation of authority among themselves, that is to say the mode of the director and that of the helping ego) are so conceived, that the patient has no other alternatives but to compromise himself, to tell and to show what he does, feels and projects in intimacy. The stage is available for his emancipation to feel and function better in his life. From then on the subjective story becomes material for the drama.

The large 1300 qm hall of the Wuerttemberg Art Society has led us to this project through its inherent utopia, its minimalism of the 60s, and its coercing materialism (square room of 36x36m without any opening besides the entrance door). The claustrophobic aspect which is explicitly reproduced in the film unexpectedly becomes apparent in this room. This is how the hall is reflected in its locked in state. The fragment of outdated theater architecture becomes the wonder of the modernistic ideal, which results in just such an exhibition hall. With this installation the dimension of the spectacular becomes logic with implicit regulations which we concentrate in this huge one eyed room in order to compress its occlusion.



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Internment Area, 2002

Digital video, 28'18 min



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Internment Area, 2002

Digital video, 28'18 min



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Internment Area, 2002

Digital video, 28'18 min

Credit Line

Internment Area
2002

Set and video projection
Digital video, colour, 28'18 min

German speaking with English subtitles

Performers: Jan-Sandro Berner, Lou Bertalan, Angelika Fink, Sefanie Ströbele, Johann Zürner
Production manager: Holger Lund
Camera & Sound: Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Costumes: Sybille Gänsslen-Zeit
Construction crew: Martin Lenz, Ernst Ludwig, Gerhard Fauser, Hermann Fellinger, Anton Schmidt
Written, directed and edited by Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger
Produced by Academy Schloss Solitude, Württembergischer Kunstverein
Supported by MGF Filmförderung Baden-Württemberg, Pro Helvetia, Fondation Nestlé pour l'art

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Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Internment Area, 2002

Exhibition view, Württembergischer Kunstverein,
Stuttgart 2002

Stage set



AFFECTION RIPOSTE 2001



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Affection Riposte, 2001

Digital video, 5'17 min



Credit Line

Affection Riposte
2001

Set and video projection
Digital video, colour, 5'17 min

German speaking with English subtitles

Written, directed and edited by
Frédéric Moser & Philippe Schwinger

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Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
Affection Riposte, 2001

Opening Night, John Cassavetes, 1978

Exhibition view Akademie Schloss Solitude,
Stuttgart, 2002

Exhibition view Centre PasquArt, Biel, 2004





L'hallali, 1998

VIDEOS 1998–2000



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger

Low Song, 2000
Digital video, 6'19 min



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger

Low Song, 2000
Digital video, 6'19 min



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger

Tout ce chagrin, 2000
Double video projection, 3'46 min, loop



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger

Tout ce chagrin, 2000
Double video projection, 3'46 min, loop



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger

Ah! Jeunesse, 1999
Digital video, 3 min, loop



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger

Ah! Jeunesse, 1999
Digital video, 3 min, loop



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger

Champ de courses, 1999
Digital video, 3'07 min



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger

Champ de courses, 1999
Digital video, 3'07 min



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger

L'hallali, 1998
Digital video, 4'18 min



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger

L'hallali, 1998
Digital video, 4'18 min



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger

L'hallali, 1998
Digital video, 4'18 min



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger

Un fond de vérité, 1998
Production shot



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger

Un fond de vérité, 1998
Digital video, 3 min



Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger

Un fond de vérité, 1998
Digital video, 3 min

Frédéric Moser and Philippe Schwinger were born in Saint-Imier, Switzerland, in 1966 and 1961. They start their artistic collaboration in 1988, directing the independent theatre company „l'atelier ici et maintenant“ in Lausanne until 1993. Between 1993 and 1998 they study in the class of Silvie and Chérif Defraoui at the Ecole Supérieure d'Art Visuel, Geneva. Between 1998 and 2000 they win consecutely the Swiss Art Award. Residencies at Schloss Solitude Stuttgart in 2001 and at the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Warsaw in 2003 follow. In 2002 they move to Berlin. They represent Switzerland at the Biennale de São Paulo 2004.

Frédéric Moser, Philippe Schwinger
1998–2010

Design: Alexander Koch

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KOW, Berlin, 2011

