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NOVEMBER 18 – DECEMBER 16

ROD DICKINSON IN COLLABORATION WITH STEVE RUSHTON: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY AND HOW



Location: Hoffman Library Reading Room, Stevenson Library

When: Wednesday, November 18, 2009 - Wednesday, December 16, 2009

A simulated governmental press briefing on the subject of war is presented simultaneously as video and script. Footage of two figures—one presidential and the other military—delivering the briefing within a meticulously constructed press conference set is displayed alongside a scrolling teleprompter that provides the recited text. *Who, What, Where, When, Why and How* interrogates the historical role of government press briefings in the materialization of certain political realities.

The script is composed solely of fragments of press statements actually delivered over the past thirty years, broadcast by numerous governments across continents. Sources range from Lyndon B. Johnson or Tony Blair to Slobodan Milosovic or Saddam Hussein, yet the terms used throughout seem strikingly consistent. The text focuses on the way speech acts and political rhetoric have been used since the era of the Cold War as the primary tool to rationalize acts of state-sanctioned violence.

The recurring structure of the script leads from a declaration of peaceful intentions through the urgency of a perceived threat necessitating war to the proclamation of imminent victory. Hence logic is projected in a loop that revolves around the claim that maintaining peace is predicated on preemptive war. The dramatic use of language matters here in the most concrete way. The effect of this looped logic is that war seems inevitable. The script emphasizes both the historical recurrence of this logic and its appearance as a “natural” course of history by presenting a version of the narrative for each season: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter.

Who, What, Where... makes visible the ways in which the governing of morale via the media has become a foundation of contemporary democracy. “Democratic warfare” can only be legitimated by enlisting public opinion in a continuous contract with the aims of war. Being shown for the first time, it is presented in Bard College’s Stevenson Library in a reading room that also houses the Hannah Arendt Collection on the upper level, and thus provides a context resonating with the urgency of thinking about power and politics.

In conjunction with *Who, What, Where, When, Why and How* Dutch artist **Wendelien van Oldenborgh** presented her film *Instruction* (2009) on November 18 at the Avery Film Center. Both projects revolve around scripts about war, composed of excerpts from historical sources. In both cases, detours through the past serve as means for re-evaluating the present. The artists, however, each utilize their script in a very different way. In *Who, What, Where...* the performance of the script allows a structural analysis of the mechanisms by which acts of war are repeatedly presented as inevitable political scenarios. In *Instruction* the

performance of the script delivers a point of entry into different perspectives and ideological scenarios embedded in the historical material, and opens these up for renewed negotiation.

BEYOND THE WHITE CUBE

This twofold project is organized by curator in residence Anke Bangma, and is the first of a new *Beyond the White Cube* program at CCS Bard. For *Beyond The White Cube* four curators associated with CCS Bard organize projects with the same resources made available to second-year graduate students for their thesis projects. The projects all take place outside of the museum's galleries in order to encourage endeavors that apply the curatorial beyond exhibition space-proper. Tirdad Zolghadr, Ana Paula Cohen, and Christina Linden will realize forthcoming *Beyond the White Cube* projects in 2010.

Anke Bangma's residency is made possible through a partnership with the Fonds Voor Beeldende Kunsten, a non-profit arts initiative based in Amsterdam.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Rod Dickinson is an artist based in London. His projects include *The Game of War* (2007); *Greenwich Degree Zero* (with Tom McCarthy, 2005-06); *Nocturn: The Waco Re-enactment* (2004); *The Milgram Re-enactment* (2002); *The Air Loom* (2002); *The Jonestown Reenactment* (2000). Recent exhibitions include *Performing Evidence*, SMART Project Space, Amsterdam, 2009; *The Return of Religion and Other Myths*, BAK, Utrecht, 2008-09; *History Will Repeat Itself*, HMKV, Dortmund & KunstWerke, Berlin, 2007-08; *The Air Loom and Other Dangerous Influencing Machines*, Prinzhorn Institute, Heidelberg, 2007. He is Senior Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of West England.

Steve Rushton is a writer and editor based in Rotterdam. He is co-founder (with Emily Pethick, David Reinfurt and Marina Vishmidt) of the research group *Signal: Noise*, which investigates the prevalence of notions of feedback in contemporary culture.

Wendelien van Oldenborgh is an artist based in Rotterdam. Her projects include *Après la reprise, la prise* (2009); *No False Echoes* (2008); *Maurits Film* (2008), *Maurits Script* (2006), *The Basis for a Song* (2005); *Polyphonic Stage* (2005). Recent exhibitions include the *Istanbul Biennial* (2009); *Contour*, Mechelen (2009); *The Demon of Comparisons*, Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (2009); *Wendelien van Oldenborgh: As Occasions*, TENT, Rotterdam (2008); *Sao Paulo Biennial* (2008); *Be(com)ing Dutch*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2008); *Lecture/Audience/Camera*, MuHKA, Antwerp (2008).

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