

On Estate, Boris Buden

In "Estate" Komarov follows the traces of desire, value and estate; he observes the mythical transfigured ideas of mines at the Ural to go further to the heterotopian space of the Frankfurter stock market, followed by shots of art collections of two banks to end up with an overview of the cityscape of Yekaterinburg and Frankfurt. Both works are filmed with a reserved view on the subjects and offers the viewer space to think about all the different incorporations of power, labor and estate, to reflect about the daily impact of such manifestations and our own position within these various compositions. The films could be seen as essays about who is in charge, who is in and out, who awakes desires, who knows and owns without explaining, judging or commenting it.

- Renate Wagner

As we then enter the Frankfurt Stock Exchange in Komarov's "Estate" we found desublimates reality in its everyday banality. In the very place where capitalist means of production take on their most sublime form, as a trade in shares, Komarov chooses to focus on the simply terrestrial: the stock brokers sit in front of screens and chew their sandwiches, a TV journalist prepares for her live stock market report, a monotone noise signals the constant changing of numbers on the large display board etc., in short, a not particularly exciting atmosphere.

But where there's so much money to be found, art can't be far away. And, sure enough, in the neighbourhood of the stock exchange in Frankfurt we find the Deutsche Bank - world famous, not lastly, for its art collection. Art has been collected here for years, and collected under the concept: "Art at Work". This is taken to mean "Art in the Workplace", which literally means that the collected art works decorate the working spaces of this financial institution, and in doing so, as it is typically believed, can somehow refine a dry, bureaucratically alienating working atmosphere. We could choose to believe that the role of art in the work place is to impart a sublime dimension to the essentially rational and pragmatic working with money, to, as it were, elevate it artistically from the dirt of reality. Exactly the opposite is the case.

It was exactly this artistic redesigning of the work place, this "going artistic", which was viewed at the time by Herbert Marcuse, in, for instance, *One Dimensional Man*, as an example of what he called repressive desublimation. Art doesn't enter the work place in order to breathe soul into it, and thus refine it. Instead, art wants to aesthetically sensualise it, to affectively charge it. Art wants to make working sexy. Why? To extend the control over the working body. It is art that now takes over the old assignment of rationalisation and standardisation, which industrial modernism once used to kick off its historical boom. Instead of engineers like Taylor, it is art that is mobilized to increase productivity, or, in other words, to increase the efficiency of exploitation. / But here, Aleksander Komarov also takes it a step further. In "Estate" he brings to our attention a further "progression", which Deutsche Bank has in the meantime made in its conception of art collecting. The company no longer calls its collection "Art at Work", but "ArtWorks". Although the difference might not sound so dramatic - from one ambiguity: "art in the workplace" or "art while working" to another: "works of art" or "art works" - it explicitly marks the transition to a post-industrial and post-Fordist method of production. Art can now really work, and not just stimulate and monitor the working process from the outside. Art is no longer there to make working with money more efficient, it makes money itself. The same thing can be said for the sublime. It has also become a worker. The first part of Komarov's "Estate" undeniably evokes in us an experience of the sublime, and this in the Kantian sense: it is images of nature - the opencast mines in the Urals - which create the feeling of vastness and boundlessness. It is a vision of the inexhaustibility of natural resources, in this case, the natural reserves in the Urals, and, taken still further, of the

boundlessness of nature itself, which is communicated to us by these images; in other words, exactly that feeling of exaltation, of the sublime, as defined by Kant. In addition to this, Komarov documents - to use another Kantian concept - subjective awareness, which goes beyond the sensual to attain the realm of ideas: in the transcendence of nature - in its boundlessness, which both implies the inevitability of the industrial exploitation of natural resources and provides it with ideological legitimacy - people have found their authentic world to work and live in. In other words, it is their identity, a soul breathed in from their reality.

Boris Buden, from the book 'Aleksander Komarov - Estate'