

BODY MISSING, 1994, Toronto, Linz.

Vera Frenkel

Single channel compilation dub of video components of six-channel text/photo/video work installed originally at the Offenes Kulturhaus, Linz, Austria. This tape is accompanied by a printed narrative.

Running Time, six parts, six minutes each; 36 minutes total.
Colour and B/W. English and German with English sub-titles

Body Missing, based on a casual conversation overheard in a bar, is a work that seems to be about the fetishistic art-collecting practices of the Third Reich. Situated between documentary and fiction in such a way that each interrogates the other, Body Missing draws on both historical and current sources: The many contradictory lists of the works of art "collected", shipped, stored, but somehow gone; endless identification numbers; transcripts of interrogations from Spandau prison; Canadian and Austrian radio news reports; recent footage of art crates in the basement of the Akademie in Vienna; and, as a metaphorical thread, the monument to the Plague (Pestsau) in the main square of Linz, site of Hitler's first public speech to the citizens of his hometown after the Anschluss.

From the many conversations the barkeeper overhears at the Transit Bar, two contradictory narratives persist: indications of growing neo-Nazi activity in town, and a quiet plan by certain artists who have each chosen from the list of missing artworks one in particular to reconstruct, as an homage or Trauerarbeit and labour of love.

The text which accompanies the tape is in the voice of the barkeeper at the itinerant Transit Bar now located in Linz, the boyhood home of Adolf Hitler, and site of the Fuehrermuseum, his dream-plan for the largest and most important museum in Europe. Destined for this Museum and hidden in the salt-mines nearby, were immense caches of works of art plundered by the Nazis throughout Europe. Many of these works have now disappeared. Body Missing traces through this absence the shadows of others.

It should perhaps be mentioned that what was originally a casual overheard conversation overheard is now proving disconcertingly true. The new works are actually being made. Some of the artists: Robert Adrian, Joanna Jones, Alice Mansell, Bernie Miller, Piotr Nathan, Daniel Olson ...

Body Missing forms part three of the Transit Bar project on displacement, identity and loss. Part One, ... from the Transit Bar was installed at documenta IX in Kassel (1992) and at The Power Plant in Toronto (1994/5). Part Two, Raincoats, Suitcases, Palms, was installed at the Art Gallery of York University (1993). Catalogues are available for both exhibitions.