



Video Installation 'YOU'
By Kim Engelen

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More info: www.kimengelen.com/YOU

Commentary on Kim Engelen's videos YOU (from the Series: Words don't come easy),

Three portraits face us in three identical screens. We are put to pay attention to a multiplicity of voices that echo one another like mutually exclusive conditions that persist by themselves and are only united in us. Everything that is experienced is experienced by one self, and part of its meaning is that it belongs to the unity of this self and thus contains an unmistakable and irreplaceable relation to the whole of this one life. And yet... all these people, all these different people repeating the same thoughts draws us away from the obsessive focus on the individual psychical experience, feeling the claims of the social pressing upon us.

None of them is an English native speaker and yet they all feel at ease reflecting in the global language, interpreting a text and being recorded in the same white space, keeping silence at the same lapse; understanding is within reach... translation is possible! And yet, they repeat the "same" text, at their own pace and with their own tones. We are immediately attracted by the difference that comes from repetition as in Borges' Pierre Menard who aimed to write the Quixote not by simply writing out passages from the existing text but by creating a new work that just so happens to coincide with the original one. In the same fashion Engelen walks at the border of authorship by allowing their subjects a loose end in the input of this work.

Even though the text may seem identical it would seem that if we take into account the aims and backgrounds of each individual the idiomatic elements come to the forefront. Indeed the room is filled at intervals with a cacophony that goes deeper than sound. The persons on the screen, their thoughts and gestures their differing backgrounds create a visual dissonance that tells a story about their context, one which cannot be understood locally for these global citizens may feel at home in the gate of an airport as much as under the neon lights of a 24 hour mini-market while at the same time deal with the limits their passports might set on their identity. Equal among unequal persons find a common place where they convey a message of the very reasoned intransitivity and cyclic thoughts that characterize our moments of doubt where we affirm our identity in relation to our fears and expectations. "I am here, but I want to go over there." It is desire that motivate us, the forbidden fruit is sweet. These persons talking to the camera with their own accent could well be standing at the waiting room with a heavy conscience. Are they about to depart or are they waiting for someone? Do they notice the person right next to each other goes through the same thoughts? The repetitiveness of these thoughts gives a sense of sacredness to the ordinary. Engelen's narrative care balances on portraying an intimate sense of personhood with positive and negative emotions while using these basic elements to suggest a much wider picture.

Where is the difference the videos portray with so many commons and some other randoms? Perhaps YOU emphasizes metabolisms, processes we fall upon to maintain ourselves, to keep on in a struggle for self-recognition at several degrees of freedom. Chances are more than the two sides of a coin, but it can also be that sometimes the coin falls always on the same side, as if the other side had been cut off and the decision has been taken. Kim Engelen's YOU creates bridges between the economy of one's very own fears and desires and the modern economy where click acts debunk speech acts and our most humane hopes are under constant siege and perhaps, whether huge or tiny, that is what makes them even stronger.

René Fidel Lazcano.