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TITLE

Der Standpunkt der Aufnahme
Point of View

“Der Standpunkt einer Aufnahme ist bereits eine Stellungnahme zur Sache” – “Placing the camera means to have already taken a position on the cause,” Zurich video activists wrote in a text grappling with their role in the confrontation between the youth movement and the police in the “hot summer” of 1980. The article is an after-the-fact reflection on the activists’ own conduct on the streets and on the ways in which it changed during and because of the events. The authors are trying to come to grips with the ambivalent effects of holding a camera, of being observers, participants and representatives all at the same time. The unresolved physiognomy of this text informed an ongoing program, titled “Der Standpunkt der Aufnahme – Point of View”, which was launched at the cinema Arsenal in Berlin in October 2010 and is dedicated to the diversity with which artists and activists work politically with film and video today.

The book by the same title, edited by Tobias Hering and published by Archive Books in collaboration with Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art, is a direct outcome of the regular cinema sessions. It aims to extend and perpetuate a debate whose urgency, while bearing on constantly changing technical conditions and shifts in media agency, has never lost momentum. Contributions by artists and film makers participating in the program represent a variety of aesthetic and intellectual styles as well as different approaches to the questions at stake: *What does it mean to work politically with film and video today, what does it entail, and what does it presuppose? How is the subjectivity of an artistic practice made to act and intervene in the political sphere?*

SERIES

Projects

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The emergence of the book mirrored the *carte blanche* approach to the cinema program, letting the authors choose on which aspect of their work they would elaborate and in which form. The outcome is a compendium of highly original contributions, ranging from theoretical texts and project diaries to visual essays and interviews, which are all nevertheless connected through their common concerns, their contemporaneity and their shared reference to the ongoing cinema program. Where the latter regularly includes films from the repertoire of political cinema, the book features an eclectic selection of republished older texts from the 1970's to the recent past, including three essays by Serge Daney and the aforementioned text by the "Videoladen Zürich" collective, all printed in English for the first time. A further occasion of a cross-generation dialogue is the transcript of a three-day interview with Jean-Marie Straub conducted by Elke Marhöfer and Mikhail Lylov in spring 2013 and published here for the first time.

One must search and search until one finds what you refer to as the "point of view," and then the subject matter comes into being. In the same way as when one wants to film a village, one needs to know the spot from where to do that. This phrase, "Standpunkt der Aufnahme", "the viewpoint of the take", bothered me. The take is the result, and the viewpoint is what one searches for in order to achieve that result. And that involves driving around the village a lot, going up and then going down until one finds that spot from where one can simply see something. Where one sees something. It's important to repeat that. And then one discovers that in a village the search often ends where the water tower stands, for needless to say the water tower's location isn't arbitrary. It is placed exactly on that spot where water can be fed to the entire locality. And the standpoint from where the locality can be supplied with water just also happens to be the filmmaker's standpoint, who is likewise attempting to show an entirety.

—Jean-Marie Straub in conversation with Elke Marhöfer
and Mikhail Lylov, February 2013.

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