

Stories Die Hard

By James Pei-Mun Tsang

Stories Die Hard considers three videos in view of political theater. Bertolt Brecht said, "Theater remains theater, even when it is didactic theatre; and if it is good theater it will entertain." There are a variety of activities that incorporate this kind of approach regardless if its stakes are professed to be political. I am more interested in the effect of engagement, if it serves as a means to categorical demands, or simply makes a mockery of our ideals by complication.

Let's keep our definition of theater open. Any event of collective production is an arena of potential drama—manifest, for example, as a story, a mission; a community. Theatricality can reveal itself through the act of documentation, or the excesses of pedagogy. To read self-organization as a narrative is to address the ways that we express (perhaps to extremity) the demands of the group.

Political theater evokes a historically instructive practice. Here, these videos persist with the political as a kind of engagement. The results are more particular: the effect of what stuck after incantation; the evolution of more than a decade of practice; the ingenuous or faithful conclusion, depending on how you view it. Think of engagement as a combative process, without necessarily an end goal. This process is not scripted by



Math Bass
Chickens' Feed (2002)
RT: 03'28
Courtesy the artists



The Radek Community
Manifestations (2002)
RT: 05'43
Courtesy the artists



Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn
Homer (2006)
RT: 07'43
Courtesy the artists and Elizabeth Dee Gallery, NY

pragmatism, yet is driven by palpable investment. This kind of theatrical movement has potential for both agenda and for revelation.

Math Bass' *Chickens' Feed* is a sacrificial performance. Materials include chickens, news paper, a cape, chicken feed and a ladder. Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn's *Homer*: lois, on shooting high. And in *Manifestations* by The Radek Community, the artist group surreptitiously integrate themselves in large group of pedestrians (who are simply waiting to cross the streetlight in a busy street in Moscow), pull some banners out ("Another World is Possible" and "One Solution is Revolution"), and transform the documentation of this daily walk of pedestrians into an image of a demonstration.

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ART IN GENERAL

79 Walker Street, New York, NY 10013
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Gallery Hours
Tuesday-Saturday , 12-6pm

Founded in 1981 in Lower Manhattan, **Art in General** is a nonprofit organization that assists artists with the production and presentation of new work. It changes in response to the needs of artists and engages the public with their work. In 25 years, the organization has emerged as one of New York City's leading nonprofits devoted to supporting and stimulating the creation of contemporary art, providing an environment in which artists can exhibit unconventional work and exchange ideas with their peers. Art in General has exhibited the work of nearly 5,000 artists working across a wide range of media.

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The 8th Annual Video Marathon is organized by Art in General. Thanks to the guest curators and the participating artists. And special thanks to Chris Reitz, curatorial intern, who was the program coordinator and brochure designer. – Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy, curator, Art in General

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Matthieu Laurette
Apparition: The Today Show, NBC, 31 December 2004 (2004)
RT: 02'
Edition 3, II a.p.
Courtesy Matthieu Laurette and Yvon Lambert Paris/New York

January 14–February 18, 2006

8th annual video marathon // not a marathon, just a traffic jam

This year's video marathon is organized as a series of guest-curated exhibitions of single channel video works co-existing for five-weeks at Art in General's Gallery 4. The guest curators, who Art in General invited for the first time, were asked to consider interesting artists and strong video works new to New York City audiences. In addition, *With A Special Appearance By* includes a video by Matthieu Laurette selected by Art in General's curator, Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy. This video, which is presented in the building's lobby, is part of the artist's larger body of work known as *Appearances*, where the artist 'makes his way' into popular TV programs or stages special appearances in the public domain.

China Works

Chen Chieh-Jen, Yuk King Tan, Cao Fei, Lin Yilin, Mia Ou, and Cedric Maridet
Curated by Tobias Berger

Neighborhood of Make Believe

Werther Germondari, Saki Satom, and Ruti Sela and Ma'ayan Amir
Curated by Michael Connor

Stories Die Hard

Math Bass, Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn, and The Radek Community
Curated by James Pei-Mun Tsang

With A Special Appearance By

Matthieu Laurette