Texts about the videos shown on the eBoard and in the media library

VIDEO CITY.BS

"LONELINESS"

May 28 – August 11
8 videos by Sylvie Boisseau & Frank Westermeyer, Gregory Buchert, Dimension émotionnelle, Paul Heintz, Luzia Hürzeler, František Klossner, Theres Liechti, Elodie Pong are screened daily from 8:00–24:00 in between the regular messages shown on the **Congress Center Basel eBoard** Messeplatz 21 next to Swissôtel Le Plaza

Furthermore they will be shown from Monday till Friday 10:00 –13:00 on the screen in the **Mediathek, FHNW** Academy of Art and Design, 8th floor, Freilager-Platz 1

May 28 – June 26
videocity.bs window at **GLOBUS Basel** created by the artists Sylvie Boisseau & Frank Westermeyer from 8:00–24:00 Marktplatz 2

June 27 – August 11
A huge site-specific installation by Sebastian Mundwiler on the e-boards and LED facade of the **City Lounge,** Messeplatz

8 Videos on the eBoard Congress Center Basel (without their soundtrack) and in Mediathek FHNW (with sound; two-thirds of them have sound)

Sylvie Boisseau & Frank Westermeyer
"Flagman", 2004
2:10 Min., without sound (*videocity.bs* version)

Gregory Buchert
"L'éclaireur", 2015
9 Min., with sound

Dimension Émotionnelle
"Somniloquie du perroquet", 2012
52:04 min., sound (on the eBoard a 10 min. videocity.bs version without sound is shown)

Luzia Hürzeler
"Die Forelle" (The trout), 2012
7:45 Min., with sound (*videocity.bs* version, 1 channel, 16:3, Split Screen)

Paul Heintz
"Le Soldat", 2011
4:30 Min., without sound

Frantiček Klossner
"Mess up Your Mind", 2001/04
4 Min., with sound

Theres Liechti
"Superwoman", 2017
4:19 Min., without sound

Elodie Pong
"180 degree", 2016
2:30 Min., without sound

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**Sylvie Boisseau & Frank Westermeyer**
"Flagman", 2004
2:10 Min., without sound (*videocity.bs* version)

Chicago, Summer 2004: a man with a red flag stands on the side of a paved road – at first glance, he looks like a Formula One official. But on closer view, one notices that the man has set himself up in front of a parking area. It looks as if he's regulating traffic with the flag. He looks right, then left, then right again, lifts the flag and lets it drop with a quick, decisive movement. He makes a sideways gesture as if he wants to grant someone the right of way. He gives the stop sign as soon as he notices that one of the cars driving by is braking. He hails another car's acceleration and confirms the driver's correct behavior with three fast moves of the flag.

It doesn't take much to understand that the young man is not controlling traffic, but rather that the cars that surround him are manipulating him. He seems to be determining their maneuvers, but in reality he's commenting on them. He's a meaningless figure on the margins of what's happening, a commentator without an audience.

Julia Draganović
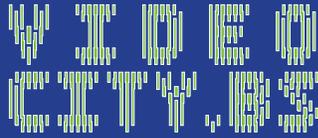
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Gregory Buchert
L'éclaireur (the scout) 2015
HD video with sound
9:20 min.

The video "L'éclaireur" (the scout) can be read as a filmic parable. A naked man exposes clothes in a river and hands them over to their fate of drifting downstream. The camera follows the mysterious journey and shows how the suit usually glides with its legs first through the sometimes narrower, sometimes wider riverbed, past meadows and rocks, over stones and rapids. It is a special garment – a one-piece consisting of a blue top and red trousers. This suit seems to be made for his swimming on the water surface, where he assumes the form of a "dead man", equally uninvolved and passive. But he seems to be awakened to new life by the waves.

Gregory Buchert does not confine himself to a mere mystical resurrection in idyllic nature. The colourful, flat suit combination quotes Henri Matisse's cut-outs made since the 1940s, with which the old master once again trod a new, groundbreaking path. The role of the "scout" mentioned in the title can be assigned differently: It refers to Henri Matisse. It also refers to the blue-red clothing gliding through the water, which becomes the personification for modernity: spiritual being, without real corporeality, pure colour surface and line, detached from a background. And last but not least, the young man at the very beginning of the video, standing bare in the riverbed, could also be the "scout". Perhaps it is even the artist himself who dares to venture into the unknown and provides the impetus with the video?

The video can thus be understood as a parable about the process of artistic creation and the flow of thoughts. There is a departure, a development, but never an arrival.

Andrea Domesle (translation: Andrea Domesle, corrected by Christopher Haley Simpson)
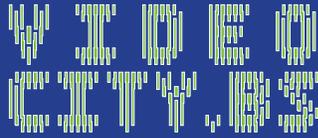
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Dimension Émotionnelle
"Somniloquie du perroquet", 2012
52:04 min., sound (on the eBoard a 10 min. *videocity.bs* version without sound is shown)

The title of the video refers to an act within language in which no interpersonal communication takes place. Somniloquie means to talk in your sleep. The people concerned are not aware of this when they are awake. The parrot mentioned in the title is the only bird with the ability to imitate words and sentences.

The compositions of strange and fragile objects that we see in the video could be described as still lifes, symbolizing absurd communication situations. These particular objects are waste that the artists found in the immediate vicinity of their studio. The materials are wood, wire, foam, plastic. It is very rare that a piece can be assigned to a specific purpose, such as a part of some sunglasses or a fragment of a hair band

The assemblages which appear to quote works by avant-garde artists, rotate on a green disc around their own axis. This mode of presentation imitates that of luxury products, whose importance is increased as a result. Such an increase in meaning thanks to the spin is only partially successful with the objects assembled by the artist group . Circonvolution also creates a feeling of vertigo. Small objects seem to dissolve optically. The spherical, which tries to seduce, also contributes to the confusion of the senses. The recently found objects, seized up by the artists before they could be destroyed, are difficult to ascertain or even to classify for the spectators. They can still acquire a new meaning, since one is quickly replaced by the other. The process of dissolution, agglutination and defilement seems to be the inevitable fate of the waste of civilization. "Sleep talking parrot" is like a swan song to civilization, a dance of death on garbage.

The curators chose this work for the fair's electronic billboard because, on the one hand, the theme of "loneliness" is reflected in these strange objects. On the other hand, the assemblages contrast starkly with the beautiful and colourful products that are represented on the screen advertisements. The fact that the video uses methods from the advertising world, such as the turntable or the brightly coloured background, adds to the particular aspect of the assemblages.

The title "Sleep talking parrot" linguistically represents a pleonasm or tautology, i. e. the same thing is said again with a significant expression, by which a semantic redundancy is created with duplication or unnecessary accumulation – or a chimera of the fantastic.

Andrea Domesle (translation: Andrea Domesle, corrected by Christopher Haley Simpson)

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Luzia Hürzeler
"The trout", 2012
7:45 min., with sound (*videocity.bs* version, 1 channel, 16:9, split screen)

The trout, 2012, 4 3, 2 channel installation on 2 pedestals

"The Trout" is a synchronized video installation consisting of two cubic monitors standing next to each other on pedestals, on each of which one video is shown. One screen shows my life-size portrait in front of a white background. The other screen shows a life-size trout swimming in the water against an identical background. In the course of the video the trout is drained of water, while on the other video I am flooded with water. The fish has less and less water to swim in, its space to move becomes scarcer and scarcer until it is dry for a short moment. He struggles at the bottom of the empty pool, while I hold my breath under water on the other monitor. After the water reaches the top of the screen, it starts to sink again as the empty monitor from the trout fills up with water again. I gasp for air and the trout resumes its swimming motion.

Luzia Hürzeler (translation: Andrea Domesle, corrected by Christopher Haley Simpson)

videocity.bs version, 1 channel, 16:9, split screen

"The Trout" video is shown on the eBoard of the Congress Center Basel, following the suggestion of the curators, as a splitscreen, meaning the two video images are mounted side by side in a 16: 9 format and run instantaniously in parallel. This allows a direct comparison of how the water level rises on one side while falling on the other, bringing either the woman and the fish into danger or else bringing both continued life.

The split screen composition blends in very well with the architectural structure of the Congress Center Basel and picks up on the aquarium-like impression of the glass surfaces in the hotel interior. According to the artist, these are "made perceptible in a different way".

Andrea Domesle (translation: Andrea Domesle, corrected by Christopher Haley Simpson)

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Paul Heintz
"Le Soldat", 2011
4:30 Min., silent

Paul Heintz's camera focuses on the face of a young soldier. His gaze is continuously directed off-camera. He looks to his right at something in the distance. Little by little, tears appear timidly on his face - but nothing explains the cause. The man tries to keep his eyes fixed, to keep his head still. Does he sniff to hold back his tears or is this a sign of his inner state? He does not wipe his tears as if his task is to always look in the same direction, without gestures, without expressions. Only once he turns his head, looks the other way and briefly lowers his gaze.

His tears continue to flow, silently. His lips open imperceptibly, but they do not formulate words. The video has no sound. The soldier, who is probably located outside, wears a camouflaged helmet. We can't locate where the soldier is standing. Maybe he doesn't even notice the camera looking at him? Men don't cry, a cliché says. Therefore, they should not let themselves be watched crying. All indications are that the crying is occurring clandestinely. The camera becomes the observer-voyeur, who tries to unlock his secret. Tears reveal the soldier beyond the uniform as a human being, who awakens our compassion. We begin to look for a reason for his sadness in the world he looks at outside of the video frame.

This soldier's point of view overlooking the world is further accentuated by his presentation in the public space as part of videocity.bs. The electronic scoreboard, from which it is shown, is placed well above the street viewing level and in the direction of the fairground. In this way, the soldier's gaze looks down on the passers-by. He appears as a giant, crying about our existence.

Andrea Domesle (translation: Andrea Domesle, corrected by Christopher Haley Simpson)

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Frantiček Klossner
"Mess up Your Mind", 2001/04
4 min., with sound

Frantiček Klossner's high-speed video "Mess up Your Mind" stages the deconstruction of the subject in a radical way. Using a camera developed for military purposes that produces more than 15,000 shots per second, he has captured close-ups of human faces in extreme slow motion that, as they exhale, cause their closed lips to vibrate through the outflowing air. By decomposing fleeting movements into their minimal components, initially reminiscent of scientific-analytical research methods, Frantiček produces monstrously distorted video portraits.

The face as a façade that creates meaning and identity seems to escape all control, individual traits liquefy and become illegible. The communication structure, in which facial expressions and speech apparatus are taken for granted, collapses. It is replaced by the unbroken obscenity of the huge close-ups, carried by the immediate physical effect of the opening and closing lips.

Karin Mundt (translation: Andrea Domesle, corrected by Christopher Haley Simpson)

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Theres Liechti
"Superwoman", 2017
frozen motion animation, 4:19 min, without sound

The frozen motion animation "Superwoman" shows a female figure in the pose of the famous Superman - with outstretched arms - flying over mountain peaks. Whereas the original comic hero flies high above skylines of US metropolises in his fight against the villains of this world, Superwoman sails up against obstacles. Here one sees a steady stream of oncoming traffic in the form of cute decorative cushions or doilies buzzing along. These are all accessories of a sphere in which society still prefers to see women today: Within the cosy home, beside the stove, in the lap of the family. Superwoman has mobilized superpowers to fly out of the restrictive sphere of female existence into freedom. Superwoman has decided that even perfidious obstacles in the air cannot hold her back. The question of where her escape shall lead is deliberately not answered in the work. Will she fly high or crash down after the collision? Once free, almost anything is possible.

Christina Peege (translation: Christopher Haley Simpson)

Elodie Pong
"180 degree", 2016
2:30 min., loop, without sound

The dancer moves in a liquid flow-motion. Although the video is silent, they seem to be filled with a melody that makes their body oscillate. The performer is dressed like many today: tight-fitting dark trousers, a blue T-shirt and sneakers, all in the same tone of colours as the background in front of which they evolve. Now for the extraordinary: they shift in a 180 degrees spectrum!
At the beginning of the loop, they are facing us. They then take a deep breath, arms reaching out to the back - as if to get the necessary energy to set the dancing figures, which are performed upside down, in motion. Their steps, from the viewer's perspective, first lead them clockwise to the left edge of the picture, then along the upper edge to the upper right corner - and from there back to the left corner to remain here in an extended pose; head down. Or is head down actually a heads-up?
There are two such sequences, which differ mainly in the colouring of the background: First, the left side is light blue and the other dark blue, then it's the other way around. In the first round the movement leads from light to dark and back to light, the second ends in dark blue.

In this upside-down world, the dancer takes on the characteristics of plants or animals, their arms gliding constantly up and down and back and forth, like an algae organism, or an undetermined aquatic creature. The body, too, is characterised by its flexibility, as if boneless, supple like an octopus. The resting positions resemble those of sitting birds, if turned 180 degrees, or of sleeping bats.
Perhaps they find themselves in a super-natural zone where weightlessness reigns? Are they performing a cosmic dance that symbolizes the creation, destruction and re-creation of the universe? Do they immediately point Aurora to the beginning day? Or does Astraios point to dusk? The latter two were often depicted with wings in ancient times. Who would they personify today?
Is the protagonist in Elodie Pong's video the personification of cinematic arts? What may be seen as heaven could then be the blue box of a film studio. The blue-screen technique makes it possible to isolate the figures and set them against a different, separately produced background. In the history of cinema, special effects were shot with it, such as chariot races or space voyages, the execution of which otherwise seemed too daring or impossible. What is the intended fake background for "180 degree"?

The videocity.bs screening on the eBoard of the Congress Center Basel, thanks to size and positioning, emphasizes the association with a mythological sky dance in Elodie Pong's video. A further environmental factor influences the interpretation: in June, the exhibition site is populated with visitors from all over the world who travel to Art Basel. Their visit is reminiscent of a contemporary pilgrimage. Admirable objects are usually displayed raised or specially illuminated, so that the videos shown by videocity.bs on the eBoard are suitable for adoration. Even if underrepresented in comparison to other means of expression, videos and films are also present at Art Basel. Perhaps Elodie Pong's figure will turn this "180 degrees" around?   / Andrea Domesle (translation: Andrea Domesle, corrected by Elodie Pong)
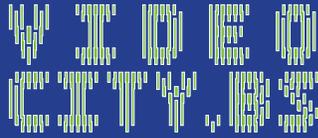
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Mediathek and e-Board :
videocity.bs **experiments once with once without sound**

Our perception in the media library of the Academy of Art and Design FHNW is quite different from that experienced in the city centre. Here the videos are presented with their original soundtracks (two-thirds of them have sound). It is a traditional presentation with a monitor, headset and seating within a concentrated, quiet, stylish ambience. Here the visitors can fully comprehend the *videocity.bs* experiment itself: those who are interested can here study the difference between the presentation in the public space and pay heed to the shifts in meaning that arise in interpretations of the same work, be they with or without sound, be it indoors or outdoors.

Integral to the *videocity.bs* experiment is that traffic sounds form the backing track or replace the original soundtrack. Coincidences of everyday life – consisting of noises and reflections – intervene with the compositions; they emphasize or diminish aesthetic elements and thus displace the statements of the artists. The videos take on a new light in the public domain in Basel.

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9 artists or artist groups

Sylvie Boisseau & Frank Westermeyer
Sylvie Boisseau *1970 Paris; Frank Westermeyer *1971 Essen, live in Geneve and Berlin
https://filmerei.de

Gregory Buchert *1983 Haguenau, lives in Lille
http://galeriepoggi.com/en/artistes/documentation/10347/gregory-buchert

Dimension Émotionnelle, an art group formed in France in 2012
http://www.dimensionemotionnelle.com

Paul Heintz *1989 Saint-Avold, lives in Paris
http://paulheintz.fr/apropos, https://vimeo.com/paulheintz

Luzia Hürzeler *1976 Solothurn, lives in Geneve
www.luziahurzeler.ch

Frantiček Klossner *1960 Grosshöchstetten, lives in Bern
https://www.franticek.com

Theres Liechti *1968 Zurich, lives in Winterthur
https://www.theresliechti.ch

Sebastian Mundwiler *1978, lives in Basel, http://www.sebastianmundwiler.ch

Elodie Pong *1966 Boston, lives in Zurich, http://www.sikart.ch/KuenstlerInnen.aspx?id=4027026

Further Information

-> **videocitybs.ch**