

erik moskowitz & amanda trager

cloud
cuckoo
land

installation



Exhibition at 303 GALLERY
“Mary’s Choice”
January 10 thru February 21, 2009

installation



Exhibition at **MOMENTA ART**
October 17 thru December 1, 2008





Opening Night screening
Les Rencontres Internationales
The Pompidou Center, 2008

ABOUT CLOUD CUCKOO LAND

In 2008-09, *Cloud Cuckoo Land* was shown as an installation at the 303 Gallery and Momena Art (NY), PULSE Miami, Haus Der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin) and Deluge Contemporary Art (British Columbia).

In 2008-09, *Cloud Cuckoo Land* was screened at the Pompidou Center and the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris; the Reina Sofia, Edificio de Tabacalera, Madrid and as part of *Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin/Madrid* festival. As part of the Pompidou's *Hors Piste* festival it was screened at the Pompidou Center, Paris, Institut Culturel Franco-Japonais de Tokyo and Pompidou-Metz, France. In New York it has been in screenings at: Participant, Inc., NY (curated by Laura Parnes), NADA Video Nights at Horton & Co., NY (curated by Matthew Lyons).

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free|03point9

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New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA)

Fellowship in Video, 2008

Experimental Television Center

Finishing Funds Award, 2008

The Outpost

Cuts and Burns Artist Residency Program (through NYSCA), 2008

COLLABORATION AND BACKGROUND

Erik Moskowitz and Amanda Trager are collaborating artists. Their work has been shown at venues such as The Pompidou Center (Paris), the 303 Gallery, The Brooklyn Museum (NYC), Carnegie Mellon University (PA), Goethe Institute (Mumbai). They live and work in Brooklyn.

Cloud Cuckoo Land is a first-time collaboration between Erik Moskowitz and Amanda Trager. Collaboration presented an opportunity to meld their separate pursuits in creating narrative-based visual art.

Their involvement with fractured narrative is of long-standing in their independent practices. For Moskowitz it dates back to childhood, when Spalding Gray invited him to perform in the Wooster Group's *Sakonnet Point*. His work with Spalding continued for the next eight years; his relationship with Joan Jonas dates from this period. More recently, Moskowitz has been known for music/video installations based on excerpts from literary sources. Trager, focusing on rant-like texts and character-creation in painting, sculpture and installation for over ten years, has recently been making work embodying lopsided "conversation" between mismatched players.



Erik Moskowitz, "A Bit of Dirt" Installation, 2005



Amanda Trager studio, 2006

SYNOPSIS AND DESCRIPTION



Transparency in CCL installation

Cloud Cuckoo Land is a single-channel video framed as a narrative tableau within a larger installation. It includes an original screenplay and operatic soundtrack created and performed by the artists. The lead roles are also played by us (the artists) along with Joan Jonas, Robert Janitz, Ronnie Bass.

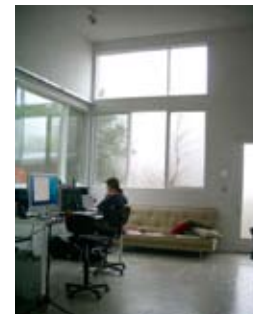
The title of the piece is taken from the Aristophanes' play *The Birds*. In the 4th Century BC, the notion of utopia was already in play — and put into doubt. Our narrative encompasses a family's move to a contemporary commune (these "intentional communities" are usually progressive in outlook but in other ways disturbingly like segregated or gated communities). The central character, after years of fantasizing about the ideal way to raise her child and with fixed, romantic notions of the "best" way to live, is confronted by her own intolerance and inability to integrate with the community.

The video's narrative exploits conventional cinematic devices (shot/reverse shot, music cues) and is meant for exhibition in gallery and museum space as well as in cinematic space. The work explores the limits of the utopian ideal of a Lacanian, pre-mirror identity — where a fluidity of boundaries proposes a "You" that cannot easily be distinguished from an "I." Porousness — and its opposite — extend to formal aspects of the installation, e.g., wall-sized scrims that are nevertheless transparent allowing viewers to watch other viewers who are safely "within" these walls and furniture that is simultaneously 2- and 3-dimensional thus confusing the notion of what is and isn't real. The piece critiques assumptions too easily relied upon when determining the difference between public and private space.

The prescribed boundary between art space and cinema space functions as a model of the larger issue whereby artificial and arbitrary boundaries are used to define conventions of personal and societal comfort and safety.

These boundaries, pointedly explored in this narrative about communal living, were actually explored by us as we created this piece. It began at Montalvo Arts Center — an artists residency with live/work studios literally made of glass walls and endorsing an open-door policy between residents, administration and patrons. It is from photographs of spaces at this residency (the commons area, the kitchen, the studios), that we made room-sized backdrop scrims that we used for the shoot and later for the installation.

Around this time, we were beginning to know Robert Janitz, a German painter living in Paris, who was in the process of relocating to the US. We shared our home and studio (then functioning as a production set) with him back in New York as we further developed *CCL*. Robert used the set (when dark) as his bedroom. Artifacts of this living arrangement, redolent of the mundane pleasures and tensions of an unconventional "family-life," remain in the installation, functioning as a nearly hidden narrative-within-a-narrative and blurring the line between invention and actuality. Janitz later became a co-performer in *CCL*, playing the key role of the protagonist's "husband".



Montalvo residency



CCL set and Robert's "bedroom"

It took over two years to make and "complete" *CCL*. As we now enter its exhibition phase, we find that it is not complete; and in fact may never be so. Each opportunity to exhibit *CCL* gives rise to new configurations, the creation of new props and different expression of its meaning(s).