

**Annebarbe Kau**

**Klaus Schrenk: "A vision of time prolonged".**

**in: Annebarbe Kau Video – Installation – Zeichnung/Drawing.**

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**Translation by: Steve Cox**

Observations of substantive processes constitute the artistic point of departure of the video works and installations of Annebarbe Kau. Image and sound – through usually operating at different levels – are regarded as complementary factors within an indivisible unity. Via the opposing but mutually reinforcing elements of this unity the viewer is gradually introduced to the tapes as they unfold and inspired to interpret through association the images and compositions.

As the tapes are played we do not perceive the passing of given time. Rather, seeing and hearing are subjectively slowed down and accelerated, so that the final pattern, woven out of optical and acoustic units, imbues every tape with its own specific time „pulse“. This aspect touches on ideas in modern music: different tones and tempi are heard simultaneously while also filling timeframes on their own.

In recent years the artist has increasingly developed and refined the interplay of image and sound, the interpenetration of space and time, the formal structure expressed in movement and rhythm. Alongside her video works she has created sound installations, which represent a further step in reflections of perception-oriented phenomena.

In her video works Annebarbe Kau dispenses with the use of rapid, eye-catching sequences of cuts and images. Her tapes feature camera-generated images which, through intensive post - production, are transported into a changed visual reality. Particularly important, here, is the suggestive proximity of picture, language and sound located within a changing time continuum.

The tapes, made after her time at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art, „Undine“ (1986) and "Garten im Raum" (1987), mark the beginning of an independent path of artistic and intellectual exploration.

In "Undine" , for example, language, music, and sound are used to construct three different levels of action which are initially visualized alongside of another without any apparent connection. Annebarbe Kau draws on a text sequence from „Undine geht“ by Ingeborg Bachmann, which is recounted as an off voice, spoken by the artist herself. Later we see how a jet of water pours from a tap into a plug-hole of an old stone wash basin. Language and arbitrarily produced sound are augmented by her own saxophone playing. Out of the initial juxtaposition of discrete elements a pattern emerges as music, language and water noise are connected by sequences of cuts and superimpositions until they become so interwoven that the separate starting points of the strands of action move into the background.

The different use of picture and sound in the three - minute tape entitled "Garten im Raum" appears as a conscious element of design. Again the artist employs different visual levels, which are accompanied by a text spoken in Japanese. Pictures and language allow an unmeasurable space to emerge; it is formed by the onomatopoeia of a language that is alien to us and by the associative visual sequences, which appear in connection with this.

The artist's sophisticated approach to composition achieves a compact artistically pronounced expression in „Caina“ (1988) and „Duo“ (1989), two musically oriented tapes. In both works picture and sound relate to each other as the two basic elements of video art. At the same time both works suggest to us the difficulties involved in approaching music with visual means.

In „Caina“, a rustic location in Umbria and the sonata for cello solo by Bernd Alois Zimmermann appear section - wise as opposing elements at the centre of the artist's search for subjective proximity. Through the delicate linking of visual and musical elements the observer enters into a mood in which what was initially alien is filtered by the observer's own feelings and comes to appear familiar. At the end, in the final sequence, picture and sound are made to correspond as everything slows down, and the cello music, played so dramatically, echoes through the tranquil closing scene.

The subjective and emotional character expressed in the choice of music, the corresponding approximation in the language of the images and the construction of affinities between imagined attitudes also lead to a complex formal design in „Duo“ (1989). We see hands holding the sticks which bring about the drum-roll, while the active figure, the woman musician, remains out of view in this fragmented shot. The rhythm of the music is accompanied by the horizontal displacement of images, which – in various fades, reducing right down to narrow slits – helps to create a mysteriously condensed image. The movement and superimposition of image and surface, in a consistent colour scheme of light yellow and shades of black, take place in a close relationship with the sound and rhythm of the drum. A virtuoso sequence of movements then unfolds and leads, at the end of the tape, to the point where both areas momentarily come together in unison.

This structure is developed further in „m“ (1990). The acoustic sequences – such as trickling sand, the snare drum, voice exercises, stirring of coffee and laughing – remain sounds of intrinsic value because they do not stand in a one-dimensional relationship to a picture. Rather, the relation between picture and sound sequence is open, like two lines running roughly parallel but coming together, touching and separating again. The artist's emotional interest in composing with picture and sound flares up as she deals with way in which they relate to each other.

Other aspects of Annebarbe Kau's work are apparent in the latest tape, entitled „namen“ (1992). In addition to the relation between image and sound already described, the artist directs her attention above all to movement and light. Seen on a static camera the first sequence shows the scattering of sand with the dust being blown away in the darkened mild light of an interior.

The shot, which is repeated several times, is interrupted by pictures of a camera which revolves, showing an interior in black and white. This is contrasted with slow shots of tree trunks and the ground under a forest with circling particles of light coming through the foliage.

The way Annebarbe Kau closely meshes fine art and music has ensured her works a special place, even among the video artists of her generation. By dispensing with the video clip techniques of rapid cuts and image sequences the artist has found a poetically insistent language which, in its expressive power, has already assumed an unmistakable character.