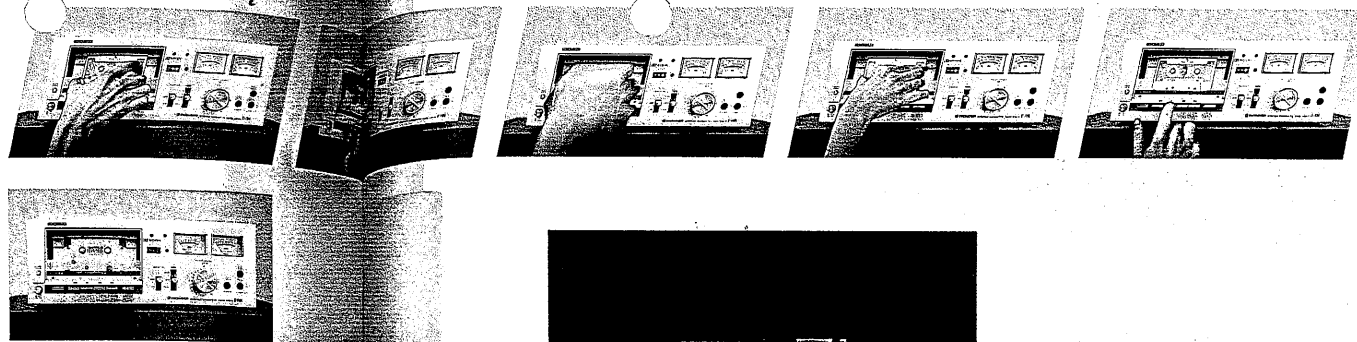


Daniel Egg
Box 3 "Dialog" (2003)

1997
Installation / Novopan, spy mirror, monitor, DVD player,
cassette recorder / 180 x 60 x 80 cm

S. 460-442

Fotografie Cinema, 1997, Preis 2007



The media construction of reality is one of the central themes of avant-garde art practices at the end of the twentieth century. As such it is the continuation of a process that began in the 1960s as the analysis of the social construction of reality. In a text from 1966 about his "Minus Objets," Michelangelo Pistoletto makes reference to his mirror paintings, extolling the contemporaneity of the depiction with the moving reality that is literally reproduced. One of the inherent qualities of the mirror image is its simultaneousness with the real image. Daniel Egg extends this reproductive and temporal dialog between mirror image and reality to include the dimensions of mediativity and space. The opponent of the mirror image is neither the photographic reproduction nor any living body; instead, the mirror image is replaced by the virtual appearance of a moving video image, which in turn is opposed by a real, three-dimensional object (the tape deck). Image and object act in perfect temporal and spatial congruence. A videotape player and a horizontally installed monitor have been set into a box, in front of which (but not visible or otherwise perceptible) is a semi-transparent mirror tilted at an angle of 45 degrees. The moving images from the videotape are superimposed on the real tape deck through the spy mirror. A virtual hand (a reflection of the image from the monitor onto the real deck) inserts a virtual cassette, yet the real deck appears to begin playing – as if it has actually been switched on. The visual images of the real and the imaginary tape decks are perfectly superimposed. At the same time one hears a dialog from the Alfred Hitchcock film *Dial M For Murder* (1954): a telephone conversation between a man and a woman. In one shot we see the man and hear both his voice and the woman's voice at the end of the telephone line. The next shows the woman and we hear her voice and the man's voice at the end of the line. In the film version, the cut between shots signifies a change of location, which Egg here reproduces as a change of tape. A

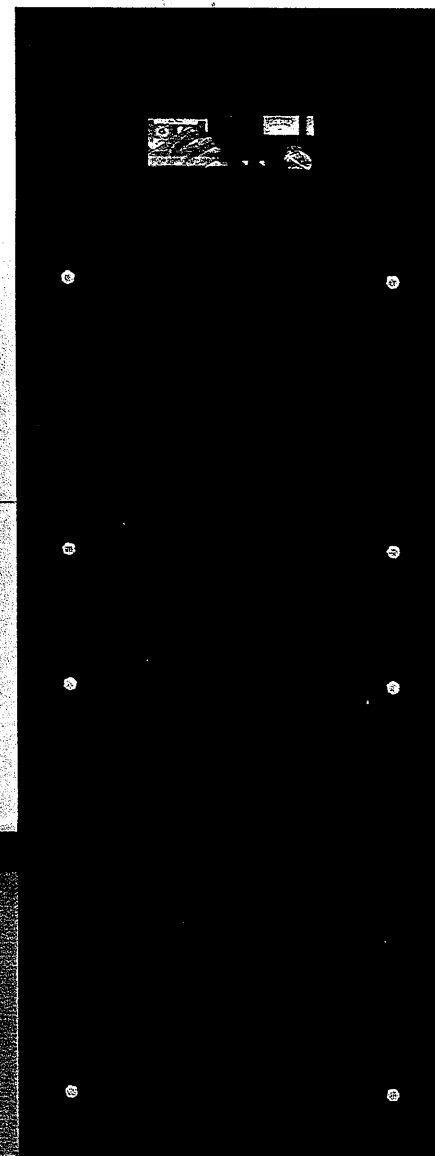
male and female hand takes turns in changing the tapes according to the cuts between shots in the film (change of location). The woman begins to speak by stopping the tape with the male voice and inserting her tape (her voice, that is), and vice versa.

Man and woman as the classical pair of opposites are thus assigned to those of present and absent, real and virtual – the primary elements of telematic culture – importantly, not in the form of an image but as sound. Kaja Silverman explored the function of the voice in film in her 1988 book with its revealing title *The acoustic mirror*. The female voice in psychoanalysis and cinema, showing it to be a key method of gender construction. Egg is thus following the acoustic mirror of media reality rather than the visual mirror of sensory reality. This distinguishes him as an artist of the 1990s from an artist of the 1960s.

The relationship between the subjects (or sexes) therefore has a strictly dual structure based on a technical dispositive that is in a Lacanian sense a remainder of the Real, an "experiment," a remnant, yet constitutive for the symbolic order.¹ In this symbolic order the relationship between the sexes becomes a "dual-mirror relation" (Zizek), built upon elements of presence and absence, reality and virtuality.

Egg's *Box* is therefore not only an analysis of media reality (an analysis of Hitchcock's film) but also an analysis of the relationships between the subjects, yet nevertheless in the mirror of the media. By achieving the perfect superimposition of the material organization of communication, the economy of the cut, and the "libidinal economy" (Jean-François Lyotard), Egg sheds light on the mechanisms of the media construction of reality and symbolic order.

Petar Weibel
Translated from the German by Jacqueline Todd
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