

An Interview with Clemens von Wedemeyer

By Rhea Dall & Andrea Viliani

What made you start working with film?

There are probably two things that led me there. The first is more classical or even banal: I started with photography and experimented with successions of images, which brought me to video editing... There might have been a second driving force, which was to investigate the whole powerful enterprise of cinema. From my point of view film is our main cultural arena, and it tends to rule over all other art forms. In one sense motion pictures can be seen as a mirror of how society deals with its image production.

Which filmmakers or artists have inspired you the most?

I usually adopt a cinematic grammar for my films from filmmakers that I like: *Occupation* (2002) refers to early cinema, such as Sergei Eisenstein and Fritz Lang's first films; while the cinematic landscape in *Otjesd* (2005) was stolen from settings by Russian filmmakers like Andrei Tarkovsky; and Samuel Beckett's *Film* (1965) inspired me for *From the Opposite Side* (2007).

What is your relation to the notion of the loop?

The loop, besides the multi-channel installation, is the biggest difference between the art space's black box and cinema presentations... I like the loop format, as you can create a story-like situation that curtails itself and doesn't need an end. A bad ending frustrates me most when I watch good films. Good films should continue forever... or have an ending that puts the entire film into question! I also like the loop format because it brings film closer to photography or painting: you can start watching at any time. And if you understand something different the second time you follow the film then the loop has done the best it can, by granting a second opportunity to watch and analyse - or even to negate what you just believed.

What is the background to *The Fourth Wall*?

One theme I am very interested in is the ongoing question of our belief in images, the question of reality and fiction... When I first read about the Tasaday tribe I saw all these questions condensed in a historic, real event: the Tasaday were a group of 26 people found living in the rain forest of Mindanao, an island in the south of the Philippines. Before their discovery in 1971 their lives had purportedly been untouched by contact with other civilizations, and were unchanged since the Stone Age. In 1986, fifteen years after the Tasaday's discovery, a journalist searching for the group managed to reach their now abandoned dwelling caves. He found the Tasaday nearby, now inhabiting houses, smoking cigarettes and wearing blue jeans. The question was whether they had been acting fifteen years before, or had just changed. Even today it seems to remain an unresolved question.

This text is an extract from a longer interview that appears in the publication produced to accompany Clemens von Wedemeyer's exhibition at Charlottenborg. Rhea Dall is curator at Kunsthal Charlottenborg and Andrea Viliani is director at Fondazione Galleria Civica, Trento