

## The Holding

*“This was what I meant when I spoke of impressions which invited the intellect, or the reverse – those which are simultaneous with opposite impressions, invite thought; those which are not simultaneous do not.”<sup>1</sup>*

Barefoot I step through a kind of gate lock into the back part of the Kunstpavillon. I slip into a dark coat, its seam touching the ground, fasten it around my waist with a belt. Never before have I worn a kimono, but this belt reminds me of an obi. Yet at the same time it could also be an ammunition belt or a holster. The sleeves I tuck up with the help of a ribbon that is being fixated with Velcro fasteners – almost as if my blood pressure were being taken, this goes through my mind. Next I put on a piece of headgear that can be worn in different ways, and I decide to tie it at the back like a headscarf. My outfit is rounded off with a pair of sunglasses. **I am anonymus.**

With small steps I proceed into the room whose walls are lit evenly in a strange way in which all over – the walls, the ceiling and the floor – is the colour of sand. I sense a soft, cropped carpet beneath my feet and I hear strange sounds emanating from ventilators the location of which I can't quite pin down. **Disorientation.**

I walk on and now I make out a distant babble of voices, hurried steps and the hissing noise produced by train doors opening and closing – a train station? In the meantime more persons have come into the room. They are dressed just as I am. We don't know each other. Still, without speaking we interact in the choice of routes we take through the room. “Relax your eyes at the right moment. Enjoy the pleasant temperature and take all the safety measures required,” we are advised by a warm and yet authoritative voice. It sounds familiar to me. But I am not able to follow its instructions. Now there are eight persons in the room. The noise level is rising. More and more sounds surround us. I believe I can make out turbines, the screeching sound of metal being worked on, but also tepid ambient noises that I'm familiar with from various contexts to do with meditation and relaxation. In between, a male and a female voice continue to give us contradictory instructions, utter warnings. Somehow, after some time, in which I have tried to find out according to which principle the sound and text fragments are set in motion and in which manner this is influenced by my movements inside the room, I begin to feel utterly empty. As soon as I and the other seven persons have left the room nothing will remain. A transitory place. Beautiful and disquieting at once. The sole point of reference: **myself.**

With her label IMOTO Margret Wibmer, in museums and art spaces, presents temporary and mobile environments, or, as with “the holding” in the context of the exhibition at the Kunstpavillon entitled “Entering A Strange Field”, she presents an interactive installation. For each intervention the communication structure is adapted to and newly developed for the respective location. The interactive installations stand in close relation to the objects and photographic works of the artist. The artworks waver between body references and robotics, between fetishism and bio-technology. They are antiquated and futuristic at the same time, and they evade any straightforward interpretation. They forever remain in between-ness and thus evoke a wide spectrum of connotations.

Similar to the “Cave” installations, in which virtual reality is simulated in real time and whose designation (CAVE) openly refers to the allegory of the cave in Plato's “Politeia”<sup>2</sup>, what the artist is after with “the holding” is the relationship between perception and insight, reality and illusion. Instead of simply postulating a situation Margret Wibmer aims for the subjective

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<sup>1</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Book VII (transl. by Benjamin Jowett), <<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/150>>

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cave\\_Automatic\\_Virtual\\_Environment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cave_Automatic_Virtual_Environment)

sensation and thinking of each person entering the room. The visitors form part of the artwork and more or less anonymously may act on their own initiative for a moment or a little longer. At the same time each one of them is being scanned and captured<sup>3</sup> (via two surveillance cameras) by “Big eye”, as the software developed by STEIM<sup>4</sup> is fittingly called. The protagonists are subject to an abstract metaphor for our civilised life caught between free development, self-determination, and social obligations and rules, for inside and out. A waiting room. **A waking-up room.**

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Virilio introduces the term “optical capturing” in his book *The Vision Machine* (orig. *La Machine de Vision*, Paris 1988) in connection with military observation during World War II, which, “in its anthropomorphic camera work already anticipated the optical capturing of video surveillance”. Translated from the German edition, *Die Sehmaschine*, Berlin 1989, p. 117

<sup>4</sup> <<http://www.steim.org>>