

battery

performance

21 December 1999 — Kaskadenkondesator, Basel, CH — Handlungen, performance series — curated by Pascale Grau and Andrea Saemann — Duration: 30 min

Background — In 1965, in the Hessian Provincial Museum in Darmstadt, Schneefall (Snowfall) by Joseph Beuys was exhibited for the first time. In this sculpture or object, 32 equally large grey felt mats are piled on the floor one on top of the other. From underneath them protrude three thin spruce trunks of different lengths, with the branches sawed off. Infrared cameras are used by fire departments, emergency rescue teams, border patrol and civil defence as well as for determining the thermal characteristics of products and building components.

Setting — A dark, empty gallery space with a large depression in the floor.

Materials and Preparation — Seven styrofoam panels, 5 cm x 50 cm x 200 cm (put together from 14 styrofoam elements, 5 cm x 50 cm x 100 cm), piled one on top of the other. A plastic barrel with a heated rim filled with ice cold water. An infrared camera on a tripod. A video projector. A screen, 400 cm x 600 cm. The continuous live projection is the only source of light in the space.

Procedure — A styrofoam surface lies at a distance of 40 cm from the pile of styrofoam panels. Y appears and pushes over the barrel of cold water in the direction of the styrofoam panels. The water flows across the floor. In the projected camera image, the cold water is black. As it warms, the water runs through the entire scale from black to white. Y pans the camera in slow motion from the water toward the pile of styrofoam panels, which X is already standing in front of, and then places it on the tripod. X lies on his stomach on top of the pile of styrofoam panels; Y lies on his back on the single panel on the floor. After one and a half minutes, X and Y stand up. The white heat impressions of their bodies can be seen on the surfaces of both styrofoam panels. X and Y take the top panel from the pile and lay it face down on top of the panel on the floor, so that one white body impression covers the other one. X and Y lie in various positions on the styrofoam panels and, after one and a half minutes, turn the panel over from the first pile to the second one, until all the panels from the first pile have been turned over. X and Y exit the field of view. After a while, Y enters the space again and pushes the pile apart. From between the panels the brightness of preserved warmth is emitted. On the screen, in the lower part of the projected image, the constantly draining battery reserve of the heat-sensitive camera is displayed.

Additional presentations: 13 July 2001, Zurich, University of the Arts, diploma exhibition 2001, curated by Paolo Bianchi

