

Salomé Voegelin / Heliodor



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Front cover:

Heliodor 2005

audio-visual installation

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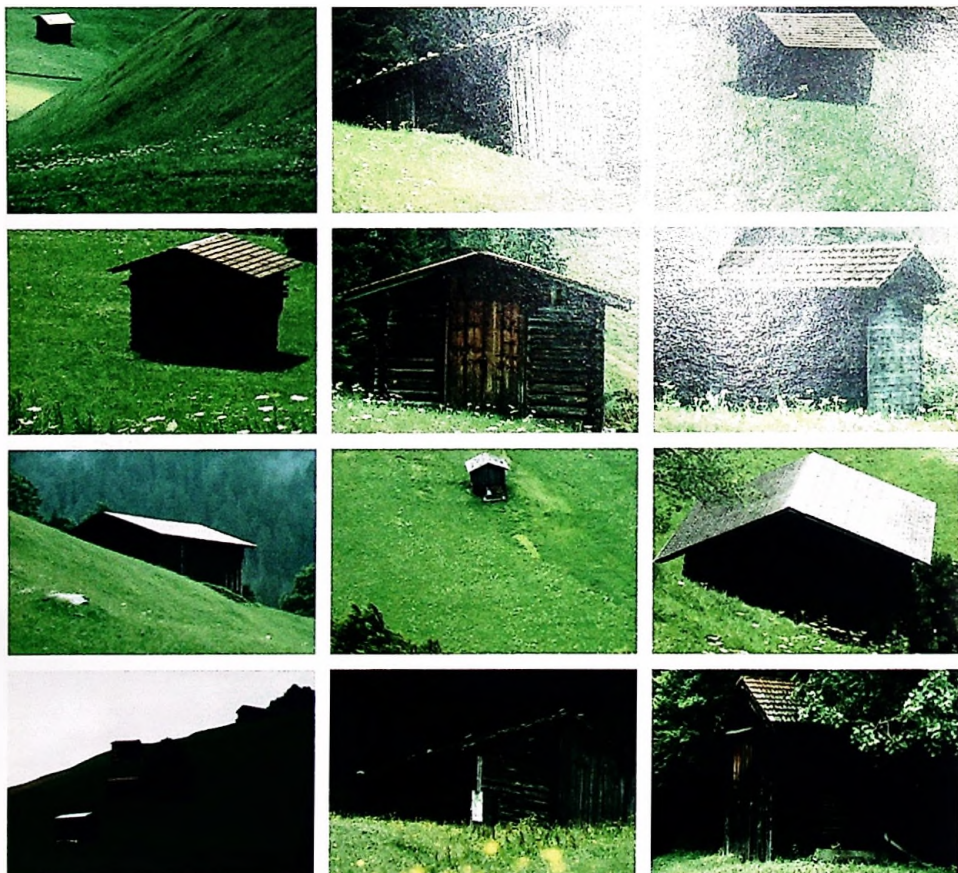
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Hobbies; a Slideshow 2001
tape/slide-show

film, interest in cinema or period or popular drama and music) while it also privileges general knowledge of the recent history of contemporary contexts in art for the sampled.

In an earlier work, the slide-show in the context of a lecture *Hobbies; a Slideshow*, 2001, Begegin obviously foregrounds quotation in her manner of introducing recorded monologue as a disembodied element in a temporal succession where then separate segments of monologue fuse but visual continuity, in terms of sequence, remains unbroken. That literalizing account of what seems a work with certain literal qualities misses a further literary quality in the work, reminiscent maybe of the nineteenth century writer Guy de Maupassant (in, for instance, his 'The Mountain') Guy de Maupassant was a 'naturalist', somebody whose attention to the real, the contingencies artfully elaborated in their full dimensionality, was realist (though how too real, so expository of the *unnatural*). In fact, of course, supernatural probability is a reasonable extension (like a hobby) of a person's faculties – like a building built to house something. A contemporary equivalent might be a glass structure with pine cladding.

There are always equivalents, they almost get out of control. I mention 'The Last of the Summer Wine', for its obvious fakery. 'The Last of the Summer Wine' was a long running apparently popular comedy (it began as a one-off tv play) that set a group of elderly male friends against a northern rural English backdrop – where they played-off various funny or sentimental/unsentimental or mildly surreal scenarios. Over a long run it became highly stylised, especially, in later episodes regarding synchronization of fairly repetitive type internal episodes; i.e., events that were kind of familiar would turn up in familiar order as you progressed through the programme's series. 'The Last of the Summer Wine' developed a stylised, self-conscious, self-referentiality that was enjoyable. For instance, after a while, there tended to be an episode toward the end of each programme in which the elderly friends (Compo, Foggy, Clegg) would be overcome by mechanical failure in some object or thing rigged-up during the earlier parts of the programme: the thing might be some kind of amateurish labour saving pseudo vehicle careering wildly out of control (in a controlled manner) with one of the friends in it. The episode would end with some paint or some rubbish being hit by the 'out-of-control' friend, there would be some graphic, primary coloured splash. Music (plodding deflations, crescendos, musical 'sighs', staccato asides) would have been keyed to the logic of the events – you could have said that the accompanying music was primary coloured as well. Scary.



Heliodor 2005
audio-visual installation

Heliodor Salomé Voegelin

Salomé Voegelin was born in London. She works in video with a particular interest in the material and aspectual relations between sound and the visual. Her recent work, including the videos *Heliodor* (2005) and *Gallant Boy* (2006) shown here, are – like some other current work in video – best understood as constructions out of material associated with contemporary video work in the immediate context of art. I mean that Voegelin is engaged by the processes, the complex material and formal associative properties of video in the context of the seemingly expanded motivational concerns of contemporary art.

One of Voegelin's tactics is to offer to collapse cues on one dimension, say, the aural, while naturalizing unnaturally, so to speak, an accompanying dimension; perhaps the visually immediately referential (the visual taken as natural). So lines of improbable narrative connection seem to open up as an effect of something like equivalence between sonic and visual significations, an obvious effect of collage and merging but a complex formal directional twist in relation to the hierarchically conventionalized, authorially singularized 'voicing' and associated simple continuity of much artists' film and video work. A work like *Heliodor* opens itself to projection (in the mental sense) in that its contents seem to be a negotiation between a viewer and the artist; in that sense the work is familiarly radical in a cooperative tradition – distant to the 'Modern' tradition where that tradition sanctioned fully interpretative closure – or radicalised in the sense of holding that closure in abeyance.

Which is not to say that *Heliodor* is not highly complicit in the production of its sense of its totality; its not amateurish. Though it deliciously is when one takes amateurish in the challenging sense – as being threatening to some kinds of tediously recondite occupational complicities. The extent to which a viewer and listener might merge themselves with the work as if at the level of symphonic experience is a challenge to specific structural, slightly wooden orthodoxies in contemporary video that I think the artist might maintain the work took on, in fact, pulped. *Heliodor*, as a video work, while it doesn't exactly mask its structural elements – the knock-about or rigged elements or devices that bring its structure to the fore, its camera work and colour symbolism for instance – produces a secondary structure of etiolated, drugged or dragged-out continuity (Anri Sala has done that spatially as well as temporally, solidly in works like 'Mixed Behaviour') which consumes the immediate aspects of obvious referentiality. In that way, also, *Heliodor* is free of hierarchy: it privileges informed recognition (knowledge of



Gallant Boy 2004
video

The video *Gallant Boy* could seem to operate in a mid-ground, between comedy and tedium, its complexity – its layering of aural events of displaced aural signatures driving visual ‘routines’ – at the level of comedy, not much mattering (though that might be the essence, the bright yellow essence of a type of comedy). Elements of quotation, visual flattening and asides, movement across the camera and a two-dimensional picture plane dissolving further as if as an obscurely life-threatening effect of a graphic – are worked to produce an overpowering, even dingy, naturalness; a sense of small fête rather than carnival. The urbane qualities of sly observation frequently survive installation. At the end *Gallant Boy* features a watchful sheep, now the video retakes itself as a kind of iconographic homage (to a kind of late sixties or early seventies pop – or Goodies – iconography familiarly revisited in music video.)

There are long passages of lyrical complexity and a kind of condensing of central phenomenal pre-occupations concerning performance orientated art in *Heliodor*. What’s particularly worth noticing, I want to suggest, is that even as the most directed and richly construed, extended, complex and constructed passages – episodes, in the artist’s terminology, in a ‘time-space collage’ – open to complex significative and rhetorical associations they simultaneously offer themselves as homage. What things figuratively and what things literally mean becomes the object of a kind of controlled nostalgia, perhaps related to something that Hans Ulrich Obrist mentions in reference to Sala’s DJ’s music (in ‘Mixed Behaviour’), as a ‘succession of obtaining control and losing it’¹. These experiences, triggered as doubtful perceptual encounter or of flooded experience, where objects signify and sound incidents converge alarmingly and beautifully and an artist appears to have her back to us so as to orchestrate, leave things hanging.

Matthew Arnatt

1. ‘The Fragility of the Real’ Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Anri Sala, When the Night Calls it a Day*, Musée d’art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Walter König 2004