Bass, Math, "Take the fire and leave the rest," ==, published by MFC – Michèle Didier, Brussels, Belgium

Miller, John, "Erika Vogt's Geometric Persecution," ==, published by MFC – Michèle Didier, Brussels, Belgium

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== is a work by New York based artist Matt and features newly commissioned essays, interviews between artists and editioned works. It consists of a book containing 108 pages and measuring 29,3 x 22,8 cm.

This edition contains also five multiples by:
  - Liz Deschenes
  - Nikolas Gambaroff
  - James Richards
  - Kay Rosen
  - Erika Vogt

The ten critical texts regarding the five artists are from:
  - Sarah Charlesworth and Carter Mull for Liz Deschenes
  - Chris Kraus and Nora Schultz for Nikolas Gambaroff
  - Ed Atkins and Steve Reinke for James Richards
  - Alejandro Cesarco and Cary Leibowitz for Kay Rosen
  - Math Bass and John Miller for Erika Vogt

The interviews are from:
  - Ajay Kurian & Sreshta Rit Premnath
  - Caleb Considine & Caitlin MacBride
  - Josh Tonsfeldt & Uri Aran
  - Alex Kwartler & Michele Abeles
  - Paul Lee & Jacob Robichaux

Erika Vogt
Marching Man
2010
carbon on printed paper
38-1/8 x 30-1/8 in (96.8 x 76.5 cm)
Courtesy of Overduin and Kite, Los Angeles

Take
the
fire
and
leave
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rest

Erika Vogt
Geometric Persecution
2010
Installation view at Overduin and Kite,
Los Angeles

The experience of looking absorbs the body all at once; the way the feet are planted,
where the eyes are directed. Being in a perceptual body becomes absorbed in the act of looking.
I find myself disappearing into the screen, stepping into images of shimmering crude symbols
that dance across a nondescript space.
The substance of film is physical, reeling, momentous. Open and exposed, flashing and heaving.
As it propels itself into being, it is exhausted onto a surface, a heavy immobile wall,
some thin and flimsy screen, some willing body.
Using film and video Erika Vogt re-photographs projected images on a wall–a process which
activates these mediums. Film turns into video and video turns into film. Her reappropriation
of found and self-generated images builds upon layers of materiality, producing an eerily
physical presence to an otherwise banal and predictable surface.
In one space, there exists the materiality of film, the ephemeral sequencing of video, the weight
of the body as it exists in time, impermanent, and at junctures, invisible.
Vogt touches this body, moves over it, lands it into action, directing and disturbing
its stationary position.
I read the projection as an object that is being looked over, an object that is being seduced
into space, turned upside down and touched by another recording device. It floats and changes
size as it is being impressed by another camera. Through this exchange I feel my body
becoming absorbed in an alternating ritual of stasis and movement.
Images jump to the distant sound of metal; jingling, falling coins are raining down from the ether.
Through a thin, almost imperceptible slit, a fracture in the diegesis, two pairs of hands
exchange objects.
A large piece of dredged up concrete from a rusty hoe.
A scale.
A triangular ruler.
A thin slat of wood.
Inside and outside become conflated and confused with one surface.
As it is becoming, it is being destroyed.
There is no direct orientation, no center of gravity, and there doesn't have to be.
Picture yourself in a boat on a river surrounded by tangerine trees and marmalade skies.
Old weights and antiquated tools are pulled to the ground. The weight of their history becomes
the weight of obsolescence.
Attached to these objects are stark white handles that have been tied into knots,
standing upright as if being held by ghosts.
When one thing is pulled in two directions a tension exists, along with a space for the breath
to expand and contract.
During the exhibition audience members were encouraged to hold onto these objects on display,
to carry them around and experience the exhibition with weighted objects in hand.
White handles also were attached to a set of long, brightly painted wood slats to be held
and carried, cutting through space, extending the body beyond its immediate containment.
I visited Erika in her studio a few weeks ago. We drank tea, ate tacos down the street, and talked
about roller coasters and forms of currency. Afterward I wished that I had recorded us.
"This is just going to be fire," she said, as stock footage of a metal forgery flickered off the wall.
Take the fire and leave the rest.

Erika Vogt
Figures Conversing
2010
pastel on printed paper
38-1/8 x 30-1/8 in (96.8 x 76.5 cm)
Courtesy of Overduin and Kite, Los Angeles

Erika Vogt's Geometric Persecution

John Miller

Erika Vogt
Still from *Geometric Persecution*
2010
16mm film and digital video with sound
Courtesy of Overduin and Kite, Los Angeles

Toward the beginning of Erika Vogt's video *Geometric Persecution*, a luminous *X* appears, followed by an *O*. The two letters indicate a rudimentary game–tic-tac-toe perhaps–or at least a gamelike structure. A succession of repetitive, permutational clips immediately follows. These include graphics, processed film footage, and fragmentary scenarios. The sound track is ambient: utensils scraping, wind hitting a mic screen, footsteps crunching on gravel.

In one close-up a plumb bob rests in an open hand, seeming to guide the one who holds it. The hand belongs to a tattooed arm. The figure, clad in black, moves across what appears to be an abandoned lot. Tall, dry grass has sprouted from cracks in the concrete. The light is bright and harsh. The figure's steady progress suggests that the plumb bob works like a divining rod. As such, the diegesis of the shot implicates the viewer in an act of magic. The purpose of a plumb bob (an instrument used since ancient Egypt) is to measure verticality. In this shot, however, it seems to exert a horizontal, antigravitational pull. Such a movement would grant the plumb bob an animus, much like the *planchette* on a Ouija board, whose movement is gener-

ated by those holding the board itself. Next, in a rapid series of reverse shots, this simple but inscrutable object implacably guides its owner first to the left, then to the right. In yet another cut, it disappears, and the camera continues to follow the open hand, now moving backward along an obscure path.

In yet another sequence, various tools–a triangle, a compass, a rod, a scale–pass from one set of hands to another. The scene's tight cropping emphasizes the tools more than the people who handle them. The tools themselves are simply passed along, not used. As a result, they emit a talismanic aura.

The camera returns to the desolate lot, this time revealing more of the androgynous figure whose black clothing includes a cape or perhaps a head scarf. The figure stands, balancing on his or her palm a long stick in the air, moving gingerly so the stick remains upright. The cape might be a magician's cape. Or Prince Valiant's. The stick, in turn, could be the Singing Sword. At the very least the stick, like the plumb bob, has acquired an animus that seems to animate the figure–contrary to common sense.

Another shot shows the same figure hanging upside down from a bar at the knees. For this shot, however, Vogt has rotated the

image 180 degrees, so the figure appears upright. The magical claim of this otherwise obvious effect is, again, to defy gravity. The viewer knows exactly what is going on but is nonetheless left with a persistent image that suggests otherwise.

Curiously, the title emerges as an alternate figure in the video as well. As opposed to implying animism Vogt here literally animates the phrase "geometric persecution." It appears first as a square, the phrase repeated four times to form its edges. Slowly the edges close in and the interior volume shrinks. The ends of each phrase now protrude past the shrink-

ing square's corners, and the whole figure rotates. If this graphic appeared only once it would read as a conventional title. Instead, Vogt repeats it. It returns again and again to haunt the video like a guilty conscience.

Not to be overlooked amid the overlays of blotchy graphics, rapid streaks, and numerical sequences is Vogt's emphasis on what guarantees film and video's fundamental coherence: the screen. We see a screen within a screen. It often functions as a small inset centered in a black field. Other times Vogt shoots a screen from oblique angles, then overlays as many as three or four different screens at once. As an ada-

mant reiteration of the camera's inherent and inescapable framing capacity, this reminds viewers that any significance they confer on what unfolds before them is a function of the camera.

Like a sequence of Tarot cards, *Geometric Persecution*'s sequences play out and recombine with aimless significance. In fact, one might argue that the potential for an occult revelation lies in its very arbitrariness. The black box of the camera, however, is the arbiter of this condition, namely what Vilém Flusser designates as the camera program. The camera doesn't simply make the events in Vogt's work available to us; it is

what brings them into being and confers importance upon them. In this respect, not only the photographer but the viewers, too, unwittingly carry out the camera's mandate. In broad historical opposition, Flusser pits images against writing. While writing requires a logic of cause and effect, images are magical because they translate the world into states of being. The meaning of images is connotative. As viewers scan images, they do so in any order they please. They can skip parts and go back over others. According to Flusser, this yields an eternal recurrence of the same. Flusser alludes to Nietzsche, who viewed the pros-

pect of eternal return with horror. As an apparatus, the camera produces technical images, namely images capable of subsuming writing and governed by programs, which Flusser likens to combination games. The end product of the camera is a phantasmagoria, in which people can only grasp reality via the camera screen.[1] In comparison to Flusser, Robert Smithson treated photographic eternal return with a more healthy skepticism. In his essay "A Tour of the Monuments of the Passaic, New Jersey," Smithson proposes a *"jejune* experiment" that begins with a sandbox divided into black and white sand. He imagines a child

running clockwise in the sandbox until all the sand appeared gray. For Smithson, this grayness was irreversible. If the child were to run counterclockwise, the sand would become grayer still. Only by filming the child and playing the film in reverse could the sand, as it were, be sorted out. Such a sandbox would not be out of place in *Geometric Persecution*. Yet Smithson goes on to remind his readers that eventually the film would decay, the projector would break down. In short, entropy would erode the sanctity of the frame.[2] Might not this otherwise impervious rectangle be the persecutory apparatus Vogt identifies in her title?

[1] Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, trans. Anthony Mathews (London: Reaktion Books, 2000).
[2] Robert Smithson, *A Tour of the Monuments of the Passaic, New Jersey, The Writings of Robert Smithson* (New York: New York University Press, 1979), pp. 56-57.