

Feierabend

(The sealed garden)

Installation by Arno Oehri
realized in April 1999 at the Gallery tangente, Eschen, Liechtenstein

Part I

The german word *Feierabend* means *Closing time*, but also *leisure time after work*. I converted the entrance hall of the tangente into a kind of a mixture between living room and a bar. The set-up includes a small library with (mainly) art books, a sofa, a table and chairs and a bar where one can buy drinks. Since I frequently draw and paint on slate boards used for writing down the results when playing cards, which is a common, traditional game to spend the leisure time, I wanted to offer not only my artwork but also the game itself. For most people Art is something that is connected to their *Feierabend*, during the day they are at work. My goal is to expose art as a part of daily life, as self-evident as playing cards for instance. Thus the director of the gallery and myself were present during all opening hours, ready to play cards with visitors and/or talk about art or just offering to sit down and read books, or have a drink and talk.

Part II

The word *Feierabend* is also understood as an expression for something that has ended. It describes a borderline, the limitation of communication for instance, which is hardest there, where life is confronted with death. In that situation I spend the *Feierabend* in a sealed garden. The words are spoken or remain unspoken, feelings have been shown or hidden, it is a stage of closure, of finality.

Part II of the installation is inspired by the death of a person that was very close to me. It is not of interest, who it was and in what kind of relation that person was to me, that's why in the video all names are given only with initials. The video is kind of the heart of the installation. The story about the death of H. is told through excerpts of a diary. the whole video is in slow motion. We see feet walking over mountain paths (handcamera), old people playing cards, under-water takes of bricks with inscriptions like *grandfather, father, son, grandmother, mother, daughter* etc. and we see faces of different people. It's a composition of text-fragments, images and sounds, executed in a sketchy way.

The installation also contains a sofa chair, bricks, slate boards covered with the notes of card players and "closed" plaster-casted pots with single word inscriptions like respect, lust, uncertainty, honesty, shame etc., expressions that describe a mental or spiritual state of being, or personal characteristics or attitudes. Everything is distributed on the floor around the TV-set and the chair.

It's about the limits of our possibilities and willingness to communicate. What do we know *really* about our next? What do we *really* communicate about ourselves? What does *justice* mean to him or her? What kind of *passion* drives him or her? What's he *ashamed of*, what kind of *doubts* is she carrying within etc.

I recently discovered slate boards as art tools. A small, simple item, black slate, with a wooden frame. Usually used when playing cards. Playing cards is a game. In my

understanding, art is strongly connected with play-instinct. An artist is a privileged adult that is still allowed to keep playing. It's a game with forms and colours, with words, sounds, materials, medias and spaces and these games were connected with concepts and strategies, with intellectual and spiritual contents and thus transformed into art.

When playing cards, the form is given, the intellectual content is neglectible, the rules are fixed - remaining only strategy and luck. How were the cards distributed? Who opens the game? What cards have been played out already? People that play cards lead a very strange, highly ritualised conversation. Sharing the same party one can really get close to oneanother. One talks, but one does not communicate about personal matters There are gestures and emotions shown, but can play cards with a partner over years and never know much about his or her life etc. In the video, these ritualized conversations are confronted with the very intimate report of a persons death and the conditions that this death evoked. A person that is watching the video in Part II also hears the card-playing conversations of the players in Part I in the background.

Arno Oehri

*1962, freischaffender Künstler seit 1986, lebt und arbeitet in Ruggell, Liechtenstein. Diverse Einzel- und Gruppenausstellungen im In- und Ausland. Kunst am Bau - Projekte in Liechtenstein. Arbeitsaufenthalte, Installations- und Performanceprojekte u.a. in den USA, Russland, Italien und Mexico.