

Georgia On My Mind – Opening of the Berlin 'Kunstherbst', Translation of the press article "Im Sog des Marketing", by Nicolas Siepen, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Berliner Seiten, 21st of Sept. '01

Viktoria Quartier Berlin, Sept.'01

Within The Suction of Marketing

"Kunstherbst 2001" as label for Berlin culture

(...) The only event that was able to interrupt at least for a short period of time the strangely stiff atmosphere of the evening was the performance "Georgia On My Mind" by William Wheeler and Antonia Baehr. This year the performance-duo already had presented shows at Podewil that the audience frenetically celebrated. Besides with its work the duo moves within cultural spheres that are not represented within the symbolic frame that "Kunstherbst" pretends to cover.

Even if there are again and again attempts to integrate what is understood as "underground" into the cultural landscape, most of the time the concrete forms do not come out right. That manifested itself among other things through the fact that the audience perceived the glamour-show almost dully as entertainment.

Yet the performance, that played with adaptations of the cowboy-figure, and therein especially of the American country-queen "Dolly Parton", lived on the possibility of an audience's feedback. What looked like a travesty-show at first sight was actually a subtle game with identity and integrity of bodies, clichés, and their boundaries. William Wheeler, who transformed with his clothing and physique the image of the cowboy into an ambivalent "sexiness", also played his partner's voice on the Theremin.

This almost forgotten instrument invented by Lev Theremin at the beginning of the twentieth century in Russia is played by manipulating electromagnetic fields with the hands. The manual

process appears so ghostly immaterial that the acoustic effect of the “borrowed” voice is still increased on the visual level. To the extent in which the glittering androgyny cowboy was absorbed in his play in an immobile and concentrated way, the saloon-diva performed by Antonia Baehr was slowly getting out of control. She seemed to endeavor excessively in the lip-sync singing, although yet precisely the fragile electronically amplified sounds were giving her at the same time a remain of hold to the world.

Perhaps one could best situate this performance in the world of Andy Warhol’s “Factory”, who is represented this “Kunstherbst” with a big retrospective in the Nationalgalerie (...).