

INTRODUCTION

Fee Altmann

In the name of the Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF and especially of the Institute for Artistic Research, I would like to cordially thank Nadja Rademacher and Anzhelika Dementyeva for organizing the exhibition PANORAMAVISION. I also especially thank all the sponsors.

Frank Geßner was Vice President for Education, Research, and Development at the former Academy for Film and Television “Konrad Wolf” on its way to becoming the Film University. In that function, he co-founded the Institute for Artistic Research/IKF in 2008 and since then has greatly supported it, in part because artistic research is precisely what he stands for with his professorship and his artistic practice.

Artistic research has established itself as a field within the traditional realm of research and has integrated itself into the conventional academic system only in the last 30 years. It has meanwhile developed great relevance, especially in the international research context.

To do research in the arts, i.e., also in film, means to think in film with the widest variety of research settings and strategies. Of course, it also means to continue developing the medium of film in theory and practice, to transform it, or to to gain a better understanding of it in new areas of application and in new contexts, and to aim to become adept at employing it in artistic practice – and all this explicitly not from an external perspective, but from the perspective of those who make films, i.e., with the gaze of the

authors, directors, film musicians, editors, scenographers, and of course animators, i.e., from the viewpoint of the arts taking part in film-making. Artistic research is part of our cultural techniques of progress and part of our culture of knowledge. It is nothing other than the work on the theory and practice of artistic, creative design, and it takes place in the context of various processes of transformation, be they political, societal, or technological.

The exhibition PANORAMAVISION, developed by Frank Geßner, also develops, describes, and reflects on processes of artistic research. This is because, in partnership with new technologies, Geßner is working on a theory and practice of an “Expanded Animation Cinema” that turns film into a spatial, performative experience that unites art and film in line with the concept of pictorial history, that is, a concept that always has the historical roots in its rear-view mirror.

In no way is artistic research a self-referential, self-enclosed, art-for-art’s-sake principle. As Frank Geßner’s exhibition PANORAMAVISION shows, artistic research is an art-immanent aspect of artistic thinking and artistic practice. It does not illustrate or describe any existing picture or likeness; rather, it grasps the world we live in in its heterogeneity and takes that as the starting point for developing ideas, for example of a VISION of what our “today” can be tomorrow. I speak quite consciously of “us”, because it is no coincidence that, in conceiving his “Palladio model” of the cinematographic 12-channel installation that we

see as the central motif in the exhibition, Frank Geßner refers to Le Corbusier’s “Modulor”. The “Modulor” is the very emblem of a modern view (which has been around since the Renaissance) that all construction, that all construction, all architecture should relate to the human scale, human proportions, and human perspectives. No “far out”, crazy theory, therefore: this approach claims that I, you, and we are responsible designers of every new step, of every architecture that will surround us tomorrow. The many personal as well as historical references in the exhibition describe or symbolize the complex system of references that constitutes our identity. For we are not only now, we are also a part of yesterday, we are today and tomorrow – and: it is US who are shaping that very process!

The process of coming from a “today” to an idea of “tomorrow” is, as we all know, forming theory through practice or research, and it is fundamentally as old as our culture. It finds expression in various media.

Research, including artistic research, means being in an experimental space where, through the power of imagination, intuition, and reflection through theory, one moves out of the space of conventional knowledge into something new, unfamiliar, still to be discovered: inevitably into the unknown.

For the arts, that must mean letting ideas and theory become form, giving artistic shape to new thinking, and shaping

for others an access and experientable space specifically their own. With this exhibition, by meeting great technical challenges, Frank Geßner and the team of the German Institute for Animated Film have been explicitly successful at that; the idea of the PANORAMAVISION is exemplified not only “on a surface”, but also as a spatially animation, audio-visually set in motion and turned into a performative, sensory experience.

Dresden has often played an important role in major processes of transformation. The Technical Collections tell of this, of course, but in many ways so does the history of this city. I would like to briefly mention an aspect of this in connection with the PANORAMAVISION: a few months ago, to conduct artistic research, we were in Dresden’s Festspielhaus Hellerau, which still seems surprisingly modern and visionary today that one is immediately gripped by the inspiring power of the site. Standing for the the innovative spirit that was already at work more than 100 years ago in Dresden’s Hellerau district is the huge yin-yang symbol that already hung over the entranceway in 1911. It reminds me of a piece of old, associated Asian wisdom that fits Frank Geßner’s artistic research work: “What you think today, you will be tomorrow.” In this sense, I wish everyone much pleasure exploring the PANORAMAVISION.

FEE ALTMANN

Managing director of the Institute for Artistic Research of the Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF and Deputy Equal Opportunity Officer. She is a founding member of the Society for Artistic Research in Germany. She led the Adrian Piper Research Archive as Director and Archivist for the Concept artist and philosopher Adrian Piper. As an art historian, curator, and specialist, she worked in the international art market for galleries and for the auction house Phillips, de Pury & Company, and the Bureau des Arts Plastiques of the French Embassy, among others. The substantive foci of her work have been themes like the practice and logic of the arts as cultural practice, their methods, strategies, potentials, investigatory aesthetics, and interaction with various fields of society; transdisciplinarity; and artistic practice as research.