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Silvia Gruner

Un Chant d'Amour

November 22 - December 18, 2005

Opening Reception: Tuesday, November 22, 7-9pm

From November 22 through December 18, 2005, PARTICIPANT INC presents **Silvia Gruner**, *Un Chant d'Amour*, an installation comprised of two single-channel videos and site-specific elements based on the only film directed by writer Jean Genet. In her forthcoming essay, "At the Margins of Silvia Gruner's *Un Chant d'Amour*," Irmgard Emmelhainz has described *Un Chant d'Amour*:

"Silvia Gruner's video *Un Chant d'Amour*, 2004, shows a close-up of the artist and two men at a space divided by a wall performing an erotic dialogue. Enacting the signs of amorous desire, the characters make an effort to communicate with the person on the other side through a tiny hole. The camera pans back and forth [across] two sides of the wall while the three characters exchange places, attempting to reach out to each other by mingling their breaths with cigarette smoke, passing the smoke through the hole with a straw... At certain moments, one of the performers blocks the hole with chewing gum, sealing off the other's discontinuous presence.

At the intertextual level, Gruner is referencing Genet's film of the same title, *Un Chant d'Amour* (1950), in which a prisoner makes love to the person in the cell next to his as if through a glory hole. Yet, the hole between the cells is too small, so they communicate through the hole with smoke and a straw and make love masturbating. The function of the hole in the wall in Gruner's video is similar, as it is too small to allow any physical contact through....

In both works, the physical absence of the other is evident, as his/her presence manifests through the discontinuous indexing of him/herself through the straw and the smoke, which function as a bridge or as a passage for communication. However, the other remains virtual, as he/she is unable to make his/her signifying traits pass through the wall. Likewise, in Genet's earliest novel, *Notre Dame des Fleurs* (1944) the other is virtual, as a prisoner tells stories about his absent lovers, bringing them back to life from the walls and into his pages, describing situations in which he interacts with them, sometimes making love to them masturbating. In these works, the absence or the possibility of presence becomes the only way to relate to the Other.

Gruner has explored further the relationship to the Other as desire and love in works that link psychoanalysis and fiction such as *Away from You*, *Instinto*, *Narrow Slot/Sueño Paradójico* and *Lazy Susan*, negotiating the boundaries of access to the Other and the openness of the Self. In these videos, as well as in her *Un Chant d'Amour*, the limits of *jouissance* as the essence of subjectivity come to the fore as a ceaseless repetitive movement in which the Self seeks cathartic affirmation through flows of desire produced by the tension between the presence or the absence of the Other."

Silvia Gruner lives and works in Mexico City. She has shown internationally with solo exhibitions at La Caja Negra, Madrid, Spain (2005); Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros, Mexico City (2004); The Kitchen, New York (2004); Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Mexico (2003); Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA (1998); Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, Venezuela (1998); and Museo del Chopo, Mexico (1990). Her work in video, photography, sculpture, and installation has been shown in group exhibitions at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain (2005); *Bienal de la Habana*, Cuba (2003); The Power Plant, Toronto, Ontario (2003); Art In General, NY (2003); and La Panderia, Mexico City (2002), among others. Gruner holds degrees from Betzalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem and Massachusetts College of Art, Boston.

PARTICIPANT INC is located at 95 Rivington Street, between Ludlow and Orchard Streets on the Lower East Side. Gallery Hours: Wednesday-Sunday, noon-7pm.
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