

Gabriela Löffel

Lives and works in Switzerland

Inside

3-channel video Installation

35:00

2019

The inside is cold and calculated, not made for living people nor artworks. Secrets guard the gate. Opacity is its governance structure. What cannot be imaged and is hardly imagined is the central focus of Inside, Löffel's work critiquing the freeport mechanism. During a 2018 Pro Helvetia residency in Shanghai, Löffel sought to insert herself into the then-under construction International Artwork Exchange Center, part of the Pudong Free Trade Zone, in order to explore art storage and markets, global finance and special economic zones.

Later, the artist drew links between the Pudong Free Trade Zone and the Geneva Freeport – a sister port for the storage of art and valuable goods in Switzerland, the country where she was born. Löffel made audio and video recordings outside both free ports. Working with the Mandarin-English simultaneous interpreter Ti Wang, the work channels the voices of numerous lawyers and historians from China and Switzerland to provide a glossary of terms such as 'territory', 'transit zone', 'economy', 'storage', 'cloud', 'investment' and 'technical'. Löffel was prohibited from filming in the free ports, and as the experts speak we hear Wang's voice, softly transferring this information between languages as she walks in a fictional free port, created in virtual reality. Each scene she walks into mirrors an abstraction of the defined term, with the Free Port hovering as a challenge to our representational values in filmmaking. As the artist's interlocutor, Zian Chen, posits: 'This is the dual character of the freeport: both as a mountain fortress (Geneva) and as an oceanic

harbour (Shanghai).' Between the mountain and sea are containers which we cannot help but want to peer inside of.

After Löffel's research work at the Shanghai Freeport "International Artwork Exchange Center", she continued her exploration at the Geneva Art Freeport. There, in front of the first art freeport of the kind, she staged and filmed a translation sequence. The Freeport of Geneva serves here as the film setting where interpreter Ti Wang simultaneously interprets from Mandarin Chinese into English the conversation Löffel recorded during her visit at the construction site of the "International Artwork Exchange Center" in Shanghai. The second part of "Inside" approaches the interior of the Art Free Port. The impossibility of filming the real Inside has led Löffel into the domain of Virtual Reality and to the places where these realities are designed; the VR studios. In the volumetric production studios "4D Views", the interpreter, Ti Wang, works again between the Chinese and English language. This time, she interprets the texts that Löffel has mandated from Chinese and Swiss lawyers and historian specialising in the question of freeports. Each of them gave explanations and comments on terms she had proposed, like "Territory", "Offshore", "Technique".

As the interpreter translates these recorded audio files at the "4DViews" studio, she is led with the help of VR glasses inside a fictional 3D Art Freeport, created according to Löffel's indications.

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Courtesy of the artist