



# Judy Ross

Short films and video installations



# Judy Ross

My artworks are narrative short films and video installations. My projects are related to movies and theatre. The stories are fragmented in time and space, emotion and communication. I aim to expose the intimacy and uniqueness of tragedy. My installations and short films employ a variety of media including written and spoken language, illustration, photography, sculpture and performance.

In my projects, I often play the protagonist or function as narrator. Sometimes one character is played by several actors or one actor is playing several figures. The psychology of the characters is exposed through the absurdity of their actions, costumes, dialogues and monologues. I research psychological, historical and site specific details, in order to write scripts, create still images and storyboards. I develop objects and build miniature models prior to producing short films and video installations.

I construct and deconstruct dramatic sets and create theatrical exaggerations of characters, referencing, yet rhetorically distorting the structure of classic film, mythological stories, or clichés. I focus on uncovering and disturbing familiar images as well as disquieting the personal and social narrative expectations of film.

Both, the technological frame of the camera lens that creates subject and narrative, and the camera itself, which represents the medium of film, work as independent figures in my film projects.

Also, within the installations, it is my goal to actively involve the viewer. The construction of the installations always remains visible, inspired by TV studios and theatrical stages. This makes proportions and perspectives change, confusing the scale of the fictional world and the real world. To linger in the installations and be able to observe the details of a simultaneously familiar and unexpected environment allows the viewer to unravel the multiple layers of each story.

[www.judyross.de](http://www.judyross.de)

# Los Angeles, Where Ideas Come to Die

2012

Short film, 6:12 minutes, English

Single channel projection as loop

Produced by Kurt Forman

Cinematography:

Dino Dumandan, Hugo Contreras, Dennis Nishi

Cast: Amber Jolley, Judy Ross

Music: Neven Dayvid

Supported by

ifa - International Exhibition Funding, 2012











Script abstract

DETECTIVE  
Miss Gloria called me: Wants me to find out, why this girl died in her pool. She doesn't seems to care who this girl even was. She was furious about her pretentious pool. Rambling about her reputation as great movie star. I hate these rich ladies! But she offered me a lot of money: I had to take the job.  
I don't know anything about that Girl. But it was all over the papers, how Miss Gloria bitches everybody around, especially the other females. Can't believe she is that innocent! Might be interesting to investigate her.I decided to visit a former lover of Miss Gloria: Mister William Wrigley Jr. – the chewing gum mogul. Maybe he knows something. Oddly, Mr. Wrigley looks like Walter Benjamin.

WRIGLEY  
LA, where ideas come to die.  
Gloria has suffered in movie making! It changed her. Her body has left reality, to be changed into a flickering image on screen. You should meet this director. He might be a better help. He knows everybody in town.

DIRECTOR  
Oh, I remember her. She had a small part in my last movie! She wasn't very happy with it. She said: Her character is

missing its aura. Anyway, I told her what I always say: It's just a movie!

DETECTIVE  
Before hanging up the phone, the girl with the glorious swinging hips gave me an address from the dead girl's shrink, who works as a psychic!?

PSYCHIC flashback  
You're happy in your face, but not in your heart. If you want my help: It will cost you around \$500.Do you want my help?

GIRL  
I want to shine! But, I'm like memories, a vanishing illusion. Just a reflection of the ideas .

PSYCHIC  
I will tell you what I see. And I won't charge you for that. In your next reincarnation you will be a great star and you will get all the love you deserve, but not in this one. Sorry.



Judy Ross’ latest short film, “Los Angeles: Where Ideas Come to Die”, is in part a homage to one of the ultimate films noirs, Billy Wilder’s “Sunset Boulevard”, itself a gimlet-eyed homage to dream-factory Hollywood, which nods to Hawks and Chandler, Hitchcock, and even Robert Altman (The Long Goodbye).

The instigator of the skeletal narrative is one “Miss Gloria,” an obvious stand-in for Gloria Swanson’s Norma Desmond, upset this time not by a faithless and feckless lover, but a young starlet dead in her swimming pool. As in “Sunset Boulevard”, the film opens with a shot of the body floating in the pool – Ross’ lambent and cerulean, worthy of Hockney or perhaps Helmut Newton. The voice-over narration is not that of the dead actress, but Ross’ own, playing the part of the detective hired by “Miss Gloria” to find out who the girl is and how she happened to drown in her pool.

In fact, all characters are played by Ross, except the actress: the reclining, petulant diva Gloria; the jaded, down-market hipster shamus in his battered Chevy Nova; a film director bathed in darkness; a psychic, who the deceased actress consulted and Gloria’s ex-lover, William Wrigley, Jr., who “looks like Walter Benjamin.” It is Benjamin who states the film’s premise: “L.A., Where ideas” (as opposed

to ‘dreams’) “come to die.” Ross is deliberately overstating here: Ideas never exactly arrived in Hollywood in the first place, or if they did, they were stillborn.

Between static vignettes and talking head shots, the film loops around Los Angeles in choreographed segments of light and shadow. Ross is moving us past noir’s dark dreams into a sunlit civilization of glittering towers, which promise riches, but seems nonetheless disconnected, without the force of reality. What does the doomed actress want from this world? Only “to shine.” The payoff is superstardom – itself a stand-in for “love.” “Sorry,” the psychic shrugs – but releasing us without charge. In other words, you get what you pay for. But is “shine” enough to make up for “aura”?

The irony is that the great noir films, quintessential mechanical, commercial products, retain an ‘aura’ that can be claimed by few stand-alone contemporary fine art masterpieces. Ross’ film is a further spatial and temporal deconstruction of the noir meta-script, yet stands in some continuity with the subjects of her previous work – the fracturing of action, intention and desire, and the dubious efficacy of human agency.  
Ezrha Jean Black, 2012



# The Filmmaker

2011 - 2012

Short film / Installation / Performance,

6:30 minutes, Chinese / English subtitle

Single channel projection as loop

420x 290x 260 cm

Cinematography: Cai Junhua, Deng Chunyu,  
Sigrun Schnarrenberger, Domenik Schötschel,  
Jaqueline Sattler, Judy Ross

Choreography Performance: Brian Solomon

Cast: Qu Lijun, Zhao Jingyuan, Ma Yuntao,

Su Fusheng, Yan Dong, Shi Jie, Fan Donglei,

Li Meiyong, Brian Solomon, Judy Ross

Installation: Michael & Judy Ross

Supported by

Arbeitsstipendium für Bildende Kunst 2011

des Landes Berlin

IARB China (International Art Residency Beijing)

Best Experimental Film, Watch Out! Film Festival,

Tetovo (Makedonia), 2012















Performance 2012, NGBK Berlin

In *The Filmmaker*, German video artist, Judy Ross, constructs a complex landscape based on a fictitious film director's daydreams. Set partially within a contemporary film shoot, the video casts a critical glance on a couple surrendering to a Chinese metropolis. While the man remains stoically silent, the woman, in the role of the nurse, complains bitterly about her uncooperative patient. In a tight sequence of scenes, both characters are played by several actors, complicating the narrative. The video reprises common relationship role-playing, including a dramatization of the healing/Samaritan syndrome. Yet these satirical takes on gender conflicts serve as well as a personal metaphor for Ross in addressing cultural difference. As a visitor from abroad in China, she experiences misunderstanding of, and dependency on, others as an unavoidable but vital occurrence within the exchange.

Seeking to reflect her experience in China, she fractures the flow of the video and includes obvious breaks in continuity to symbolically reflect the incomplete exchanges in language and cultural understanding that are common features for international artists visiting China. In this way the work adapts and then challenges the stereotype of the artist as a restless and melancholic character in need of care, a figure otherwise lost and alone in his or her imagi-

nation. But rather than present a biographical account, she reflects her experience within a fictional story where the characters play out the difficulty in understanding, and the beauty that can be found it.

To follow the story is the first effort in watching any drama, when piecing the scenes together becomes difficult, we reflect back on what has occurred to assemble a complete picture. In "The Filmmaker" our expectations of narrative sequence are intentionally undermined, while it uses the form of dramatization, the expected roles of director, actor, and audience are reconfigured, with the viewer permitted the opportunity to define the story.

Gordon Laurin,  
Director of the Where Where Art Space, Beijing, China



# Was mir die Kunst auch bringe, ich bleibe guter Dinge.

*What ever the art will bring to me, I will stay calm.*

In this installation at the C. Rockefeller Center For The Contemporary Arts in Dresden Judy Ross, Timo Klöppel & Marius Schmidt combine elements of three artistic positions to open a gate between vision and reality.

*2011*

*Video installation / Performance,*

*20:00 minutes, German*

*3 Rear projections as loop*

*240x 360x 275 cm*

*Co-operation with by Timo Klöppel & Marius Schmidt*

*Cinematography by Lucie Freynhagen, Judy Ross*

*Installation: Timo Klöppel, Judy Ross*











Script abstract

Dear visitor,  
It is wonderful to have you here.  
Art strengthens our inner balance and assists us with our  
everyday stability.  
Please make yourself comfortable and relax.  
Take a look around and become familiar with the room.  
As you know tension is an obstacle and a barrier, it gets in  
the way of art and to your inner-self.  
On the other hand, serenity and calmness will bring you  
to your center, where we will wait for you...



# Der Udo Lindenberg Fanshop

*The Udo Lindenberg fan shop* consists of a cardboard display of the German singer and songwriter Udo Lindenberg, a radio play and a video projection. The radio play tells a fictive story about the musician, giving a concert in a small German town and falling in love with a waitress. But his feelings aren't be responded. The text combines extracts of Lindenberg's text work, music, movies and interviews. While the opening the audience is welcome to get their picture taken with the Udo Lindenberg display. These pictures are projected in the installation – in the hope of solidarity with everybody still believing in real love, because there is still hope behind the horizon.

*2010  
Radio play / Installation / Performance,  
13:00 minutes, German  
Single channel projection as loop  
180x 200x 230 cm*

*Supported by  
Kulturkreis Everswinkel, 2010*







#### Script abstract

Die Schöne schlägt die Augen auf: „Ein Bett für die Nacht? Wollen Sie eins mieten? Oder was? Für sich allein?“ „Schon für mich allein. Oder wollen Sie etwa mit hinein?“  
“Na, hören Sie mal! Ein Zimmer, also?“  
„M.“ „Für eine Nacht?“ Udo schwankt. Die Stufen fangen an zu flackern und kommen mit einem Knarz zum erwachen. Udo stolpert über den Teppich und hält sich hilfeschend an der Kommode fest. „Und seit wann arbeiten Sie hier?“  
„Seit 4 ½ Jahren. Hat mich von Anfang an gefallen.“ „Und die Saufkumpels, nerven die nicht?“ Der Wäschekorb starrt ihn strafend an. Sie lacht, die Ohrringe glitzern.  
„Haben Sie einen Freund?“ „Das geht Sie überhaupt nichts an! Da ist das Bad. Vorsicht Stufe und net soviel Wasser aufdrehen, sonst wird’s schnell kalt. Und das ist das Klo.“ „Schön“, was anderes fällt ihm nicht ein. Der Körper schwankt und wankt. Der Gang ist eng. Die Wirtin schön und schlank. Er lächelt sie an. „Ich könnte uns zwei Flügel kaufen und dann hauen wir ab...“ „8:00 Uhr Frühstück, um 9:00 Zimmer räumen.“ „Alles klar.“ Ein letzter Versuch von Charme. Stützt sich lässig an der Türkante ab. Doch vergeblich. Kriegt nur den Schlüssel in die Hand gedrückt und wird ins Zimmer geschubst. Lange blickt er ihr nach, wie sie mit ihren Absatzschuhen gemächlich an den vielen Türen vorbei den Abgang macht.

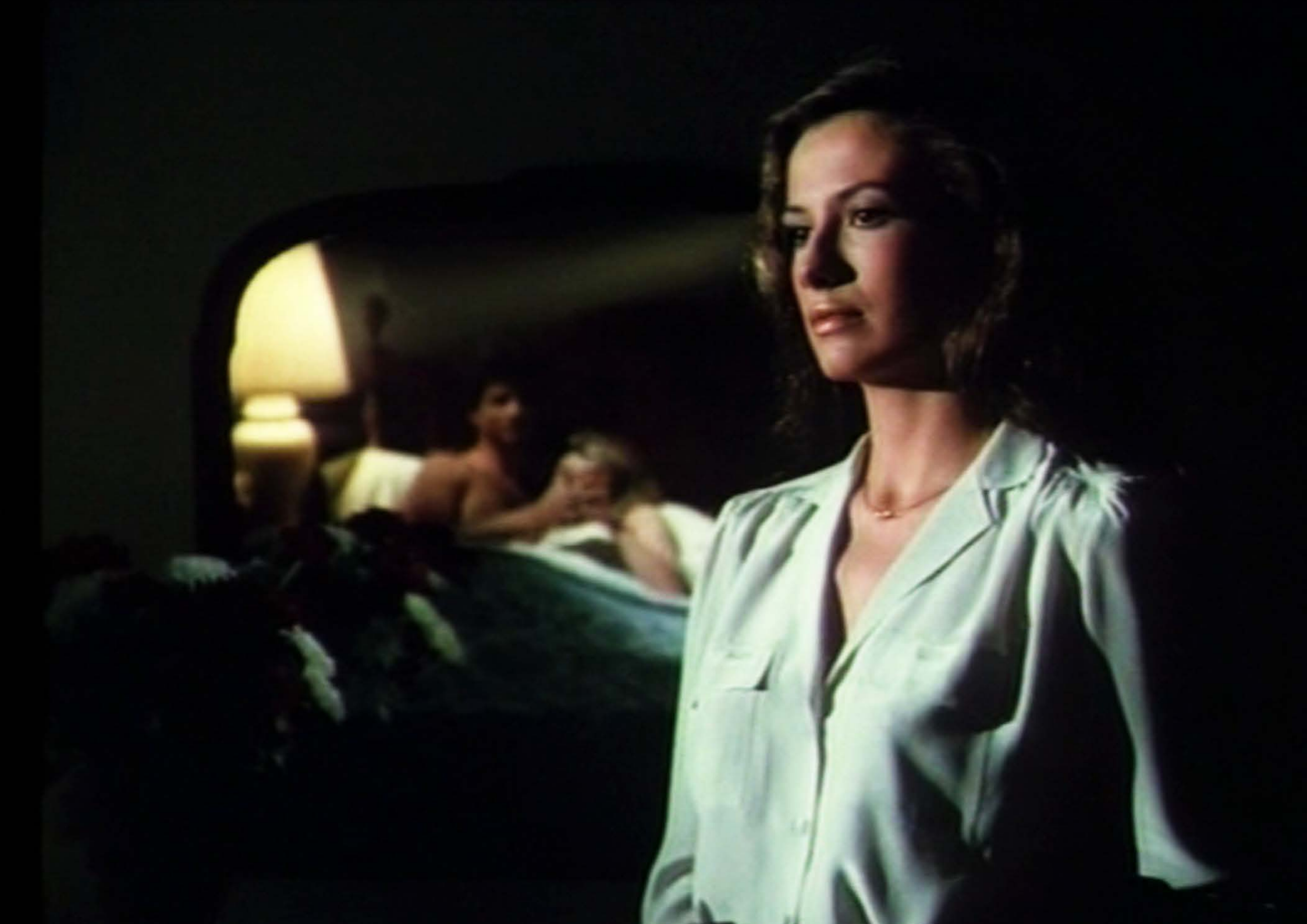


# ultimate answers

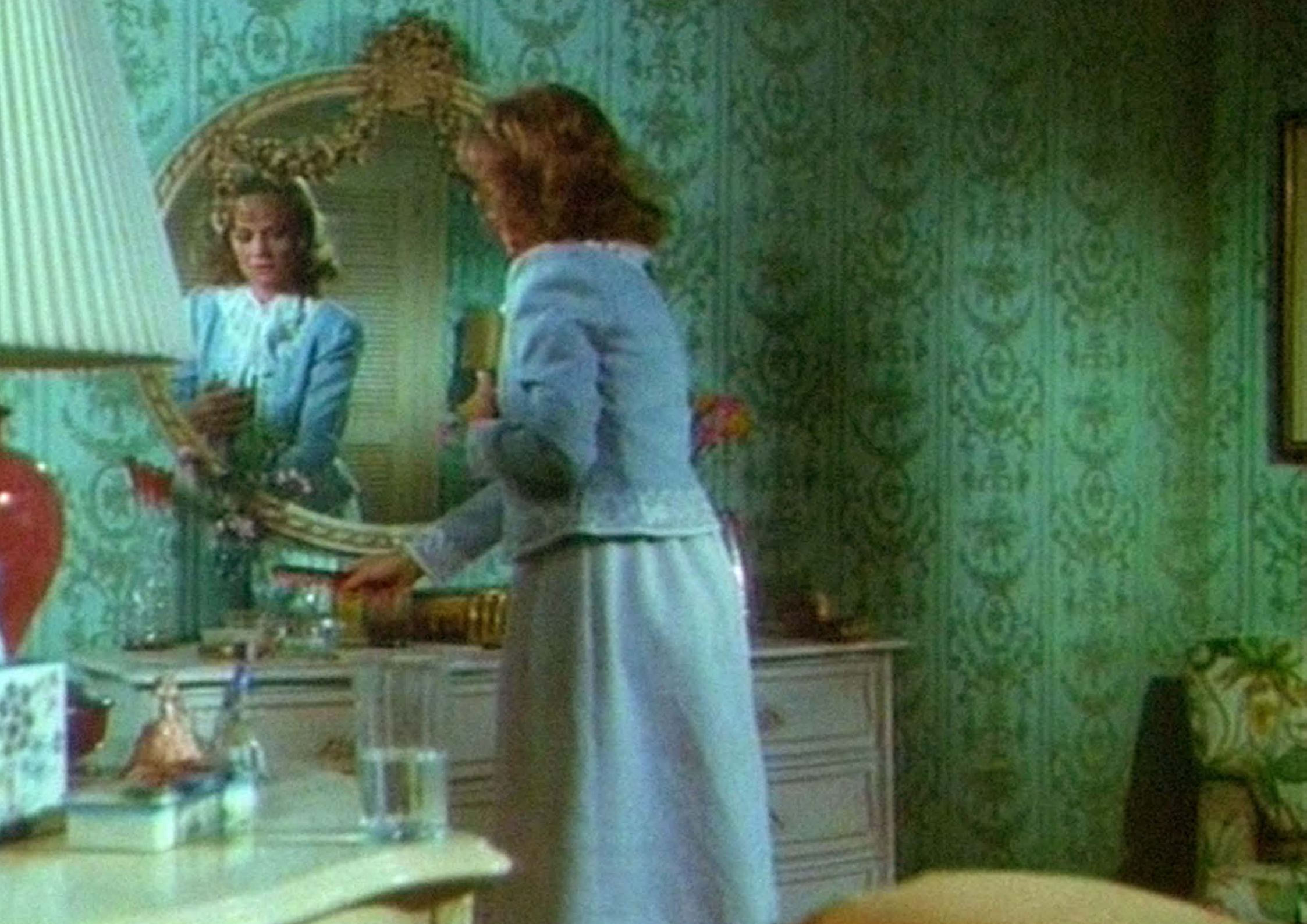
2010  
Short film / Installation / Found footage,  
3:13 minutes, English  
Single channel projection as loop  
320x 400x 210 cm











The video installation ultimate answers combines a fake living room environment with a video projection. The projected video shows newly arranged found footage. The original material of the video sequences is from an American prime time soap opera from the eighties: "Falcon Crest" directed by Earl Hamner Jr. The video compares the feeling of falling in love with mental illness. The different characters of the TV soap opera are combined to one personality. This figure symbolizes the chaos of feelings when falling in love, respectively initiating insanity. The video shows isolated individuals, communicating only through the editing. By seating oneself (for example on the sofa) in the installation, the viewer is facing an electric fireplace surrounded by a typical British living room setting. The video projection is located in the back of the audience and appears as "thoughts" - as a kind of "mental sound". So the viewer has to turn around to clear his mind.



# Der Vogt von Elspe

2008 - 2009

Short film / Installation, 10:00 minutes, German

Single channel projection as loop

74x 960x 230 cm

Cinematography: David Jazay, Timo Katz, Judy Ross

Cast: Hilde & Judy Ross, Julia Koslowski, Gerd Hüttemann, Sabine Muhr, Rolf Rüsch, Otmar Schneider, Birgit Safarek, Berthold Duwe

Installation: Michael & Judy Ross

Supported by

ü.NN Kultur and Kunstverein Südsauerland with the  
Attendorner Kulturstipendium, 2008











#### No place, no time, a trauma, an amateur play

When inviting to Attendorn an artist such as Judy Ross, whose work stages accounts of daily occurrences in strange, Dada-inspired three-dimensional multimedia installations, chances are that she will address the local context. But rather than a chronicler of daily life, who coerces events into the seemingly compelling logic of our linear understanding of history, Judy Ross acts as a “storyteller” who enhances the facts with fiction by merging them with an unlikely synchronicity of historic events.

Ross’s installation *Der Vogt von Elspe* (The Bailiff from the village of Elspe) confronts spectators with extreme time jumps, bringing together a 500 year-old solitary bailiff, an “empress-queen” (a hybrid figure between Emperor Otto III (980–1002) and Queen Elisabeth II) and a 19th-century doctor called Dr. Parnemann in a health resort. While the latter two are played by amateur actors (respectively the artist’s mother and the artist herself), the bailiff is merely hinted at by way of a reconstructed flat in the shape of a film set.

No-one and nothing is what he or it really is. There is no point at which the installation purports the illusion of au-

thenticity. Hence the three protagonists are mere stand-ins for an absence, or symbols, if you will: the bailiff represents the medieval justice system, the empress-queen symbolizes dictatorship as idealized by the media, and the doctor stands for healing – or so it seems. Or does the image of the familiarly antiquated reconstruction of a flat and the symbolism enshrined in the empress-queen/mother and doctor/daughter matrix betray a topical generational conflict?

The exterior views showing the queen on her way to Elspe alternate with a sequence based on found footage. The excerpts show images from a shooting contest in Elspe which took place in 1939. The village, as was common back then, is draped in swastika flags. Here, another time layer sneaks into the confusing juxtaposition of stories, though not as a fictional reconstruction but in the shape of a historical document. In the following sequence, the empress-queen is seen sitting in prayer in front of a stuffed stag’s head, the icon par excellence of the rural bourgeoisie’s connection with nature – an image of death caught in infinity that recalls the symbolic representation of Jesus on the Cross.

Nationalism, hunting trophy and bigotry: aren’t these elements of a symbolic understanding which sociology

describes as a rural mechanism of self-protection against the purported danger emanating from the threatening and unfathomable world outside?

Judy Ross ceaselessly entangles viewers in the never-ending story of a past which finds no end or redemption and provides no intermediate space between dream and optional reality. Extracting it from its theatrical context, she thus uses the amateur play as a means to articulate this experience in the here and now.

Hans D. Chris,  
Director of the Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart



# Erase the image

Script abstract    The snowflakes grew larger and larger.  
At last it was like a young lady,  
made of a million flakes, like stars.  
She was beautiful, but out of ice: sparkling ice.

And, as it seemed to her,  
the waves nodded in a strange manner,  
she began to cry; but no one heard her  
except the snow drops;  
they sunk immediately into the dark earth.

The walls of the castle  
were formed of drifted snow  
and cutting wind.  
Empty, vast and cold  
were the halls of the Snow Queen.  
In the midst of its empty,  
endless halls was a frozen lake:  
the mirror of reason,  
broken on its surface into a thousand forms.

2007 - 2008  
Short film / Installation, 2:57 minutes, English  
3 Rear projections, 1 ground projection and  
3 TVs in sync as loop  
220x 330x 250 cm  
Cinematography: Aubrey Fernandez  
Animation: Daniel Geis, David Kretz, Trent Noble  
Cast: Kelly Moynihan, Simon Clark,  
Daniel Geis, Rona Lee

Supported by  
DAAD Project Scholarship  
Artist in Residence Banff Centre (Canada), 2007







This work is based on the ephemerality of memories. Fragments of H.C. Andersen's "Snow Queen" and the German lullaby song "Wiegenlied" by Franz Schubert make up the narration. The different elements of the story are divided into various channels all of which play simultaneously. The characters are: the Snow Queen, posing as a model and singing the lullaby, the Piano Player, who musically accompanies the Snow Queen's voice and the ecstatic and ephemeral Cowboy, who appears and disappears like a dream in an idealized nature. Erase the Image exposes how memories of the deceased slowly fade and how idealized pictures take their place.



# Pension Rita

The viewers enter the installation through a life size door and find themselves in a girl's room. The construction of the free standing room is always visible because of the missing ceiling. The installation is a bittersweet experience of a dysfunctional family in the Pension Rita, a run down guesthouse in Berlin. The characters are Chantal, Miss Rita (Chantal's mother) and her friend Dr. Geiger. These characters have created fictitious identities with appropriate ambitions, behaviors and personalities, as refuge from their troubled lives. For them, there is no question that their identities are constructed.

In her room, Chantal lives in her own fantasy world to escape from the conflict with her mother. Her fantasy world involves two whales that live in the cellar full of water. Taking comfort in this fantasy, she has lost contact with the outside world. To the audience, the room appears recently left and Chantal herself is only visible through her footprints on the floor, like a ghost. The footprints trace her daily movements from her bed to the window to the television, where her mother, Dr. Geiger and the other guests in the Pension Rita are at a coffee party gossiping about Chantal.

The viewer is literally immersed in the reality of a young, depressed woman and is able to witness both the effects and the causes of her affliction.

*2006  
Short film / Installation, 3:43 minutes, German  
2 TVs, 1 wall projection and 1 ground projection  
in sync as loop  
250x 320x 220 cm  
Cinematography: David Jazay, Ina Gecke, Judy Ross  
Cast: Hilde Ross, Gisela Hampel,  
Horst & Sofie Bergemann, Hassan Akkouch,  
Tonny Kondo, Osman  
Installation: Michael & Judy Ross*

*Supported by  
NaföG (Postgraduate Aid by the City of Berlin)  
Federal Award for Fine Art by the German Federal  
Ministry of Education and Research in Bonn, 2007  
Meisterschülerpreis, 2006*









# Dr. Gordon

Script abstract      The saddest thing was  
When the last nurse died  
And the mannequins for wedding gowns

In those days,  
When people still climbed  
Venice’s gondolas full of hope  
Just ignoring the green slime,  
When the rounded bellies of women  
gushing into the strollers

When one would still admire  
Someone’s glowing, flawless skin  
And the echo of high heels  
reached someone’s ears  
And not simulated by pills and tubes

When a mother still stood  
at her stove for hours  
To serve the last zebra for consumption  
We buried the hooves in front of the door  
Because of ancient superstition  
So everything would be right and good  
Yet, one can’t undo the past

2005  
Short film / Installation, 6:48 minutes, German  
3 Wall projections, 3 TVs as loop  
25 Slide projections on cardboard boxes  
280x 530x 480 cm  
Cinematography: David Jazay, Judy Ross  
Cast: Jörg Starke, Jaime Ortis, Boris Schulmeister,  
Uwe Meyer, Elke Schneider, Judy Ross  
Music: Neven Dayvid, Yasir Hamdan







*Dr. Gordon* is an absurd environment of a destroyed city, installed as short films and slide projections. The main character is Dr. Gordon. His looped monologue is a dystopic science fiction based speech about human beings, who live hopelessly in a world of total surveillance. The characters (which include the Nurse, the Soldier, and the Girl on the Swing) live in a city where they observe while being observed by each other. In the installation viewers feel the atmosphere of visceral trepidation. The heat and the sound of the projectors create a stressful environment, much like being in a contemporary metropolis.



# Detektiv Ross

2003  
Short film / Installation, 11:40 minutes, German  
Single channel projection as loop  
280x 530x 480 cm  
Cinematography: Jan Molzberger,  
Frank Bartsch, Judy Ross  
Cast: Judy Ross







The viewers enter the installation of a detective's office, which includes a 1:10 scaled down miniature of the office and it's surroundings. The short film about Detective Ross, a neurotic hero, is projected on the wall inside the installation. The story is a mockery of a classic whodunit (a classic crime story) with an obviously senseless search for clues in a model of a crime site.



# Die Freiheit fliegt nicht

## Script abstract

Crow:  
Karrk, Karrk. Your “Madame in a Halo”  
should have been a lighthouse,  
but these days  
there are paying tourists in her head!

Frédéric August Bartholdi:  
Don’t be so aggravating!  
You flying creatures ...  
You can’t create greater things –  
your wings aren’t able to do anything except fly!

Crow:  
You and your monument are too heavy to fly!

2003

*Video performance, 9:20 minutes, German*

*Single channel projection*

*Produced by Jörg Rüsewald*

*Cinematography: Jörg Rüsewald, Judy Ross*

*Cast: Hilde & Judy Ross*







This performance is a dialogue between the sculptor of the statue of liberty (Frédéric August Bartholdi) and his conscience - a crow as a video projection. The dialogue analyzes the meaning of the term/idea "liberty" and the contemporary understanding of "La liberté illumine le monde".



# Judy Ross

Judy Ross studied at the Berlin University of the Arts and the Royal Danish Art Academy in Copenhagen. Ross' short films and video installations have been exhibited in numerous solo and group shows across Europe, USA, Canada, China, and New Zealand. Judy Ross was the recipient of several national and civic grants: Federal Award for Fine Art by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, ifa - International Exhibition-Funding, DAAD Short-Term Project Scholarship for Canada and Work Scholarship by the City of Berlin. Ross was an Artist in Residence at International Art Residency Beijing, China and at Banff Centre, Canada. She works as guest lecturer at universities in Germany and China.

Judy Ross lives and works in Berlin.  
[www.judyross.de](http://www.judyross.de)