

## Shahryar Nashat - *Das Beispiel (The Example)*

April 26 to June 28, 2008

It is perhaps through a considered re-building of forms and things as examples (or even more profoundly through trying to have them built) that their underlining structures can be manifested for critique. By way of example, ostensibly, Shahryar Nashat's exhibition *Das Beispiel (The Example)*, involves the building and display of an enigmatic, abstract almost mystically resonant concrete sculpture. But each of the related works in the exhibition - all displayed in a colour and light coded and dramatized space - echo the sculpture's near or partial absence.

A video, *Das Beispiel* (2008), in some ways starts and finishes in the middle of a longer path, creates anticipation but never allowing the expected climax or narrative closure of the action. In the work the larger than life conical object is shown under construction. However, it never fully appears in this documented process of its making, and in particular, its sky pointing pinnacle is never revealed. The sequence of events is arranged like a series of episodes punctuated with fields of grey underscored by samples of J.S. Bach's *Concerto in A-Minor, BWV 1065*. But something is always left out, truncated and withheld.

The video also features three protagonists: Adriano, a commentator enlisted to play something between himself and a stand-in for the artist whose task is to observe and narrate; and David and Philipp, a pair hired-hands complicit but nevertheless also just doing their job rendering the surface of the sculptural prop. The cone form suggested itself to Nashat after reading Thomas Bernhard's novel 'Correction' (1975), and it is from this book that Adriano – the artist's stand-in – recites as he disappears huffing and puffing up a path in forest covered hill, continually repeating the lines: “ We're always set toward that predetermined moment. When that moment has come, we don't know that it has come, but it is the right moment. We can exist at the highest degree of intensity as long as we live. The end is no process. Clearing.” An inspiration, rather than strictly an appropriated referent, the exhibition is not “about” Bernhard's novel, but a harder to quantify something else. In the video Adriano improvises an explanation for the workers about the work, explaining that: 'the work and the film, the work with you both, that's what you could say is the main thing... the novel actually fades away more and more and this sculpture and this work takes on its own life [...] the corrections have corrected themselves [...] Essentially its about building this thing.’ The logic that the cone is being built simply because of the work it involves suggests a folly. It's clear that production or work per se

is not the only subject – except perhaps in the sense that a lot of time effort and work has been done to manifest an empty perhaps melancholic centre. There are also other complications for instance, there is an obvious discomfort in the staged relationship between Adriano and the workers. One of them seems aware of his attractiveness (the potential unattainable or at very least inappropriate object of desire rather than the phallic cone), and the camera and editing is utilized to acknowledge this readily.

The videos companion pieces are *Plattform* and *Monument*. The latter consists of a near room filling bulk of gridded scaffolding cast in pale blue light, a mausoleum for an outline or shape. Finally through a wall a crack opens up allowing a beam of white light. Unreachable, barely visible in a sealed chamber of sorts lies the object - a toppled monument in repose.

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