The Animatograph, a apparatus resuscitated from early film history, unites different elements of visual and performing arts into a new format. It is a rotating stage construction, an “actionistic photo-plate” which is used as a recording and filmic and acoustical projection device. Animated by life interventions, superimposed by overlaying film projections and ambient soundscapes, The Animatograph incorporates thematically episodes of a Mystery House murder-story with current Islandic occurrences and the world of Iceland’s sagas.
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INTRODUCTION TO
THE ANIMATOGRAPH PROJECT

by Francesca von Habsburg

When Christoph Schlingensief first walked into the Thyssen-Bornemisza Art
Contemporary offices in Vienna, six months ago, I don’t believe that he really
knew where he was, who I was, and certainly not what the T-B A21 foundation does!
But his instincts were right on target it seems, just as always. He lives and
works very spontaneously, but at the same time, nothing about his work is not
deeply considered in his mind, which races at the most extraordinary speed. He
rushed me through two hours of a stream of images, video clips, entire acts of
“Parsifal” with music, from one continent to another, jumping back and forth de-
veloping his ideas through a visual language, which left me aghast! His seductive
charm together with the “tourbillon” of images and ideas fit perfectly together
with a language that I have been leaning recently through the Dan Graham, Tony
Oursler and Rodney Graham production of “Don’t Trust Anyone Over Thirty” in Miami.
The language of a position that is not defined by one art form or another. A ma-
trix of expression, that is layered with images of Schlingensief’s extraordinar-
ily rich visual language, and whilst the bad boy of German theater dreams of other
horizons, he already has them all in his laptop.
A couple of weeks later I received a quick-time rendering in 3D of the first
>Animatograph<, with projections of his past work flowing over screens as it ro-
tated around and around my desktop. I was dizzy with excitement! A project was
born and whilst sometimes I wait respectfully for months (even years) for some
artists to become available, then conceive and develop their projects, here was
one I could absolutely see happening immediately. At the very same time, I was
planning my next trip to Iceland in January, and heard about the appointment of
Jessica Morgan from the Tate Modern, to the Reykjavik Arts Festival, which was
conceived around the Dieter Roth retrospective at Reykjavik’s two major muse-
ums, the National Gallery of Iceland and the Reykjavik Art Museum/Hafnarhus.
A perfect combination of coincidences started to push >The Animatograph< into
its first journey. What better company could Schlingensief have for his art-installation than Roth and some of the new generation artists whose work he certainly had some influence over such as John Bock and Jonathan Meese. He liked the idea very much and a month later we were scouting in Iceland. Braving the subzero temperatures, I watched Schlingensief immerse himself in the culture, the people, the history of Iceland, but most of all in the Sagas. There was a moment in the truly remarkable Museum of Ethnology of Iceland, when the commitment to Iceland and this project really took form. I could see the images flashing through his mind. The following months we drew up a plan for the future of The Animatograph, which included traveling it to Baktapur, in Nepal, Namibia, the rain forest in Brazil and possibly Jamaica, as a collector of myths and sagas from around the world. These myths represent man’s obsession with fear, and a currency of protection against evil, in all parts of the world. So it is appropriate that The Animatograph is born in Iceland, and from here will continue its journey around the world.

It needs to be understood about The Animatograph that it is a “work in transit”, collecting sagas, myths, symbols and paranoid fears from all continents and translating them into an ever evolving sequence of images, that The Animatograph will collect and disseminate at the same time as it circles our lives and questions are existence. It is our Holy Grail.
Pictures are always just reproductions. They are the one-way-mirror window of a representation that inevitably has already forfeited a certain amount of authenticity; pictures lack transparency, in more than one sense of the word. Up to the present day, neither the “old” nor the new media have succeeded in opening this window – not only to project the presenting and presented person, but also to make this person into a projector. The creation of multi-layered spatial projections was attempted in the 1920s by artists such as László Moholy-Nagy, with his Light-Space-Modulator, or Ray Eames, the American architect who experimented with spatial complexity and overlay until the end of the 1980s. With Meyerhold, Eisenstein and Piscator, projections found their way into the theater, dissolving its characteristic boundaries of time and space and multiplying the possible levels of theatrics and of reality.

In the course of staging his productions “Atta Atta” und “Bambiland” (both in 2003), Christoph Schlingensief hit on the idea for a large-scale project in several parts, which became more clearly defined during his work on the stage set for “Parsifal” (Bayreuth Festival, 2004). During his recent production of “Kunst und Gemüse” (Volksbühne Berlin, 2004), Schlingensief developed a concrete plan for integrating and merging the disciplines in which he has worked – theater, opera, film and actionism –, freeing them from unmitigated art – acting – and entrusting them, in a kind of “Life Machine”, to the everyday stagings and rituals of people outside of the artistic sphere. 

The Animatograph is, first of all, a mobile revolving stage installation, with the usual construction elements and equipment, which not only gives visitors a frontal view but also permits entry. Visitors can then operate the set, act on and react to the installation, “take the stage” as it were and direct their own scenes; at the same time they can use the installation by applying it to their own everyday lives and cultures.
In a figurative sense, the revolving stage installation is an “actionistic photographic plate”, which globally and cross-culturally captures the happenings taking place upon it and, wherever it is set up, projects the filmed, photographed and acoustic documentations of these happenings anew, each time enriched with the images of the previous stations.

> The Animatograph< can therefore claim
1) to present this “Life Machine”,
2) to activate it and
3) to hand it over to the local machinists - us.

At first >The Animatograph< is to be set up for weekly periods in various places all over the earth, in Iceland, Germany, Central Europe, Africa and Central Asia as well as North and South America, and made available for “for use”, e.g. in a Nepalese marketplace, in a Namibian slum, a “liberated zone” in East Germany, a Brazilian favela and an amusement park in the USA. Following this, the intention is to hold “happening weeks” at central locations in Berlin, Buenos Aires, New York, Reykjavik, Windhoek and Tokyo. Each station will create its own energy field, which will gradually become charged by its users, through everyday actions as well as through religious rites or artistic acts. In each place, the images, objects, sounds and music will be documented and, by means of projections and recordings, become part of the installation at the following stations. Thus, gradually, a hyperprojection will be created. The picture that is exposed will be that of a universal culture.

In a second phase, >The Animatograph< will be transported from the culturally dependent stage of everyday life back to the traditional artistic sphere and will be given presentations and performances at selected theaters (e.g. the National-theater Reykjavik), opera houses (e.g. the Staatsoper Unter den Linden in Berlin), museums (e.g. the Kunsthalle Wien in Vienna, Museum of Modern Art New York) and festivals, where it will also be made available to its visitors for use.

“Even at the time when I was the assistant of experimental filmmaker Werner Nekes, I already had the dream of uniting all the media in which I had worked up to that time with the viewer to create a Gesamtorganismus, a synthesis of art and life in which the viewer no longer merely views, but steps out of his world into the vision-and-shadow world of >The Animatograph<, which he exposes like a photographic plate with his experiences and energy charges.”

(Christoph Schlingensief, 2005)
The project picks up efforts of first English film producer Robert William Paul (1869–1943), to follow “the trace of events” with a new camera eye and to take part in a “modern model of cultural information”, which was created by development of photography, stage technology, illustrated press an early film.

“The possibilities of moved photographs are not in the least used so far.”
Robert W. Paul, 1896

On March 25th, 1896 Paul presented his Animatograph in the London Alhambra Theatre, a projector, which he had first announced as Theatrograph, according to his own theatre experiences.

1891 Paul had opened a factory for electrical instruments. In 1894 he began to copy the Edison Kinetoskop, together with photographer Birt Acres. First film tests they showed at the beginning of 1895. One year later Paul passed over to projection procedure and presented his Theatrograph on February 20th, 1896. A public demonstration followed on March 19th at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly Circus. Artist David Devant projected all overlaying mobile photographs on stage of the theatre. Shortly after Paul briefly renamed the equipment Animatograph, because the theatre notation did not appear to him trend-setting enough. He set great store by the versatile usability of the Animatograph. It wasn’t his goal to reform the old medium (theatre) by new film; his goal was a medium-spreading culture apparatus, which projected not only on static stage, but even out of the illusory worlds on the real world stage.

“The Animatograph is not an artificial eye, not a camera, but a human visual organ. It is the viewer seeing himself and, in doing so, leaving traces, the way images leave traces on the retina.” Christoph Schlingensief, 2005

“The Animatograph unites different elements of visual and performing arts into a new format. Following avant-garde film and theatre and their respective aesthetic paradigms, The Animatograph formulates a breaking up of the projection field
The Animatograph project picks up efforts of first English film producer Robert Stott. It is a large-scale project in several parts, which became more clearly one another, dissolving the boundaries between realities and arts in a single display. Each station will be used as projection surface to essential films by Christoph Schlingensief. During his recent production of "Kunst und Gemüse" (2004), during the 2nd, performative cornerstone is the "model" of the prototype of Iceland and the Reykjavik Art Museum/Hafnarhus. A perfect combination of coincidences started to push this person into a projector. The creation of multi-layered configuration of the installation to cultural or religious rituals. The animatic compound, the full beauty and power is revealed in the combination of the different cells. The growth of each cell will happen live in front of the spectator’s eye. At the same time, the spatial layering of the work psychically takes in the viewer, who is in the centre of action. The Animatograph not only offers insight into a moving and cross-fading – i.e. living – installation; it lets the viewer actually enter into and act upon the installation, which is thereby brought to life.

The human being is the organ that activates the spatial body, the “Life Machine”. The human being’s eye is the camera that photographs the world. The Animatograph not only becomes visible, it becomes perceivable. It is necessary to animate it and explore it, to perceive it as an open stage, as a – to paraphrase Shakespeare – “stage of life”.

“Like a life-sized photographic plate, the Animatograph captures not only the materials of the respective location, but also its light exposure, the acoustic and energetic charge it receives through the people of that location.”

Christoph Schlingensief, 2005

The Animatograph consists of various parts. On its base, it is a giant revolving stage, divided into numerous spatial segments to be used as projection surface to essential films by Christoph Schlingensief. Each segment will feature four to six newly edited looped film sequences and will function like an independent cell, producing and building its own dynamics of an idiosyncratic installation. Like an animate compound, the full beauty and power is revealed in the combination of the different cells. The growth of each cell will happen live in front of the spectator’s eye. At the same time, the spatial layering of the work psychically takes in the viewer, who is in the centre of action. The Animatograph not only offers insight into a moving and cross-fading – i.e. living – installation; it lets the viewer actually enter into and act upon the installation, which is thereby brought to life.

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“The human being is the organ that activates the spatial body, the “Life Machine”.”

Christoph Schlingensief, 2005
On the revolving stage, a constantly fluctuating space-and-life world is installed, which, through new constructions, projections and, especially, its accessibility for visitors, continually changes and develops, without aiming for any particular final objective. Instead, the focus is on in-between times, our in-between time, the moment – one’s own little experience in the great and endless cosmos of the whole.

Here (in the modern myth) as there (classical myths), the focus is on the human being and the human being’s relationship with nature and with beings such as gods or cultural heirs (heroes). The object is to discover and project the beliefs and stores of knowledge of a community as well as the things that keep the individual anchored in the world. In the search for the modern myth, the basic equipment includes specific fragments from Nordic, or to be more precise, old Icelandic lore (the “Edda”), Germanic mythology and African (nature) religions. The “Edda” con-
tains visions (“Prophecy of the Vala”) in which human beings are confronted with higher powers, gods and heroes, visions that are to be put on film for »The Animatograph«. An explicit theme of Germanic mythology is the search for worldly and divine bliss, as expressed, for example, in the Nibelungenlied and the legend of the Grail, a search which Schlingensief has already begun in his work with Wagnerian subject matter and which he intends to intensify in »The Animatograph«. In African and also in Central Asian shamanism, the belief in gods and the experience of the inner self play an important role as a social regulation mechanism for the community. By means of the ritual integration of historic events through their symbolic reinterpretation, these cultures hope to gain insight and strength for their present survival and for the safeguarding of their common future. Through ancient European cultural evidence, »The Animatograph« creates a bridge to the world of African shamans and to the living tradition of Asian religious rituals, transforming them through the instruments of art (and through art itself) into the here and now. Ancient archetypes, which »The Animatograph« projects onto our era.
The German artist, filmmaker, and theater director Christoph Schlingensief has developed a mobile revolving stage installation entitled >The Animatograph< for the 2005 Reykjavik Arts Festival. This contribution to the Icelandic festival, which was co-produced by Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, will be presented for the first time with a performance by Christoph Schlingensief at the Klink og Bank Gallery in Reykjavik on 14 May 2005.

“And the earth rifted apart and revealed a gash.”

“Here at this place, where the New and Old Worlds drift apart at a rate of 8 mm a year, the prototype of >The Animatograph< comes into being. A soul writer. A walk-on photo plate. An organic body situated between mankind’s oldest wish for government (Thingvellir) and the house of ungovernable obsessions (Holmur). Here, on this earth crust fringe, spirits ride our bodies; here the biggest film I’ll ever make begins. From this fringe, we will travel the earth, crossing cultural and civilizational rape crime scenes to reach the African underworld in October, to search for the hammer, to make holes in the walls to our neighbors next door, and, after announcing to the world the ostrich egg, to fly to Nepal, and from there to the plastic coffins inside the American twin tomb... A dream I fulfill for myself. For anyone who casts a look at >The Animatograph< exposes it. And anyone who steps onto it is exposed.” Christoph Schlingensief
Thingvellir, 50 km east of the Icelandic capital Reykjavik, is the place where the oldest existing national parliament convened in 930 AD, situated on the edge of a deep earth crack where the North-American and Eurasian continental plates drift apart several millimeters every year. Here, order and obsession coincide from which the idea of government and the forces of nature emanate.

At this magic place, Christoph Schlingensief developed his most recent project, The Animatograph – Iceland Edition. Destroy Thingvellir. His provocative view of the paranoid, claustrophobic, and obsessive inclinations of human nature shows the human torn between good and evil. Man’s confrontation with higher powers such as spirits, gods, and mythical heroes is an expression of this struggle in which rituals of purification and symbolical metamorphosis play an important role, too. Schlingensief draws on, and combines, Nordic-European, African and Asian spiritual traditions and interweaves filmic visions of the Wagnerian interpretation of the legend of the Holy Grail with shamanistic traditions and Nordic sagas such as the “Edda”.

The Animatograph, a projection apparatus from early film history, combines elements of the visual and performing arts into a new format. The revolving stage construction, an “actionist photo plate”, is used both as a recorder and as a film and sound projector. Live interventions are supplemented with overlapping film projections and sound environments.

Drawing: Tobias Buser
May 2005
Photos pp. 14/15:
Shooting for the Animatograph Iceland
May 2005
And the graves opened, and many bodies of the deceased rose and went from their graves into town, and appeared to many. They laid hold on people and wrapped them in canvas so as to make an image of them.

The Animatograph is based on a series of new films, shot on different locations in Iceland in collaboration with local artists, musicians, and (amateur) actors. The performance character of the installation undercuts the usual one-directional communication between actors and audience and involves viewers as participants, renouncing the sole authority of the author with regard to the reading of the work: Schlingensief unfolds the narrative through the use of filmic and media paradigms.

Christoph Schlingensief sees his project as a living organism, which reloads at every stop along its way. With its “Icelandic collectibles”, The Animatograph travels on to Namibia, Nepal, and the USA.

“Every exposure to light needs the dark. The Animatograph is the dark side of this exposure.” Christoph Schlingensief

With the support of: Hauser & Wirth, Zurich London, The National Theater of Iceland, Reykjavík, Klink og Bank, Reykjavík, and Landsbanki Islands
Commissioned by Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary
In collaboration with the Klink & Bank

Artistic Director: Christoph Schlingensief
Actors: Karin Witt, Klaus Beyer, Christoph Schlingensief, Jörg van der Horst, Arnar Jónsson, Björn Thors, Eðill Heidar, Anton Pálsson, Gudrún Gísladóttir, Lílla Gudrún Porrálsdóttir, Nina Dögg Fillipusdóttir, Ölfur Eigilsson, Sólveig Arnarsdóttir, Unnur Stefánsdóttir

Artists from Klink & Bank for “Prize Ceremony” at Thingvellir:
Guðmundur Oddur Magnússon, Daniel Björnsson, Snorri Asmundsson, Sírra Sigurðardóttir, Erling Klingenberg, Sigurður Björg Sigurðardóttir, Omar Stefansson, Nina Magnúsdottr, Unnar Audarson

Construction: Thekla von Mülheim, Tobias Buser, Ulfr Grönvold, Daniel Björnsson, Pål Banine, Pål Einarsson

Property Master: Harry Johansson

Sound-Design: David Por Jonsson, Helgi Svavar Helgason

Helping Hands: Lará Skjalbriea, Finnur Ragnarsson, Petur Hauksson, Guðmundur Hauksson

Lights: Björn Guðmundsson

Costume: Aino Laberenz

Camera: Kathrin Krottenthaler, Henning Nass

Editing: Kathrin Krottenthaler, Kristian Zelinsky

Assistant to Director, research and oestrich: Jörg van der Horst

Artistic and production advices: Henning Nass

Production Management Germany: Anna Schulz, Holger Schulz

Production Management Iceland: Nina Magnusdóttir

Production Management Austria: Daniela Zyman, Eva Ebersberger

Graphic Design: Gudur (Guðmundur Oddur Magnusson)

Webdesign: Patrick Hells

Tea and picnics: Francesca von Habsburg

Photos: Aino Laberenz, Christoph Schlingensief, Jörg van der Horst

With special thanks to: The National Theater – Tinna Gunnlaugsdóttir, Lydur Sigurðsson, Margret Sigurðardóttir, Askell Gunnlaugsson at Toyota, Bjarni Ingolfsson at Vaka, Asgeir Fríðgeirsson, Claudia Kaloff, Hedi Pottag, Nathalia Stochon, Arno Weich und Philipp Krummel

With the support of: Galerie Hauser & Wirth, Zürich, Isländisches Nationaltheater, Reykjavik, Isländische Landesbank.

REYKJAVIK ARTS FESTIVAL 2005

Christoph Schlingensief: >The Animatograph< – Iceland Edition. Destroy Thingvellir

Klink og Bank Gallery

Brautarholt 1, 105 Reykjavík

Preopening with live performance: Friday, May 13, 2005 at 5 pm

Opening with live performance: Saturday, May 14, 2005, at 7 pm

Additional live performance: Sunday, May 15, 2005 at 7 pm

Duration of the exhibition: May 18–June, 5, 2005, opening hours: Wednesday to Sunday, from 2 pm to 6 pm
The Universe Has No Shadow
Christoph Schlingensief in conversation with Gerhard Ahrens

GA: Some two weeks ago, you arrived at the airport of Neuhardenberg with your crew. Since then, you have worked on the German edition of your Animatograph. This is the second venue after Iceland.

CS: Actually, it’s the third venue because the first Animatography, ‘Parsifal’ at Bayreuth, was not declared a venue.

GA: ‘Parsifal’ would then have been the prelude of the Animatograph, as it is the prelude of the ‘Ring of the Nibelung’.

CS: Yes. This all came out of the primeval soup of the ‘pre’. Bayreuth was the pre-stage of the Animatograph in which the transformation of ‘Here time turns into space’ no longer occurs in the closed theater space; instead, the Animatograph as an organism was exposed to cosmic radiation in Iceland and also here in Neuhardenberg. The environment becomes the organism’s elixir of life.

GA: The revolving stage with projections, which is at the heart of the Animatograph that you have developed, was also used by Piscator. And then, at the same time, Brecht tried to cope with the main problem of the theater, namely, how to effect the fusion of actor and spectator in space. This was later taken up by Heiner Müller, who wanted to activate the audience by referring to
Brecht's idea of the great debate. The goal was starting a broad discussion which directly leads to a different idea of democracy.

CS: Mentioning names like Piscator or Brecht—I would also include Müller and Schleef—is of course quite a burden. These are extremely high standards, and it's terribly difficult to come up with something to show for in this field, in the sense of Dieter Roth or Beuys. This process of loving and embracing, the process of 'letting all participate', including nature and the place here, that was the moment to leave the trodden paths of the theater. Not to say: we'll take the large hangar, but: we'll go into the bunker to play there for one and a half hours. It was only by leaving the trodden paths that the Animatograph project was made possible here.

Some day, you drive around the airport premises, you turn hard to the left and drive into the woods where you suddenly discover a chimney and another wall. And you start thinking that this configuration must have some logic to it, almost like a constellation. This must lead somewhere or have some kind of meaning. So you get to a hidden place, a place of which nobody really knows how to get there. There are some locals who tell about the old days when weapons were stored here. You get to know them—beer helps—and when it gets dark, they come out of their holes with their Kalashnikovs to shoot some hares. For the broad public, you have an air show next door, and this mini airport pretends to be an air traffic hub like Frankfurt.
You encounter things and forces that belong together this way and no other. These forces are not dead yet, which means that our corpses are still alive. We don’t simply crap up this ritualistic place here with our own ritual. I think that actors like Horst Gelloneck or Helga and Achim von Paczensky with their personal strength are able to relate to things without bias or resentment. Karin Witt and Klaus Beyer, who both participated in the Icelandic Animatograph already, released incredible forces here, too. They paint, play, sing, and are important parts of the whole project. They all come in here, they find something and use it as an object. I’m trying myself to kind of plunge in so that I’m really ridden by some god or something. The images and symbols here are actually beginning to interact.

GA: So ‘Parsifal’ was the eve, the prelude of the Animatograph, the first evening is Iceland, and then there is a second evening, this is here at Neuhardenberg. This will be followed by Namibia and end with another edition at the Vienna
Burgtheater before you return to Iceland. The venue that you have found and chosen at Neuhardenberg is a high-security complex.

CS: Yes, this was an ammunition depot.

GA: This is a terrain with different buildings on it, which you have to explore walking and in which things are installed. It has got something of a paper chase.

CS: Bayreuth would deserve that kind of paper chase, too. As would the Burgtheater. I want to have the audience on the stage and lead them around. People must be able to walk around. The monopoly of the spectator sitting comfortably in his row must be broken. The spectator must go on an exploration. Here, you lose your bearings as soon as you drive up to this place. The people who come here, who pass this gate, do not know any longer where they are. On the one hand, you enter safely; on the other, there is this latent anxiety about what’s going to happen. People have their expectations about me, you know, that something provocative might bounce right out of the bunker, spray cream squirting or what not … But this is not the case here. The spectator walking through will finally enter the Animatograph, a mausoleum with an open condolences book, and he will be like electrically charged by a multitude of impressions. And this is then documented. This is the most powerful weapon one has today, documentation, the memory. Activating the memory is always okay, but it is awfully difficult, too. That’s something I come to realize here once again. This is a very important point to make.

The Icelandic Animatograph we produced by using the sudden emergent forces that we encountered driving through the vast landscape—encounters with the cosmos of the Edda, quotations, indications given by the locals. This resulted in a shimmering, almost Nepal-like state of mind. In Iceland, the Animatograph was a space in which people exposed themselves to sounds and images for almost an hour and a half. It’s most beautiful when you sit in there alone. The whole thing is pretty complex and intricate. The Animatograph is a living creature, an organism which decides on its own, through the forces operative in it, whether it wants to become even more intricate. It insists on representing the place it originates from. And it takes the place of the previous venue with it, so as to say: ‘This is my memory, this is my intuition, this is the intuitive field of forces stored inside me. You are all inside me.’ Sometimes it only takes five minutes for things to come together and to work. Actually, we work quite in the sense of the Edda method. The Icelandic word for ‘translate’ literally means ‘thaw’. We are in fact thawing out. We are frozen things afraid of being exposed to heat. We are just thawing out, and this
gives us a possibility of starting to flow; and that flow is a great liberation in the first place. Even if we know that, like in Wagner’s death of love, everything will end in a twilight of the Gods, in sorrow-born out of sorrow, died in sorrow. We were created out of nothingness and have become gods and yearn for humans to become nothing again, to become gods again, to be able to transform. This movement is right and important, but you must be able to wait for it to happen.

GA: The like should be done by the viewer and spectator.

CS: The ideal state would be to see yourself as the light you have to stare into until you are blinded. In fact, it is the most obvious things in most cases. Here space turns into time and time into space. You become part of the animatographic experiment yourself. That is the formula which is in there, but which everybody has to compute for himself. You may experience that you are sitting in an endless time machine here. My dream of the development of this organism, as far as I can see right now, some time, in three or five years from now, is building a sixteen-meter Animatograph with an all-round screen on which all films ever made for it are showing, permanently overlapping so that they develop into their own story; a story which I cannot correct any longer. The story is written by the Animatograph itself.

GA: What we have here now is a place contaminated by history. This is why, unlike in Iceland, there is no model of democracy here at Neuhardenberg that this place could work on. Instead, this is where the leaders Stalin and Hitler meet, and where Seelow comes into play, too; a place marked by what Heiner Müller called ‘the path of the tanks from Berlin to Moscow and back’. There are legions of dead here.

CS: Legions. We dug up the ground here and there on the premises and found old boxes of black and white film, totally rotten. We took them to Geyer ...

GA: Schlingensief the archeologist.

CS: Yes, that is something I have in common with Kluge, and with Heiner Müller, but also with Mr. Jones or Mrs. Smith next door. Sometimes we dig up flower beds in the garden and find the bodies of dead children. We did not know anything about this, or maybe we have always wondered why this woman had so incredibly luxuriant flowers in her garden. That is the question here, too. Is it all being overgrown? What is growing together here? We did digs on the airport premises and found film boxes. The contamination of this place, that whole ammunition that polluted the...
ground here has exposed and distorted the material. We found a Hitler-Stalin porn movie that we are going to show. It is an extremely realistic undertaking which goes for a truly communal organism much straighter than the functional party system, the church system etc. That’s why we show the Icelandic Animatograph as clothes dryers here. There are countless clothes dryers in the front gardens of Neuhardenberg already, all of them Iceland-blue; this is where the laundry is dried and where the organism is caught on. Humans are chosen by history, they think they can take influence, and then they are hung out there to dry and finally drop to the ground to provide the humus for new strata of democracy. ‘The path continues, even if where it leads to has exploded.’ This is not fatalism; this is a sentence by Heiner Müller. Dieter Roth said: ‘The environment becomes the work, and the work the environment.’ This puts the Animatograph in a nutshell. This is what I would wish for my work, that people don’t see as a declaration of war or arrogance, but as an attempt, or a hope, of finding common ground.
The following exposé describes the concept for a 90-minute feature film and a 45-minute "making-of" documentary. The films are being produced as part of a conceptual gesamtkunstwerk comprised of the two films, an exhibition and two theatre installations on the same theme. At the beginning of a new millennium, in the face of terror, global division and sociological apocalypse, we have embarked upon a search for modern human beings.

THE STORY

We tell the story of the brilliant, young, unsuccessful director Christoph, a modern Jack Smith, a megalomaniacal, highly gifted trouble-maker, who raucously squanders his energies in epic art in forgotten, irrelevant places.

His vision of a re-staging of the 11th of September in African slums, as a statement against globalisation and First World decadence, takes him away from his bankrupt, off-Broadway theatre to Lüderitz in Namibia.

The artistic director of the world’s largest Bach Festival and owner of the legendary Bach Mineral Water Springs, Wolfgang Bach, invites Christoph, at the recommendation of his daughter Katharina Bach, to undertake the direction of a staged performance of the St. Matthew Passion in his festival theatre in the desert.

Bach suffers from creative stress resulting from his name and his heritage. Out of fear of ruining the family legacy, his decisions have never transcended safe mediocrity. For years, his wife Gudrun has harboured the secret wish to take over.
her indecisive husband’s position as intendant of the festival. His choice of the infamous Christoph as stage director is the most courageous of his whole life, and accordingly Gudrun does not welcome it at all.

Together with his faithful, eternally-doubting dramaturgist Carl, Christoph travels to Africa.

Inspired by German colonial architecture in the midst of the expansive African landscape and corrugated iron slums, he is transported into a state of creative euphoria and commissions the construction of eight-metre-high twin towers, in order to fabricate an “African” Manhattan. His ideas grow to monumental heights.

He asks an artist friend from South Africa to construct a 25-metre-long airplane out of tin sheets and transport it from South Africa to Namibia, so that it may be flown into the wooden twin towers at the première.

Full of energy and enthusiasm, Christoph’s team sets to work, but these German-American avengers of the Third World have underestimated the paralyzing effects of the African heat, flora and fauna. The sand, the desert environment and the heat drain their energies. While Carl falls in love with a local team assistant and at the same time develops a paranoid terror of being infected by AIDS, Christoph becomes entranced by the slums and by young Katharina Bach. But it is not only as a potential son-in-law that Christoph falls into increasing disfavour in Lüderitz. His sweeping, modernistic production ideas, which include using hundreds of black extras, are by no means welcomed by the traditionally oriented Bachs.

The presence of the visionary Christoph, eaten up by mosquitoes and self-doubt, shatters not only the myth of eternally repeated German classics at the festival.
theatre in Lüderitz, but also the ostensibly perfect façade of the Bach family. Mother Gudrun Bach’s animal characteristics come to the fore, along with patriarch Wolfgang’s long-concealed inferiority complex.

Open warfare breaks out among the Bachs. Conflicts buried for years beneath sand, heat and traditions erupt, and focus on Christoph. Freed of the trammels of a socially imposed addiction to harmony, ugliness bursts out of the Bachs and finally forces Wolfgang to confess the long-hidden, dark secret of his university years in Berlin, which directly connects Christoph’s destiny with that of the Bachs. Wolfgang’s confession leads to the collapse of the family. Katharina flees; Gudrun, goaded by fury and anguish, gathers a lynch mob around her and prepares to retaliate.

Carl, meanwhile, who is becoming increasingly embroiled in his obsession with the young team assistant and his fear of AIDS, is unable to give much support to Christoph, whose only shimmer of hope is the arrival of the tin airplane. The postcolonial ideal plunges into social anarchy, and into this rolls the only constant, the 25-metre-long tin plane on its way to Lüderitz.

On the evening of the première, while the performance is in progress, there is a final showdown between Gudrun, her lynch mob and Christoph. The mob chases Christoph through the steppe, catches him, and cruelly tortures him, venting their pent-up aggressions against him in unbelievable brutality. Almost miraculously, Christoph manages to escape at the very height of their frenzy. Beaten, bleeding, with his last ounce of strength and galvanized by the final music of his monumental stage produc-
At that moment, the curtain opens for the ensemble to take their bows. In the glaring spotlights the two of them stand in front of the singers to tumultuous applause for the triumphant première.

At the same moment, Wolfgang’s ancestor Majaestro, who for Wolfgang has always represented the embodiment of an unreachable ideal, appears beside him in his loge and welcomes him to Valhalla. In view of Christoph’s triumphal new production of the St. Matthew Passion with Wagner quotations as a sociopolitical statement, Majaestro now permits Wolfgang to take his place at his side, for at last he feels that the legacy of his genius is being properly administered. Wolfgang dies.

On the day of Wolfgang’s funeral, before the picturesque backdrop of Lüderitz beneath the sinking African sun, the discordant parties achieve a reconciliation. Katharina returns home and asks her father posthumously for forgiveness.

Gudrun admits defeat and Christoph leads the funeral procession, followed by his former enemies and old friends, while Mahalia Jackson sings her Gospel.

Together they all walk into the sunset.
Before the Animatograph will hit the main auditorium of the Wiener Burgtheater in January 2006, the asteroid of wood, steel, and canvas will already have completed a remarkable journey of almost 20,000 kilometers in nine months. Roughly, this corresponds to the total distance from Reykjavik to Neuhardenberg, from Neuhardenberg to the Township AREA7 and on to Lüderitz and Vienna, that is, to the places where the asteroid has hitherto left creatively proliferating crater landscapes. Physically, 20,000 kilometers in nine months is not exactly light speed, though, metaphysically, it nevertheless bears evidence of an enormous kinetic potential. A normal pregnancy takes nine months. When it comes to its end happily, the social womb, according to Beuys, delivers a child of the old arts (theater, painting, opera, film…), and a new notion of art is brought into the world which is a single stage, all the more so in our times of pervasive mediocrity. In the productive chaos of the Animatograph which keeps busily rotating on and beside its revolving stages, such a birth cannot be a coincidence. It is only by cross-breeding opposites that energy is produced. “We are”, Peter Sloterdijk accordingly says, “not in the world like the ring on the finger or the fly in the glass; we belong to it like the leap to the void, the arrow to the blue or the image to the projector.” The Animatograph is us!
Under the title of “House of Obsession” the first Animatograph, a project commissioned by TBA21, was put into operation at the Reykjavik Art Festival in May 2005. In Iceland, they say, the gods come to the surface because there the earth’s crust is thinnest. Schlingensief documented this paranormal occurrence and then, after capturing them on film, took the spirits, gods, and gods’ birds back into the interior of the earth. On the premises of a once empty underground vault, they worked together to build a course of mediated and real single images which one had to wander through, collecting images, before one came across the revolving stage, the heart of the Animatograph, in the main room of this mythological installation. Actually, it was more about not being merely confronted with this image catapult, but to conquer and experience it, to walk onto it and into the barrage of overlapping projections which bombarded the final act setting of a closed moral (theater) institution about to be wound up. Here, in the dark of an oversized, horizontal and hence walkable photographic plate, one could see it all through, taking a look of oneself and bringing to life again the world of Nordic sagas as if by the working of the gods: Man is metaphysics.

Aria for Christoph
My father
In the sea I wept with shame
For unconquered dreams
As life drained
My father
My tears
Mocked by the sea
An actor held in chains
Of tortured scenes
Yet deliverance
Appeared to me
She prayed at my feet
We rose as children
To climb a ladder of gold
Our ship shall see no river
Yet hope shall hold
Our vessel of fire
My father king again
Our tears of joy
Mock the rain
My father
My father
As dreams ordain
The brightest flame

Patti Smith
The “House of Obsession” literally was an underground movement that came to the light of day and took Beuy’s (r)evolutionary idea of a humane and pleasurable because accessible art out into the world; more precisely, into a piece of woodland in Brandenburg which, in the era of an ostensible revolution of a different kind, had been reserved to the East-German National People’s Army. So it came about that, in “Odin’s Parsipark” in Neuhardenberg near Berlin, stories met history, myths met people, and art met life. The Icelandic Animatograph and its German after-image, a second revolving stage by the name of “Ragnarok/Twilight of the Gods” seized the power of images in the old ammunition depots, transforming them, in honor of the ubiquitous Parsifal, into spaces for our time. Here, finally, art waged war on art, breaking boundaries and liberating the view from viewing habits. To the visitors of this battleground, Schlingensief posed the task of projecting themselves into these monumental images, of entering the field of force and keeping the Animatograph in continuous rotary movement. Odin, the one-eyed among us blind, was not to have sacrificed himself at the World Ash Tree in vain. The real loser is he who shuns the nightmare!

Against the background of the shooting of “African Twin Towers”—the story of a megalomaniac festival director who wants to put an opera on the stage in the most adverse conditions in Lüderitz, Namibia, the former German South-West Africa, and has a revolving stage built in the midst of a slum—, the Animatograph cuts film
off from the light it feeds on. In the film, film is declared dead, and the play of light returns to a theater of shadows. The remains of its existence, film reels, are buried in the sea sand by Icelandic gods. The characters, clearly outlined in the beginning, become blurred and fragmented. What we are faced with here is the dead living and the living dead who, quite in the sense of Bunuel, are struck by a storm of mythical dreams. Thus the animatographic movement in art has made its way out of art. The priests resign, and the gods take over. In the film, the stage is eventually built, but used as an African variant of the Animatograph. Reality breaks into fiction. The film has disappeared, the opera is a failure, and there is no more talk of theater. Art is just a rumor, which is a wish come true for every Beuys disciple. The boat that is installed on the revolving stage in the Namibian AREA7 (and subsequently sets its prayer-flag sails in the Vienna AREA7) operates on the principle of Noah’s Ark, which informs total art: all images, all dreams, scraps, flotsam and jetsam, remains of art are taken aboard to save them from the Deluge of Meaning of pseudo high culture, to breathe new life into, and give new birth to, them in another evolution of art here at the cradle of
humanity. This also describes the principle of the Animatograph—image catapult, soul writer, world design—which Schlingensief wants to take on to Nepal and Brazil from Iceland, Neuhardenberg, Lüderitz, and Vienna to make it accessible for everybody.

If, after walking through and out of the Vienna AREA7 again, it takes a few moments to become aware that one is in a theater, precisely, the Burgtheater, the Animatograph will have served its purpose. In fact, the theater will have served its purpose again (for a change), because it ceased being theater. One might even have mistaken the Animatograph for life, in the best case, for one’s own life in which one usually also takes more space than just a numbered seat. Then—a little pathos must be permitted!—one will have made a journey to oneself. There is not much farther to go. We are no artists, thank the gods. We are still alive!
Joseph Beuys, Elfriede Jelinek, Husea Ozingirai, Dieter Roth, Christoph Schlingensief, Patti Smith, Wilhelm I. + II.


Director (Leitung): Christoph Schlingensief
Construction (Konstruktion): Thekla von Mülheim/Tobias Busser
Costume Designer (Kostüm): Aino Laberenz
Light (Licht): Norbert Joachim
Dramaturgy (Dramaturgie): Jörg van der Horst/Joachim Lux/Henning Nass
Music & Sound Designer (Musik & Sounddesign): Uwe Altmann
Video & Cut (Video & Schnitt): Kathrin Krottenthaler/Meike Dressenkamp

Assistant Director (Regieassistent): Barbara Nowotny/Sophia Smitzis
Stage Setting Assistant (Bühnenbildassistenz): Andrea Flachs
Costume Assistant (Kostümassistent): Dagmar Bald/Veronika Mund
Video Assistant (Videoassistent): Marlene frainack
Trainee Director (Regiehospitanz): Michael Casar/Sarah Wulbrandt
Stage Setting Trainee (Bühnenbildhospitanz): Gabriela Neubauer
Dramaturgy Trainee (Dramaturgiehospitanz): Katharina Zobler

Prompter (Souffleuse): Isolde Friedl
Stage Manager (Inspektor): Roman Dominger
Stage Engineer (Bühnentechnik): Gerhard Weese
Illuminator (Beleuchtung): Manfred Kouril
Associate Producer (Produktionsbetreuung): Michael Haksef
Requisite (Requisite): Martin Gürz/Herbert Knor/Harald Korai
Audio Engineer/Audio Arranger (Tontechnik/Toneinrichtung): Florian Pilz/David Müller
Video Engineer/Video Arranger (Videotechnik/Videoeinrichtung): Stefan Göbl/Alexander Richter

Technical Director (Technische Leitung): Heinz Filar
Stage Technical Director (Bühnentechnik Leitung): Ernst Meissl
Illumination Director (Leitung Beleuchtung): Friedrich Rom
Audio Director (Leitung Tonabteilung): Christian Venghaus
Multimedia Director (Leitung Multimediaabteilung): Andreas Ryba
Makeup (Maske): Herbert Zehetner/Margit Hadrawa
Costume/Checkroom (Kostüm/Gaderobe): Gerlinde Häglhammer/Wolfgang Zach
Casting Director (Leitung Kompasserle): Wolfgang Janich
Decoration/Costume Designer (Dekorations-/Kostümerstellung): Art for Art Theaterservice GmbH
Associate Producer (Produktionsbetreuung): Benno Wand
Decoration Director (Leitung Dekorationswerkstätten): Martin Kollin
Associate Producer (Produktionsbetreuung): Christian Holesiowy
THE ANIMATOGRAPH
BRAZIL EDITION - THE FLYING DUTCHMAN.
MANAUS, BRAZIL, APRIL 2007

Photos pp. 36/37:
Manaus, Brazil
February 2006
MANAUS

This 1.5 million city lies along the north bank of the Negro River, 11 miles (18 km) above its confluence with the Amazon (Solimões). It is located 900 miles (1,450 km) inland from the Atlantic coast in the heart of the Amazon rain forest. As a major inland port (reached by oceangoing vessels from the Atlantic) it is a collecting and distribution center for the river areas of the upper Amazon.

The first European settlement on the site was a small fort (São Jose do Rio Negrinho) built in 1669. A small settlement developed and in 1850 became the capital of the province of Amazonas. From 1890 to 1920 the rubber boom brought prosperity to the city, actually to a few rubber barons who brutally used Indians to collect the latex from the rubber trees. During this period the great Opera House was constructed. The best entertainers from Europe and North America were brought in for the pleasure of the 100 or so families that then controlled the economy of the area. With the advent of synthetic rubber in the early 1920’s (as well as development of rubber plantations in SE Asia — an Englishman Sir Henry Wickham “clandestinely” collected rubber seeds from the wild trees of the Amazon jungles) the economic importance of natural rubber, and consequently that of Manaus declined considerably. In the late 1970s the Brazilian government and private companies began extensive development the mineral and agricultural wealth of the surrounding rain-forested region. To encourage even further commercial and tourist development Manaus has also been declared a “Zona-Franca” (duty free zone).
CONSTRUCTION KIT

SITE

The Animatograph is intended to be erected in a more compact, darkened space due to projections and sound. Minimum room size: 9 x 9 meters. Alternatively, a wooden subconstruction needs to be build for the Animatograph if there is only an open room situation (s. sketch)

Above: Iceland, May 2005
Above right: Model for Iceland April 2005, Tobias Buser
Right: Quicktime renderings

Far right and p. 39
Iceland, April/May 2005
Drawings: Tobias Buser
DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL SPACES

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

In addition to conventional installation equipment, the work will require:
- Revolving Stage
  Diameter of stage: 8 meters
  To be required at: www.bumat.com
- b/w copies of “Icelandic Party” to be mounted on a wall
- b/w copies of “Edda” to be mounted on a wall
- color prints of Icelandic film screening
- 1 Car wreck
- 1 fish tank (approx. 80 x 40 cm) with integrated lighting
- 1 real big fish in formalin to be given in the fish tank
- “Gauze” fabric used as projection screen for “police-film” (dimension vary with room situation)
- 1 Table or wooden subconstruction for model “Thingvellir”

- Technical equipment:
  5 projectors, ansilumen minimum: 3000
  5 DVD players with cables and wall mount
  various cables and multiple power socket

- Installation equipment:
  Installation material -> screws, fastening angle, anchors, lacing cords
  Black/white/Red wall color and brushes
  straw
  optionally: dried fish
  optionally: clothes horse

TRANSPORTATION

Crate / Packing material: 32 collis (incl. 1 big wooden crate)
CHRISTOPH SCHLINGENSIEF


In 1993, he made his debut as theater director with “100 Jahre CDU – Spiel ohne Grenzen” at the Berlin Volksbühne, where he has been a house director until today. This was followed by various projects outside the theater, as the 1997 “Passion Impossible – 7 Tage Notruf für Deutschland”, a Traveler’s Aid Agency project for junkies and homeless at the Hamburg Central Station, or his “Big Brother Container for Asylum Seekers” (2000), a project entitled “Bitte liebt Österreich!”, in which he demanded the resignation of the newly installed right-wing government and brought Austria on the verge of a national crisis. 1997, he enacted an art action “Überleben für Deutschland” at the documenta X. In 1998, he founded a political party named “Chance 2000” and campaigned for the parliamentary elections. The party program was: “The party of minorities which are in the majority.”

Schlingensief did numerous other TV, film, and theater projects. Today, Schlingensief works for main metropolitan theater in Vienna, Berlin, Zurich, and Frankfurt. In 2004, he directed a new production of “Parsifal” for the Bayreuth Wagner Festival.

Aside from his work as theater director and film-maker, Schlingensief also realized a number of projects and works in the domain of contemporary art. Among his best-known projects in this field is Church of Fear, a work in which he discussed common notions such as ideology, sectarianism and religion and which, after its first-time performance at the 2003 Venice Biennale, will be shown at the Cologne Ludwig Museum. Christoph Schlingensief lives and works in Berlin.

Further information at www.schlingensief.com
THE FOUNDATION
THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA ART CONTEMPORARY, VIENNA

A new foundation for contemporary art, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary – T-B A21 was founded by Francesca von Habsburg in Vienna, Austria. Its mission is to support through co-productions and unique commissions the creation of new works from artists that contribute important positions to the contemporary art practice. T-B A21 seeks to achieve this through multi-disciplinary projects that break down the traditional boundaries that define and categorize artistic expression in its different forms, whilst at the same time empowering the audiences with a living experience of contemporary artistic expression. The work of the foundation brings innovation to the core of the Thyssen-Bornemisza fourth generation’s approach to collecting and patronizing the arts.

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T-B A21
Himmelpfortgasse 13
1010 Vienna, Austria
T +43 1 513 98 56
F + 43 1 513 98 56-22
office@tba21.org
www.TBA21.org
THE ANIMAL
GRAPH