

“Audience as Subject, Part 1: Medium”

YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

701 Mission Street

October 30–February 6

Organized by Betti-Sue Hertz, this show, the first stage of a two-part exhibition, examines the identity and role of the audience with respect to live events, focusing on venues that restrict the number of viewers relative to the size of the space. This investigation is particularly relevant since it counters the hegemony of social media, where reaching a broad audience instantly is the foremost goal—a standard so pervasive that more intimate encounters are often overshadowed. The role of the spectator in small events is shown most effectively in the moving-image works on view, including Stefan Constantinescu’s disturbing film shot on a trolley bus, *Troleibuzul 92*, 2009. Its realistic account of a man



Stefan Constantinescu, *Troleibuzul 92*, 2009, still from a film in 16 mm, 8 minutes.

engaged in a series of abusive phone calls to his girlfriend is hard to forget. Although the passengers seem uncomfortable that they are privy to this private conversation, Constantinescu may be implying that they are accomplices. In contrast, over 1,500 clips of applauding audiences from television talk shows in *Venerations (Applause 3)*, 2009–10, by the collaborative team caraballo-farman, suggest that onlookers have the capacity, and possibly the need, to be the center of attention, and that their presence is a necessary evil.

The cartoony hand-drawn style of Gabriel Acevedo Velarde’s black-and-white animation *Escenario*, 2004, is well suited to represent a group of individuals at a nighttime gathering who are herded one by one onto a stage, whereupon a flash of light knocks down each of them in turn. This action is subsequently greeted by the enthusiastic clapping of a crowd comprising the same figures that were just on stage, questioning the idea of solidarity. Danica Dakic’s theatrical *Isola Bella*, 2007–2008, which utilizes nonactors who have psychological issues resulting from the Bosnian war, and Adrian Paci’s *Turn On*, 2004, featuring unemployed Albanian laborers, both exude considerable empathy yet come across as somewhat cathartic exercises.

— Chris Bors