

BORIS + NATASCHA

MEDITATIONS #1-5

Germany / Australia 2007

5 Monitors, 5 DVD-Players, Headphones

BORIS+NATASCHA have collaborated since 2003. Their name is an ironic take on the evil Russian spies and comic figures, Boris Badenov and his attractive Natasha Fatale, from the comic and television series, *Rocky & Bullwinkle*. With a penchant towards black humour, this artist duo investigates the human condition in western society. They describe their work as a contemporary Memento Mori.

MEDITATIONS #1-5 invites the viewer on a journey into fears of contemporary western society, in the form of guided visualisations. Modelled on classical relaxation techniques, the characters in the five scenarios are led on their existential journey to their innermost anxieties, panic attacks and self-doubts.

By wearing headphones, the lone viewer is lulled through various visualisations by a contemplative score and a hypnotic voiceover and led into fears in which the on-screen character is being drawn into. "The most confronting thing is to be confronted with oneself." (B+N) It remains ambiguous whether the narrations stem from the character's internal voice or speak to them.

The promised outcome of healing and meditative relaxation as a result of self-help programmes, is not the case here. No comforting solution is offered, no reconciliation with negative feelings, no reversal to a positive awareness of life: if anything a deepened emotional state erring towards drama. "Our mantra for this work is *Relax into fear*." (B+N) In a sinister, ironic way the work plays on societal and individual fears of self-doubt, uncertainty, status anxiety and paranoia. It is a critical examination of how fear is used as a manipulative tool.

Susanne Jakubczyk

Curator, Kasseler Kunstverein, Kassel, 2010

(published in *25. Kasseler Dok Fest Catalogue*)