

Turning Gliding Forming Seeing

Gudrun Kemska and the Game of Images of Movement in Space

Instructions

Gudrun Kemska is an artist. Her works consist of images and videos. The images are photographs and the videos installed, in other words not for broadcasting. Gudrun Kemska has a chair for Moving Images and Photography which is an exact description of her own work. It should be pointed out, at the outset of all deliberations, that her still images often appear to contain more movement than her videos, and that conversely her video works seem more static than many of her photographs. She is invariably preoccupied with space and time, as a sculptress she works in four rather than three dimensions, and she never stands still herself. That covers everything by way of introduction and now her images could be left to speak for themselves, be simply beautiful according to Johann Georg Sulzer and their beauty induce in us a state of disinterested pleasure as Immanuel Kant maintained.

There is a problem. Vision alone is not enough, as our eyes – and Gudrun Kemska demands that we use both eyes, more of that later – get bogged down attempting to recognise the objects. Neither will sitting in front of the video monitor do, as this leaves out our movements in relation to the images. And so without interrupting us, Gudrun Kemska confronts us, the viewers of her works, in the nicest possible way with a dilemma. What is she really showing us? What do her images show? What role do we play in a game, whose rules we are left to work out for ourselves from the images, if we wish to experience and not merely recognise their beauty? The aim of the following text is to serve as a set of instructions.

Art as a game – sounds like an affront to both art and mankind. It is hard to imagine a more pernicious assault on the autonomy of artistic endeavours, fed solely by the link established between the interpretation and the individual as authenticated by a name and signature for the last eight-hundred years. Some thirty years ago the (natural) sciences were attacked along similar lines, when John Horton Conway's *The Game of Life* introduced game theory to biology, information technology and sociology and the author faced, at least initially, bitter hostility from his colleagues. For art, the notion of a game should not present such problems, seeing as artists such as Marcel Duchamp developed games and explicitly declared their entire enterprise to be a playing field for ideas. For women artists especially, the connection between life and art has always been close enough for the largely effortless integration of playful elements into their works – which, admittedly, implies a realignment of this idea of a game.

Games are played according to rules agreed in advance. These rules produce certain conventions. Their violation leads to either a termination of the game or a new game. The conventions invariably refer to the way the players communicate amongst themselves. This is where art comes in – the social structure of art, the interaction between artists, mediators, collectors and public beyond the catalytic artwork, is not only dynamic but also depends on mutual acknowledgement and acceptance. The essential element in this conception of a game as a frame of reference for a society or one of its subsystems – here art, with the emphasis on the visual arts – is its provisional nature, its prearranged, formally conceived end. This creates the utopia of pictorial, sound or event

based communication between living persons without violence, which is interesting (from the Latin *interesse*, to be in between) and pursues a broad agenda.

Until the nineteenth century the broad agenda meant religion, chiefly Christianity. Its normative powers evoked images which were supposed to provide the foundations of faith; and whenever an explanation was attempted that opposed such use of imagery, it began by destroying existing, collected and interpreted images. Religious wars, more than other kinds of war, were and remain wars about images. Artists have always defended themselves vehemently against such exploitation of their work, admittedly with dubious success, already a central theme in the work of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. At all times, women artists had to go one step further, as they not only faced the misuse of their imagery's power, but were also denied recognition for their pictorial investigations. In comparison women artists were forgotten more quickly and must nowadays be set against this deeper historical oblivion.

Jürgen Habermas has located the foundations of modernity – to which the artist Gudrun Kemska is unreservedly committed – in the process of secularization, the separation of the powers of the state and the church through the dispossession of the latter. According to his philosophy the resulting society was no longer constituted by a shared belief or an ethical system developed from this belief, but rather by a secular legal system and numerous strategic arrangements governing the way people communicate. That this change has altered the status of art in society is obvious, but is of little use when describing art produced since then. It was Marcel Duchamp, once again, who added to the mechanisms by which art establishes itself in modern society by voicing and acting out a complete set of guidelines. Seeing as he withdrew from the artworld to play chess for two decades, he can also preside as godfather over this attempt to approach Gudrun Kemska and her works.

The Game Board

Gudrun Kemska is a postgraduate student of the Canadian sculptor David Rabinowitch, who lives in Germany. This should not be taken to indicate that she sculpts herself, just as he is not restricted to working only in one medium – and yet there is fundamental principle that, at least early on, connected their works. One of Rabinowitch's best known cycles of work consists of pieces of iron, cut, and reassembled at slight angles. His works define places and spaces, whose internal structure changes imperceptibly according to the weather and position of the sun, as the cut edge throws a soft shadow or as slits of differing widths appear. His recent stone sculptures are characterised by tentative interventions in existing structures of upright steles or surfaces, only scratching the available stone and so creating subtle drawings of sculptural correspondences. An essential element of these sculptures, almost all of which are floor pieces, is the reversal of positive and negative, the transition from strong relief via the delineated shadow to hollow form.

By the time she entered the Rabinowitch class, Gudrun Kemska had already discovered photography as a medium for artistic expression but his way of seeing is clearly evident - at least in her early works. This way of seeing acts as a floor plan for the game board, on which figures will move according to rules yet to be established and providing the fundamental principles that will determine all future moves players make. The arched or window-like border of the photographed situation is one figure on this board, the format of the resulting pictures another. Gudrun Kemska tries out various standpoints, angles, lighting and exposures in small series of half a dozen variations. The scale and size of the final print may vary, hard lines alternate with shades of grey or monochrome colour. All these variations are finger exercises associated with sculpture and codes

of artistic practice preceding the claim of an autonomous signature and artwork – a body of works in statu nascendi.

To begin with: Gudrun Kemska invents photography, exactly as it was done by William Henry Fox Talbot 150 years earlier: slide and negative are equally valid products of light, and both exhibit the same tonal range as drawings. Photogenic drawing is what Talbot, after lengthy deliberation, called his work, in which the both the *melanotype* (shadow print) and the ascendant *photography* played an important role.

Yet in the work of Gudrun Kemska the conceptualising dimension of the *disegno interno* of the photogenic drawing is equally given from the beginning. Her work is not about the perfect representation of all the elements in a space, nor about the viewer's grasp of mediated joy or terror, but rather it is solely about the sensation of light: specks on the wall, gaps in perspective, burnt out areas on the surface of the paper. Everything remains to be organised, particularly around the purity of the light, where the world in all its disorganisation is still evident.

Whatever serves as a plinth for the sculptor must provide a foundation for the photographer: a semblance of solid ground. Floor pieces do not offer this security – they are simply there and as such lay claim to their right to exist. Even if no horizons are visible, ground is indispensable to Gudrun Kemska: to stand, walk and swivel on. This pioneering photographer and Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre share a panoramic gaze: she is in the picture, and so are we. Firm foundations characterise both her photography and video works, occasionally more so the latter. Gudrun Kemska is a keen skater, and has an eye for smooth, firm ground. Asphalt roads, gravel footpaths or old cobbles streets appear blurred in her photographs creating an even floor on which any game involving pivoting and turning can take place. By contrast the surfaces on which the people and machines in her video works move are regularly patterned, often divided into constructivist grids and occasionally echelons of promenades and plazas from which stairways or steps ascend. Whereas ground does not feature in her early works, a wide arc skywards brings her focus back to earth, or else perception turns full circle. The further her work advanced according to the rules of her artistic game, the more solid the ground. The ground is prepared, the figures can take up their positions before the game commences.

The Figures

Man has always built houses and temples in his own image, even if he altered the scale. People are figures in Gudrun Kemska's art game much as the fragments of architecture, whose form and function is determined by the human flow in and around the building: windows, columns, domes, newels and more often than not façades. Windows representing a concurrence of inside and outside in the photographic act featured early on, but vanished quickly both as motifs and symbols. They made a return at some point as elements in a façade. The window as an idea was also present early, in patches of light and vistas but its appearance in the game was similarly brief - too symbolic, too heavy, too pretentious in the context of the entire picture, to succeed. By doubling the theatrical space in her videos, windows play a special role which for good reason and from the very beginning, Gudrun Kemska has always implemented sparingly.

In Gudrun Kemska's works columns and people are interchangeable, which is small wonder given the programmatic movement through space. Whoever suspects a latent classicism at this point - and this assumption of radical, contemporary artists, both male and female, is generally accurate - is not far off the mark. She turns a simple lamppost or a dark strip on the wall of a passageway into a column. She is as familiar with the ancient columns of Rome as the rows of trees lining the Via

Appia, that she, like some peripatetic Epicurean, takes as the starting point to her questioning of the world. The more figures populate her picture, the less at issue the qualities of the interior or exterior: the space awaits - let us move around in it! This entails first peering between figures, understanding depth cues, being held up by ambiguous passages and yet at all times remaining aware, as observer, of the analogy of figures in a game. The movement in the pictures infects the characters in the game and so ultimately the viewer: the drama continues, either as the game of life or occasionally also as the rising crescendo of a belling stag (which is the literal translation of *tragedy*, as used in a well-known essay by Botho Strauss).

Figures cast shadows in the dramas of antiquity, in dreams and in surrealist paintings. Gudrun Kemska is familiar with these developments but does not attach too much significance to them. Her concern is that players of her game recognise their own leanings – whatever their senses can and wish to focus on. However the shadows cast are part of the line up at the start of the game. They fix the time at which the beginning and end of a single exposure or a periodic rerecording can be located. The shadows in Gudrun Kemska's works also illustrate a rule that distinguishes her videos from her photographs - if shadows wander, figures stand still. If figures wander, the viewer, not the shadows, stands still. If one playing partner is stationary, the others are free to roam - the light, the imagination, the significance.

In some more recent works – Berlin seen from the dome of the Reichstag and the fairground videos – defining the figures has become far more difficult. Here a giant form provides a frame of reference, dominating all movements and details. Only the strong can assert themselves. But the central figure is almost invariably counterbalanced, not so much by other single elements, as by contrarotating configurations that are produced by its rotation. A railing stands out in front of the dome in the Reichstag. Fairground cars move out of line, but the centre circle and the spectators on the sidelines remain fixed. Her development, on which this book delivers an interim report, indicates that at some point Gudrun Kemska will be able to play her game without any figures at all. Admittedly, this is down to the rules, rather than the figures themselves.

The Rules

Every game has rules. The exception makes the rule. A satisfactory conclusion implies that at least one incident has been singled out for discussion. So far the definition of Gudrun Kemska's creativity fits one of several game theories. But the rules and exceptions lead us, the players, and she, the artist, off the beaten track. Not so fast, all in good time: you must know the rules if you want to join the game, be understood and deliver an incisive, knowledgeable and perceptive judgement - we are back to Immanuel Kant. By contrast the game of life knows no end of extenuating circumstances, but nevertheless also abides by the rules it has set. Remember that art is somewhere in between and interests us.

Gudrun Kemska's rules are simple and gave the book its title as well as me some ideas for this essay: *Moving Pictures!* Gudrun Kemska moved when she took the photographs, she got the protagonists in her videos to move, and now it is up to everybody else to move as well, to move their eyes, their bodies and their senses. A dervish might have inspired the spinning or whirling and just imagining such movement would leave anyone familiar with oriental trance dancing breathless. Gliding is the same as sliding – a quick, noiseless, movement forward requiring minimal exertion as in skating, snowboarding and skiing. These movements are characterised by beginning and end, unspectacular and without high points - roughly in accordance with the rules laid down by minimal music. The fluency of turn and glide is invariably interrupted - if catching and holding

one's breath provided a model for the act of photography, Gudrun Kemsal would not be alone in using it.

The rules for the photographic works are provided by turning and gliding – in general and including exceptions that confirm the rule. As she takes the picture the photographer turns – a potent metaphor for pictorial creativity - and she glides through space and time in the finished picture, which is carefully worked and adjusted and not created or produced by a speedy, intuitive type of creativity. Turning and gliding demand practice and here skill precedes art, or ability bows to proficiency. Gudrun Kemsal has acquired a repertoire of gyrations – the hand-held camera, the aperture open or set for a long exposure. In addition, diverse movements and countermovements produce a Doppler's effect when she uses panoramic cameras with swivel lenses: the naked eye can barely discern in which pictures she employs this technique. Gliding denotes two linear directions of movement – along the picture's (lower) edge and into the picture plane.

The choice of movements is, as a rule, not made at random by the artist but depends on the space she has photographed or intends to photograph. If a figure casts a shadow she turns - movement has followed the course of the sun ever since the sculptors of antiquity. She also turns in a round space or in an interior full of corners and ambiguous protrusions – as on a floor of the ubiquitous shopping mall - where she has no alternative. Consequently, as a rule, turning precedes gliding. The latter is used for straight walls, lethargic rivers such as the Nile, where a ship relieves the weary artist of the need to move herself – all very postmodern according to Boris Groys who stated, some while ago, that the new hero is tired. Gliding is also clearly the slower of the two movements, in contrast to our daily experience, in which turning can be accelerated but can never attain the speed of gliding.

If turning and gliding engender an image on paper, in other words wind up stationary, then Gudrun Kemsal's video work with moving images, should by contrast be studied in stillness and leave the movement to those romping around on screen. The promenade along the Nile is a good example: the camera records in real time what passed before the artist and what disappeared after the same interval of interpretation and reflection. The sequence of houses, streets and life stories is as arbitrary as if one were driving past and yet it follows a particular and absolute order one assumes goes on for ever. The moving panorama, probably the driving force behind this work of Gudrun Kemsal's, was an attraction from the early years of photography, long before the advent of film – it fooled coach passengers into believing they had embarked on a seemingly endless journey through the world's great landscapes when, in reality, they were faced with nothing more than a frequently repeated film loop.

Gudrun Kemsal's video works are considerably more radical in their take on representations of landscape, which provide a frame of reference for the big art game, than her own photographs and much more so than the painting of the early 19th century. Here the horizon is no longer fenced in, it can continue to the left or right indefinitely. Here, according to Peter Sloterdijk, is mankind returning to the plains of the savannah, his vision focused on incremental differences in height which will determine whether he survives, there stoneage man, here is art providing a framework for experience. However, where the videos duplicate time, they go beyond the definition of infinity implied by a horizon, and motif and editing become culturally embedded to the same degree. Now the camera turns less than ever, as in front of it everything is turning. Here gliding would be superfluous – quite the reverse, a firm stand is now expected from the camera recording these moving images.

Some of her video works, in which people cross plazas or pass by one another on promenades, assume an interesting intermediate position – between the long landscape, with the before and

after, above and below the horizon and the night time scenes of rotating machinery in visual Doppler loops. The people encounter one another – and yet not really, as they pay each other little or no attention. By composing the images and particularly in their editing and postproduction, Gudrun Kemsal turns this unreflected passing by into such a complex network of interweaving relationships, that at the very least, it resembles scientific experiments on the movement of large ant colonies and the simulation of such movements through computerised mathematical models. And in her latest video works, whose development runs parallel to this text, she breaks new ground with a combination of camera, editing and recorded movements. The moving images create their own frame of reference and are autopoietic constructs that cause minimal offence and maximum impact.

The Exceptions

The exception makes the rule, which is how it should be – humane. Even if Gudrun Kemsal is disciplined in her treatment of herself and the rules she still allows herself a few exceptions – regarding the concept as a whole, in the run-up to production. Nevertheless it would be surprising if these exceptions did not relate to medial aspects of her creative process: every art work is special, exceptional: according to Hans Belting art is simply incompatible with the everyday, even without its claiming autonomy, in other words that it was produced outside any existing definition of art. Here language helps define her works: each exposure is an exception - and yet rules to describe the whole still make sense.

When Gudrun Kemsal enters a space or a location to do her work, to interpret a situation as the basis for a photographic or video work, she has already defined the possible set of figures and the likely application of rules. The pictorial determinants are based on this interpretation and she starts by moving around the space. From her experience of such movements, be it turning or gliding, she gets an idea of the pictures and sequences she requires. When she presses the shutter release, two elements in particular are crucial. Both elements are borrowed more from sculpture than painting, just as the photographic act and its derivative film are closer to the former. There is no empty, white surface in either photography or the screens of video monitors but the raw, unhewn block of stone in the quarry is analogous to the filmed or photographed space.

We have established one of the two elements required for Gudrun Kemsal to begin her work – the space. As a dominating voluminous presence it determines the position of individual figures, which will become significant in terms of the game ultimately played by the image or sequence of images. Once she has realised where the individual figures are positioned, she is obliged to deal with them in a certain way. While the aperture is open the artist moves and generates images, or she allows her protagonists to move so that images virtually generate themselves. The pictorial space is always conceived of as a block, from which the work should be hewn, similar to Michelangelo's conception of chiselling all superfluity away. The space stipulates the position and interaction of the figures throughout the recording, that both artist and viewer alike must perform.

It is striking that Gudrun Kemsal always selects enclosed, almost sheltered spaces. A priori she fulfils Aldo van Eyck's demand that architecture build interiors outdoors as well as in - he accused it of doing the reverse, namely creating exteriors everywhere. Gudrun Kemsal invents spaces, in which interiors can serve as plausible projections of the world and a world view. She invents such spaces as the basis for her work, without wishing to build them for herself. This distinguishes her work fundamentally from the efforts of many contemporaries, whose perception is focused solely on spaces they themselves have constructed and are thus condemned to fabrication in some form

or other. Gudrun Kemsal can cope without models of the world, her gaze is as direct as her reaction and the viewer experiences her pictorial discoveries as such.

When selecting a suitable space for her figures and game, Gudrun Kemsal is influenced by one variable which is difficult to put in words – colour. It is not that she is unfamiliar with colour systems, neither is her preference for certain juxtapositions of colour whimsical: rather the quick and assured selection of a specific colour to provide the basis for a situation is indicative of the artist acting autonomously. She knows her colours and can describe and designate them accurately - but that is not what it is about. A colour evokes a particular mood and associations and she then selects a location – for both colour and artist - to match. Neon lights on a fairground, a vast array of gases and filters, Mediterranean sunlight on a garden and portico and their resulting brown shadows, the red tinges of an underground passage, the makeshift architecture under a bridge in dirty primaries. Colours evoke the scene in the image, whilst contemplating the image, both standing in front of it and thereafter.

Gudrun Kemsal's approach to colour is by no means classical, not even in terms of the modern view of colour as an image of an image. For her, colours suggest technical considerations, how to illuminate and photograph a reality, that serves as the starting point for her game of image-making – the resulting photographic print and the flickering monitor are so similar in their evocation of perception, that we need not distinguish between the two. The world is colourful – once upon a time abstraction was black and white. Gudrun Kemsal went through such a phase producing quality works, which were beautiful in the original sense of the word. But since then colour has become the trigger, the reason for putting a game plan and some figures in place and ultimately for applying the rules. The plan is cold, the figures lifeless, the space and colour are the be-all and end-all of the game – and the life that it reveals. But hardly has a game begun or the first round completed, when it is extended in terms not of variations and settlements, but significance and perceptible realities.

Extensions of the Game

Every game becomes boring when the rules laid down are too strict or they are applied too rigidly without regard for the state of play. Returning to John Horton Conway's *The Game of Life*: genetics soon recognised that extensions, improvements and connections were required for more complex, and thus more accurate, model calculations of cell growth and forms of biological organisation. Games are extended primarily to interpret or modify rules or figures in an attempt to clarify some fundamental aspects of the game – however contradictory this might appear at first glance. It is the same with the works of Gudrun Kemsal. Conclusions regarding the entire project can be drawn from these extensions and reinterpretations of the figures and rules, which naturally only apply to the current state of play.

Let us take the colours as an example. Where the location determines the framework, the treatment or cropping of the image can give a particular colour, not necessarily associated with the location, a new meaning that affects the reading of the use of colour as a whole. The deep, yellow floor surfaces in some videos of plazas may not be incompatible with our everyday perception of a walkway people might actually use, but are so bright that they undermine the space rendering it defunct, or at least unreal. Suddenly the people are no longer walking, but gliding and turning, performing the same choreographed movements, that Gudrun Kemsal imposed on herself during the recording. In the video projection, on monitor or screen, the yellow loses all semblance of structure and the resulting smooth expanse focuses attention, drawing it away behind the screen panel. The same is true of some blue backgrounds in the video sequences

of the promenade. It may not be a blue box in front of which an event unfolds, but it is easy to imagine any other background.

Titles are significant extensions, making allusions which are as pertinent as they are incomplete. "Colonnades", which one suspects could form part of the Brandenburg Gate, Schinkel's classicist museum in Berlin or could just as easily belong to some Roman shrine of late Hellenic antiquity. "The Park" shows a cheerful, Italian Pasticcio, with early and late baroque hedges and sculptures lining sandy paths – as in a quiz, it does not allow easy identification in terms of location. But this is not part of the game. For the extension of the Kemsian scenery, it is important that identification be traced back to individual memories, wherever they might lead. By contrast, the passageway under Potsdamer Platz in Berlin has a famous name as does the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, but in both cases the accompanying architecture is as unremarkable as any supermarket entrance or office façade. The title robs the subject of its uniqueness, linking it to other memories in our contemplation thereof, to a mood of perseverance, missed opportunities, turning and gliding.

At this point photographs and videos once again diverge – playfully, if you so wish – but only because the public has differing expectations of the media in terms of end product. Photographs generate indices of whatever they depict, independent of the quality of the representation. The dilemma of photographic art is that the index of the mimetic qualities is at odds with the autonomy of the image – which Alfred Stieglitz, early on, when he wanted to establish fine art photography, struggled in vain to overcome. Gudrun Kemska can deal with this double indices without any problem and turns it neatly into a playful extension of the rule book. Either a meaningful place name refers to a meaningless space or a run of the mill name is brought into association with something important without indicating precisely what it is. This grasp of art – true in both senses since Marcel Duchamp – has a second motivation: it establishes an iconography, part of Gudrun Kemska's toying with art.

Plazas as ground, columns as figures, movement as the rule – it is a highly constructivist programme and as such, highly ideological. As regards Gudrun Kemska, nothing could be further from the truth. But she has good reason for her appeal to a classicist ensemble as it positions her in a European context with clear conventions, in which her aim of expanding perceptual horizons can be, and is, understood without further ado. Precisely because the objects in her images and videos are familiar elements from a broad, middle European, cultural tradition, the interaction with them can be as free as it is – from turning and gliding to seeing and forming. The latter leads to a formulation – one of many formulations possible, but that is a job for the players.

The Players

Artists are not players – either they are preoccupied with existential questions and how these are reflected in image, sound or word or else they are not artists. This does not prohibit the implications of playfulness, especially for women artists. The example of the *Game of Life* as a mathematical model for game playing has nothing if not existential ramifications. The description of Gudrun Kemska's works to date using such game playing terminology, is based on several finished results that can be visually analysed, for example in the form of projections. But this contemplation is itself part of the game, although without the artist's direct involvement. She does her job, creating her works and defining their existence as objects or events. But the job of interpretation is left to others, here the players – which is difficult to describe in so far as the mathematical models for game playing do not allow for any players and because the colloquial use of the word "game" does not extend to art.

In her more recent works, Gudrun Kemsal has incorporated the players into the image, in the tradition of the founding fathers of the late Middle Ages or as romantic silhouettes in the foreground of mood landscapes. How still these figures are is especially obvious in her videos – they observe, in our place. Contemplation appears the order of the day, but that is evidently a ruse, as whoever can be bothered to watch a video with a running time of several minutes to the end – branded a totally unreasonable demand to make of art lovers since Documenta XI – quickly discovers, as silhouettes appear and suddenly disappear, remain still and then vanish in a flash. There is no evidence of an apocalyptic vision or sacred worship, once again one must suspect disinterested pleasure, but not of the caught-in-between variety, but a similarly marginalized and absent-minded way of looking. That is exactly what Gudrun does not do herself, and so she should expect the same from us – we players.

The artist gives no instructions as to which way of looking. She is professional enough, to refrain from making any such comments which would only cramp and confuse audience receptivity. But her way of working reveals a principle, not an order or set of instructions, but a categorical imperative. Whether moving or still, Gudrun Kemsal's images are especially reluctant to fall in line regarding one photographic criterion in particular – the focus. The end products of turning and gliding appear blurred, the moving figures in videos occasionally lack definition. This obliges one to look again. Where will the eye find a focus? Where do new constellations result from superimpositions? Where do the unexpectedly clear forms in the middle of the blurred expanses come from? Such questions arise well into a game and they accompany the recognition of figures and rules.

Training oneself to use both eyes, which appears to run counter to the medial constitution of the works, is useful regarding the exceptions and the game board. This is true of both photographic and video works – which can be taken together in this reflection on the works of Gudrun Kemsal as they constitute only a superficial and unenlightening category. I do not mean the eye-bulging, headache-inducing exercises of stereoscopic vision, but rather the uniform use of the entire visual field, consisting of overlapping images, without favouring one-eyed focusing as though looking through the finder on a camera or at a video monitor. This two-eyed gaze can also be described as use of the retina without emphasis on the role of the fovea – blind spots alone are not at issue in these works – and early prehistoric humans used it for precisely those activities, that Gudrun Kemsal performs when working – turning and gliding, then seeing and forming.

It is the same exercise, which brings me back to the starting point of my deliberations, that sculptors since the late nineteenth century, since Medardo Rosso and Auguste Rodin, have demanded from their public. This did not necessarily entail walking around the object, but on no account should it be seen from just one angle and above all, it demanded a synthesis of all conceivable vantage points. Gudrun Kemsal combines countless possible photographs in one image and hints at innumerable other movements in a single video. That is, as I have said, part of her game. She has a right to expect the players in front of her images – which she stands firmly behind – to involve themselves at least for a little while, neither too long nor too short, in this way of seeing and synthesising. So the game in front of Gudrun Kemsal's photographs and videos is on.

The Second Game

The work of an artist is a combination of creation and reception together with feedback for the next creation. Gudrun Kemsal has shown her works – a phrase that incorporates both the process and the result without prioritising one over the other – for more than a decade in the white cubes

of exhibitions, galleries, museums and festivals. Her works have been exhibited in local and international contexts and it would be amazing if these presentations were not reflected in subsequent works. The effect has been described in the sections on the board, figures and rules – a repertoire of great consistency and impressive tenacity. Nevertheless interim reports such as this demarcate a break, demonstrate a transition to a new, or at least different, phase and create expectations, be it only an inkling, as to what is to come - if possible before the artist knows it herself.

Perhaps it is already apparent how little difference, between the two media in which Gudrun Kemska works, there really is. Whatever can be said about photography is also applicable to videos. Whatever is obvious in regard to videos, will be revealed by a calm and close examination of photography. However, the media used for the final presentation could not be more different. On one hand the art-historically well-established, coloured pigments on paper, on the other the screen flickering at 50 or 60 hertz. But this difference is emphasised more by the appliances than the works themselves and almost disappears by itself when describing genuine issues central to her concept. Whatever, the fusing of both ways of working is inevitable. There is ever more movement in the photographic works, and the videographic works are ever more static.

The corresponding elements are clear. The people in the photographs move – as in the example of the dome of the Reichstag – in the opposite direction to the camera and its operator. There are hardly any people in videos such as the trip down the Nile turning the river and boat travelling along it into figures of minor importance, roles usually reserved for people. Circular and oval flecks, erstwhile elements of light and its negation, are becoming increasingly transparent and their internal structure recognisable such that it begins to assert its independence in the image as a whole. Figures, formerly strict guarantors of the spaces in between, dissolve producing amorphous areas in the image, ambiguous representations of either space or flatness. It seems, therefore, as if Gudrun Kemska has finally bid sculpture farewell and has really attained an immateriality of media, which, according to Jean-Francois Lyotard's definition, is ultimately the preserve of all art, and art alone.

One More Round

A few new elements have only emerged in the works of Gudrun Kemska so recently, that they demand examination. Firstly there is the use of mirrors, which can be found in her works on the Potsdamer Platz and in the façades of the Bibliothèque Nationale. Reflection constitutes a new rule, with implications for turning and gliding whenever the recorded object has a shiny, reflective surface. Mirroring literally reflects earlier ways of working and their effects. The game board has been broken along various lines, but is deeper and more exciting. This has repercussions for the rules, especially since the figures have begun to dissolve. The movements have become more complex, referring to double loops and combined sequences, and are no longer easily identified with the physical movements of the artist whilst recording. The same goes for the lights on the fairground, on disco balls, and merry-go-rounds, detaching themselves from the physical body from which they emanate and beginning an independent life on the surface of the image.

A new round in the game has begun, and we on the sidelines in front of the images are astonished once more. The old rules still apply, or so it seems, and yet new sensations are struggling to make themselves felt. The old figures are still recognisable, but their outline is disappearing and their severity gone. The game board has become the sky, but even that has a discernible structure. Defining the game is no longer quite as easy as it was in the early works and yet it is still

recognisably there. The model has probably run its course by now. Like this book it is an intermediary and now makes way for pure seeing and understanding, that is art.

Translated from the German by Christopher Muller, presented with kind permission from Gudrun Kemsal: www.kemsa.de.

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