

galerie  
andresthalmann

Katja Loher  
Sculpting in Air

Exhibition 4 November - 4 December 2010



#### Faszinierende Videowelten

Das Video-Universum der in New York lebenden und arbeitenden Schweizer Künstlerin Katja Loher vermittelt Einblicke in faszinierende Mikro-Makro-Kosmen, die mit Realität und Fiktion, Form und Dynamik, innerer und äusserer Perspektive spielen. „Videoplaneten“, Mini-Universen – so genannte „Miniversen“ – und „Videoskulpturen“ bevölkern ihre künstlerischen Sphären und kreieren Visionen von bedrückender Schönheit.

Mit ihren 31 Jahren kann Katja Loher bereits auf zahlreiche Ausstellungen in internationalen Museen und Galerien zurückblicken. Dieses Jahr wurde sie unter anderem gebeten, eine raumgreifende Skulptur zur Eröffnungsausstellung des von Zaha Hadid entworfenen Museo Nazionale Delle Arti Del XXI Secolo in Rom – kurz MAXXI genannt – zu schaffen. Darauf folgten eine Einladung zur Architekturbiennale in Venedig und die Nominierung für den Kunstcredit Basel. Im Dezember 2011 werden Katja Lohers neuste Werke zudem im renommierten MUBE, Museu Brasileiro da Escultura, in Sao Paolo zu sehen sein.

Mit den Videokompositionen von Katja Loher steht erstmals das Medium Video im Zentrum einer Ausstellung der Galerie Andres Thalmann. Gezeigt werden nebst der für das MAXXI kreierten Videokugel „Sculpting in Air“ auch verschiedene „Videoplaneten“ und „Videoskulpturen“, die eigens für die Ausstellung in Zürich entworfen wurden.

Ich möchte mich herzlich bei Elena Rossi, der Kuratorin des MAXXI in Rom, für die Verfassung des Textes zu diesem Katalog bedanken. Ein spezielles Dankeschön geht an Katja Loher für eine aussergewöhnliche Ausstellung, die wohl auch diejenigen Besucherinnen und Besucher, denen die Videokunst bisher fremd blieb, zu faszinieren und für sich zu gewinnen vermag.

#### Fascinating Video Worlds

Swiss artist Katja Loher lives and works in New York City. Her video universe offers glimpses of fascinating micro-/macrocosms that toy with reality and fiction, form and dynamism, interior and exterior perspectives. Videoplanets, mini-universes – so-called Miniverses – and Videosculptures populate her artistic spheres creating visions of oppressive beauty.

At the age of thirty-one, Katja Loher already has had several shows at international galleries and museums. This year, among other things, she created a large sculpture for the inauguration of Zaha Hadid's MAXXI, the Museo Nazionale Delle Arti Del XXI Secolo in Rome, followed by an invitation to the Venice Biennale of Architecture, and her nomination for the Kunstcredit Basel award. In December 2011 Loher's most recent works will be presented at MUBE, the Museu Brasileiro da Escultura in Sao Paolo.

This presentation of Loher's video compositions is the first time that Andres Thalmann Gallery focuses on video as a medium. Alongside Sculpting in Air, Loher's multispherical video creation for MAXXI, the gallery is proud to show various Videoplanets and Videosculptures designed especially for this exhibition in Zurich.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Elena Rossi, independent curator for MAXXI in Rome, for her contribution to this catalogue. My special thanks go to Katja Loher for this extraordinary show. We trust it will fascinate and attract also and especially those visitors who have yet to fully embrace video art.

*Carina Andres Thalmann*

Carina Andres Thalmann  
Galerie Andres Thalmann

# Katja Loher – Sculpting in Air

Katja Loher projiziert ihre Videos auf die Oberfläche von grossen, glatten Globen, die mitten im Raum hängen. Die 31-jährige Schweizer Künstlerin löst sich vom Monitor und der Black Box, in der Videos auf eine oder mehrere Wände projiziert werden, und inszeniert statt dessen ihre Werke als raumgreifende „Videoskulpturen“. Sie entstehen in ihrem New Yorker Atelier in enger Zusammenarbeit mit Tänzern, Choreografen, Musikern und Designern. Loher nennt sie „Video-planets“ und „Miniversen“. Die kleinformatigen „Miniversen“ sind Kugeln, deren Innenseite bespielt und der Aussenwelt durch Öffnungen erschlossen wird. Wie die grossformatigen „Videoplanets“ reflektieren sie die *Conditio humana* in der globalisierten Welt.

In ihren skulpturalen Videoarbeiten eröffnet Loher ein Spannungsfeld zwischen märchenhafter Fantasie und beklemmender Wirklichkeit. So sind die surrealen Welten von realen Figuren bevölkert, die in virtuellen Räumen herumtaumeln und gleichsam den ökologischen Kollaps zu verhindern suchen. Androgyn anmutende Tänzerinnen, die an Feen erinnern, sind bestrebt, die natürliche Grundlage unserer Existenz zu erhalten, indem sie künstlich die Bestäubung von Pflanzen oder gar die Photosynthese vollziehen.

In ihrem Video, das sie anlässlich der diesjährigen Eröffnung des spektakulären MAXXI-Museum von Zaha Hadid herstellte, greift Loher ein neues Thema auf und inszeniert einen Dialog zwischen Mensch und Computer. Das rudimentäre Frage- und Antwortspiel und die uniform kostümierten Akteure erinnern an Science-Fiction-Filme der 1970er Jahre. Mit ihrer überzeichneten Bildsprache unterstreicht die Künstlerin, dass der Wortwechsel zwischen dem funkelnden Auge und der rotierenden Harddisk keine Verständigung aufkommen lässt.

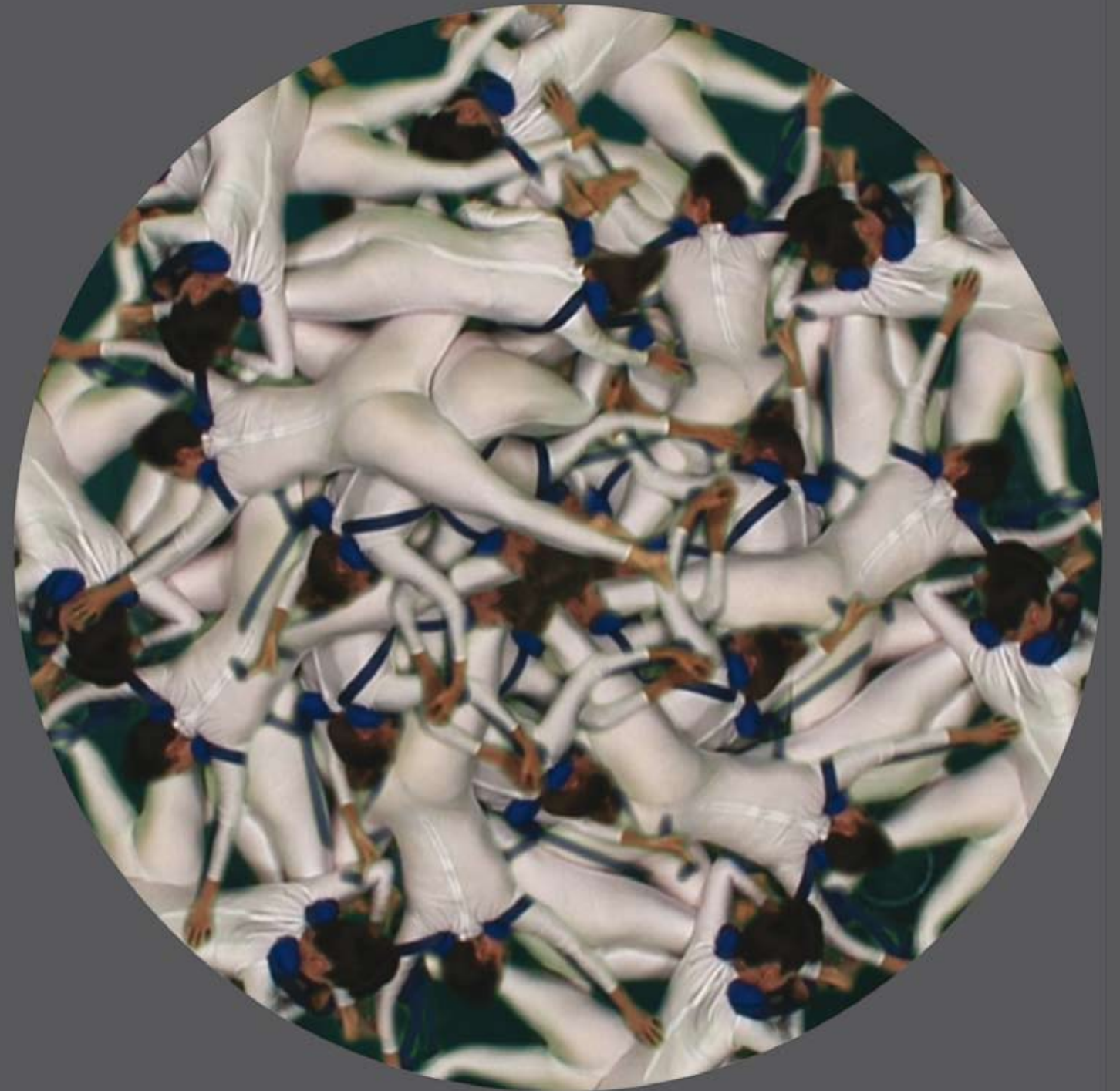
Inspiriert von Pablo Nerudas „Buch der Fragen“ befasst sich Loher seit 2005 mit Fragen, die unsere Existenzgrundlage betreffen. Ihre vielschichtigen Videocollagen zeigen metaphorisch auf, welche weit reichende Auswirkungen poetisch gestellte Fragen wie beispielsweise „Why did the bees leave?“ haben können. Zuweilen setzt Loher Fragen als Textbilder um, indem sie Tänzer zu Buchstaben formiert und diese zu Wörtern verbindet. Meist sind die Wörter, die sie mit ihrem sogenannten „Videoalphabet“ komponiert, in Szenerien eingebettet, die die Bedeutung des sich entfaltenden Satzes in einem kontrastreichen Spannungsbogen versinnbildlichen.

Im Gegensatz zur Textebene, die Loher in einzelnen Videos einfügt, ist bei den Bewegungsabläufen kaum eine narrative Struktur auszumachen. Die Bewegungen einer Tanzgruppe sind meist synchron choreographiert. Mit der Vogelperspektive, die Loher in fast allen Arbeiten einsetzt, wird die Disposition der Körper als klares Muster aufgezeichnet. Diese Muster vervielfacht die Künstlerin in kaleidoskopischer Manier bei der digitalen Nachbearbeitung. Die sich ständig verändernden Konstellationen von bewegenden Körpern erzeugen in ihrer symmetrischen Vervielfachung ein rhythmisch pulsierendes Kollektiv. Lohers träumerisch inszenierte apokalyptische Fabeln suggerieren uns, dass die „Retung des Planeten“ nur mit kollektiver Kraft ermöglicht werden kann.

Ruth Littman







# Entering Katja Loher's Universes

Projections onto large weather balloons (Videoplanets, since 2006), or inside circular sculptures (Mini-universes, since 2008), through the colored water in three glasses (RGB Well, 2009/2010), or – in her latest work – inside glass bubbles (Bubbles, 2010) – these are just some of the ways in which Katja Loher's videos are transformed into sculptures. A skilful film editor and an artist who embarks on in-depth experiments with materials, shapes and colors, she collaborates with professionals from different backgrounds to create „planets“ or imaginary universes which mentally and emotionally embrace the audience. In a quest to „locate a new identity in space and time“, Loher's worlds are condensed into an altered global vision.

Filmed from a bird's eye view, choreographed bodies come together in the post-production process to form letters that shape a new language, which the artist calls Videoalphabet. The tiny scale of the performers seen from above provides an outside view, as though through a microscope. The dancers that enter into the camera focus become part of Loher's universe where they „evaporate“ into ephemeral components, digitally controlled, engaged in embodying a „human language“ that sometimes dissolves into abstract patterns.

Questions or simple dialogues occasionally alternate with the representation of „micro-societies“, such as the one of men working like bees depicted in one of her scenes, whose existence is reflected in the mechanical tasks that assure their survival.

The key point of reference in Loher's works is the human body – even when questions relate to red, green and blue, i.e. the colors used in Videoplanet, 2010, and RGB Well, 2009/2010); or to ask, „Where is the Center of the Sea?“ (Miniverse 3, 2009); or to the relationship between man and technology (Sculpting in Air, 2010); or yet to more specifically ecological issues such as the ones raised by the surplus of waste products that are generated in the struggle to increase productivity (Collapsoscope, 2010; in collaboration with Hans Focketyn). Universes are enclosed in other universes. In Loher's planetary vision, the body, a universe in its own right where microcosm and macrocosm meet, is as far as the human eye can reach.

The harmonious kaleidoscopic design of Loher's latest works provides another and more global vision of a dystopic world in which the balance between man and nature has been destroyed by the pervasive presence of machines. Synchronised movement becomes the subject of the work, and is the engine that moves kaleidoscopic geometrical compositions, alluding to the Bauhaus spirit of functionality in its pure state. Harmony and beauty are juxtaposed to – yet on a par with an apocalyptic vision of a mechanised world.

The performers' dehumanisation, enhanced by their costumes, is sometimes undermined by the camera zooming in on their facial expressions. They gaze up from below, which establishes a strong connection with the viewer. However, that link is broken when the camera suddenly zooms out again and the faces



merge back into the whole. This is just one of the complex games the artist plays with the observer who, in the role of voyeur, completes the meaning of the work.

In Videoplanets the projection onto large balloons gently invades and morphs space to embrace the visitors whose feelings of immersion are enhanced by the sound. A more subjective interaction is required when Loher's world is revealed through multiple openings in the circular Miniverse sculptures. The sense of viewing a universe is the same, but this time there is a radical change in the way the work is delivered. Having to get close to the work emphasises its voyeuristic aspect as the observer becomes more aware of his or her role. Other visitors seeing someone peering at a hole have a broader view, one that encompasses the sculpture and the audience involved in a unique performance or living sculpture.

The game between observer and observed is pushed to extremes in the site-specific version of *Sculpting in Air* realised for the inauguration of Rome's MAXXI Museum. The images from a camera that films visitors observing the work are projected onto the rear of the balloon and incorporated into the „planet“. From there, but in reverse, the images return in live-stream transmission to other observers who are watching both video and filmed visitors on the web component. Even more than Loher's other works, this piece emphasises a fragmented vision in which the circularity of the sculptural components is also conceived as a mode of observation.

*Collapsoscope* is a sculpture created for this year's Venice Architecture Biennale. It hangs suspended from the ceiling; its apertures protrude as though in a still image of an explosion. This piece represents a new turn in Loher's explorations. Everything seems to escape from the visual field previously inscribed in her spherical planets. The expanding projection reaches the surrounding walls where the words of the human alphabets dissolve, and the images of the digital bodies collapse accompanied by a crashing sound.

Loher takes her play with ephemeral objects and solid materials to a new level in her most recent development and vision that uses as a projection surface the bubble blown into a glass sculpture (*Bubbles*, 2010).

Elena Giulia Rossi  
Independent Curator, Rome

English version edited by Margret Powell-Joss

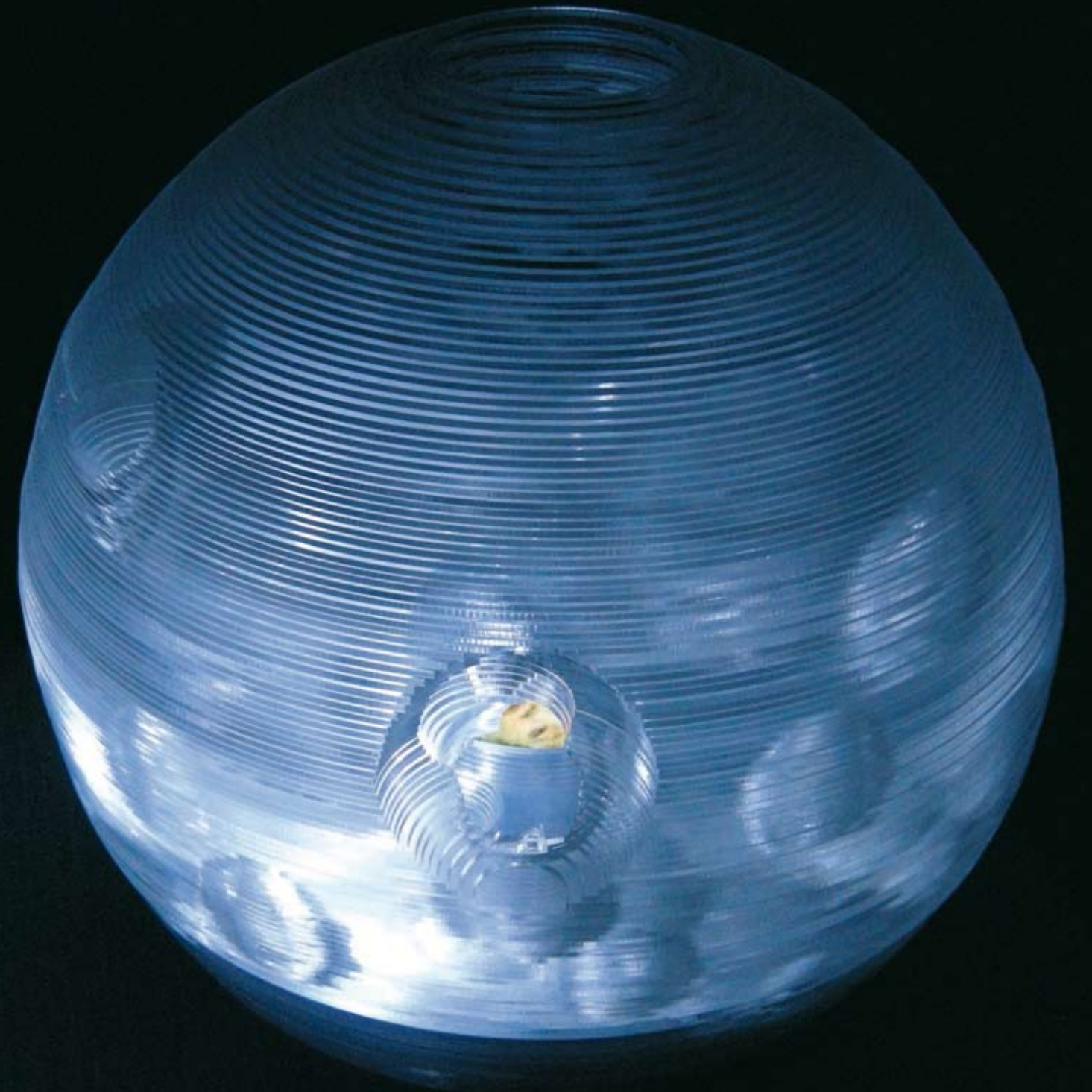














**Pages 20-21**  
**Miniverse 3** 2009, Videosculpture  
Acrylic sphere with video screen, 30 cm diameter

**Bubbles** 2010, Videosculpture. 2 glass bubbles, video screen embedded  
in a wooden pedestal. Photo: Luke Emery







## KATJA LOHER – BIOGRAPHY

1979 Born in Zurich  
2000 – 2001 ESBA, Fine Art Academy Geneva  
2001 – 2004 FHBB HGK, Fine Art Academy Basel  
2004 Diploma Dept. of Art and Media Art, Art Academy Basel, FHBB HGK  
Since 2004 Lives and works in New York and Basel

### Awards & Grants

2010 Nominated for Art Credit Award, Basel-Stadt, Switzerland.  
2009 Artist in Residence, Beijing, China. iaab: International Exchange & Studio Program, Basel-Stadt, Switzerland.  
2008 ValiART-Award by Valiant, Bern, Switzerland. Audiovision and Multimedia Grant, Canton Basel, Switzerland. Artist in Residence, Berlin, Germany, Cultural Department Schaffhausen, Switzerland.  
since 2007 0-1 Artist Visa, Artist in Residence, New York, USA. Alexander Clavel Foundation Cultural Development Prize, Riehen, Switzerland.  
2006 Artist in Residence, New York, USA. iaab: International Exchange & Studio Program Basel-Stadt, Switzerland.  
2004 TPC CreaTVty Award for new media, TPC Production Center Zurich, Switzerland. Art Credit Award, Basel-Stadt, Switzerland.

### Solo Exhibitions

2011 MUBE, Museu Brasileiro da Escultura, Sao Paulo, Brazil. Galleria Tiziana Di Caro, Salerno, Italy. Anya Tish Gallery, Houston, Texas, USA. Galerie Vernon, Prague, Prague, Czech Republic.  
2010 Sculpting in Air, Galerie Andres Thalman, Zurich, Switzerland.  
2009 Galleria Tiziana Di Caro, Salerno, Italy. Anya Tish Gallery, Houston, Texas, USA. Videotellurium Motion II, Galapagos Art Space, Dumbo, New York, USA.  
2008 Videotellurium Motion II, Christinger Contemporary, Zurich, Switzerland. A.I.R. ONE, Substitut, Berlin, Germany, Curator: Urs Kuenzi.  
2007 Planète, Scène2, Senones, France, Curator: Cécile Huet.

2006 Between the sun and ...., Tony Wuethrich Gallery, Cabinet, Basel, Switzerland. Les Jeux sont faits, Kunsthalle Palazzo, Liestal, Switzerland, Curator: Helen Hirsch, with Sirous Namazi, J.Wood & P.Harrison. Pool installation, Galapagos Art Space, New York, USA.  
2006 View to the Planets 2006, Forum Vebikus, Schaffhausen, Switzerland, Curator: André Bless. Dublin Fringe 2006, Dublin, Ireland. Wherever You May Be, The Artist Network Gallery, Soho, New York, USA, Curator: Raul Zamudio.  
2005 Love.com, The State Hermitage Museum, St.Petersburg, Russia, Curator: Maria Korosteleva. ART/36 Basel, Tony Wuethrich Gallery, Basel, Switzerland. Switzerland Festival Rose D'Or, KKL Luzern, Switzerland.

### Group Exhibitions

2010 Anya Tish Gallery, Houston, Texas, USA. Nominated for Art Credit Basel, Swiss Architecture Museum, Basel, Switzerland. NETinSPACE MAXXI, National Museum of the Arts of the XXIst Century, Rome, Italy. Curator: Elena Rossi. TINA B, Festival for Contemporary Art, Prague, Czech Republic, Curator: Monika Burian. TINA B, Porsche Center, Padova, Italy. La Biennale di Venezia - 12th International Architecture, Arsenale Nord, Venice, Italy. Convergences - New Sculptural Media, Armory Center for the Arts, Altadena, CA, USA. Post Dimension - A Journey in the Contemporary Art, Torrione Passari, Bari, Italy, Curator: Giacomo Zaza.  
2009 Siggraph Asia 2009, Yokohama, Japan, Curators: Yuko Oda & Mariko Tanaka. Light Switch, Anya Tish Gallery, Houston, Texas, USA. TINA B, Festival of contemporary Art In Prague, Czech Republic. Curator: Monika Burian. Euoiserie, Modern Art Gallery Taichung, Taiwan Found Museum, Beijing, China. Biennale Chongqing, China, Curator: Wang Lin. Dialogue of the Generations, Kunsthalle Palazzo

2008 Liestal, Switzerland, with Lori Hersberger. Wondering Where the Ducks Went, Galleria Tiziana di Caro, Salerno, Italy. Curator: Simona Brunetti. SUMMERTIME 08 - The Big Group Show, Galleri Christoffer Egelund, Denmark. Primacy, Threshold Art Space, Perth, UK, Curator: Iliyana Nedkova. Art Is My Playground, Tershane, Istanbul, Group Exhibition in a Public Space.  
2007 New York City Panorama, Flux Factory, New York, USA, Curators: Jean Barberis & Chen Tamir. Biennale Parallel, Tershane Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey, Curator: Devrim Kadirbeyoglu. 798/Dashanzi Art Festival, Beijing, China, Curator: Marc Hungerbuehler. NO1 Artbase, 798 Area, Beijing, China, Curator: Marc Hungerbuehler. Forum & Elzbieta Koscielak Gallery, Lesnica Castle, Zamek, Poland, Curator: Raul Zamudio. laab Choices, Art Space Riehen, Basel, Switzerland, Curators: Chris Regn & Lena Eriksson. Greenhouse, Alexander Clavel Foundation Cultural Development Prize. Villa Wenkenhof, Riehen, Switzerland, Curator: Kiki Seiler-Michalitsi.  
2005 Art Digital 2005, M'ARS Centre of Contemporary Arts Moscow, Russia, Curator: Antonio Geusa. Ernte 2005, Museum zu Allerheiligen, Schaffhausen, Switzerland. Regionale 6, Kunstverein Freiburg, Germany.

### Art Fairs

2011 Art Stage Singapore, Solo exhibition, presented by Galerie Vernon, Prague, Czech Republic. Artefiera, International Art Fair for contemporary Art, Bologna, Italy. Salone Internazionale del Mobile 2011, Design Week, Milan, Solo exhibition, presented by Galerie Vernon, Prague, Czech Republic.  
2010 Kunst 10 Zurich, Solo exhibition, presented by Galerie Andres Thalman, Zurich, Switzerland. Artissima 17 International, Fair of Contemporary Art in Torino, Presented by Galleria Tiziana di Caro, Salerno, Italy. VOLTA Basel, Lightbox, Solo exhibition, presented by Vernon Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic. SCOPE BASEL, presented by Vernon Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic.

2009 MIART, Milan Contemporary Art Fair, Galleria Tiziana Di Caro, Salerno, Italy. Salone del MOBILE 2010, Vernon International, Prague, Czech Republic. Art Verona On Stage, Solo Exhibition Galleria Tiziana di Caro, Salerno, Italy. Curator: Andrea Bruciati. MIART, Milan Contemporary Art Fair, Galleria Tiziana Di Caro, Salerno, Italy.  
2008 Art 39 Basel, Main Fair, Tony Wuethrich Gallery, Basel, Switzerland.  
2007 Istanbul Contemporary Art Fair, Tershane Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey.  
2006 Diva Digital & Video Art Fair, New York, USA.

### Collections

eN Arts Collection, Tokyo, Japan. GC. AC - Galleria Comunale d'Arte Contemporanea of Monfalcone, Italy. Sara Lahat Private Collection, Herzliya, Israel. Horsecross Collection, Permanent Collection of Digital Art, Perth, UK. Burkard & Partner AG, Basel, Switzerland. 9.6 Conceptual Worlds, Basel, Switzerland. Private Collectors in Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Russia, Israel and USA.

### Representing Galleries

Galerie Andres Thalman, Zurich, Switzerland. Anya Tish Gallery, Houston, Texas. Galleria Tiziana di Caro, Salerno, Italy. Galerie Vernon, Prague, Czech Republic.

### Collaborators

Hans Focketyn, Architect, Basel, Switzerland Saori Tsukada, Choreography, New York, USA Asako Fujimoto, Audio Design, Paris, France Julia Sørensen, Text, Geneva, Switzerland Erica Magrey, Costume Design, New York, USA Michiko Sakano, Glassblower, New York, USA Mister Wang, Electronics, Beijing, China Luke Emery, Assistant, New York, USA Ying Bing, Assistant, Beijing, China



## KATJA LOHER – SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY / PRESS

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Antonello Tolve: MAXXI, Una scelta secca: Dietro e dentro lo sguardo di Katja Loher. In: TeKnemedia, ARTKEY Magazine, Torino, 03.06.2010.

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Peter Stohler: TOMOGRAPH, Interviews with artists. Arnoldsche Art Publisher, Stuttgart, 2009.

Tershane Gallery: Art Is My Playground, Istanbul, 2008.

Robert Elmes: Art Primer, YRB JUMP OFF, June issue, New York, 2008.

Yonina Chan: Verses, Universes, Inverses. In: Imagine, Manila Bulletin, October Issue, 2008.

Robin Blanck: Aufbruch am Ende von Raum und Zeit. In: Schaffhauser Nachrichten, 05.07.2008.

Alison Anderson: High art suspended over Concert Hall, In: Perthshire Advertiser, Perth, 16.05.2008.

Peter Stohler: Katja Loher: Schachfeld. In: Les Jeux sont faits, Kunsthalle Palazzo, Liestal, Juni 2007.

Flux Factory: New York City Panorama, New York, 2007.

The Artist Network: 798/Dashanzi Art Festival, Beijing, 2007.

Tershane Gallery: Biennale Parallel, Istanbul, 2007.

Dietrich Roeschmann: Katja Loher: The world as a game. In: Regioartline, Art Magazine 15.06.2007, Basel.

Denise Langenegger: Interview, DRS1 Radio, National Broadcast Switzerland, New York, 2006.

Alfred Wüger, Between the Sun and the Oranges, Schaffhauser Nachrichten, November 2006.

Peter Pfister: Honey sucking helicopters and airy dreams, AZ Schaffhausen, November 2006.

Ann-Katrin Harfensteller: The special look through a peephole Basellandschaftliche Zeitung, August 2006.

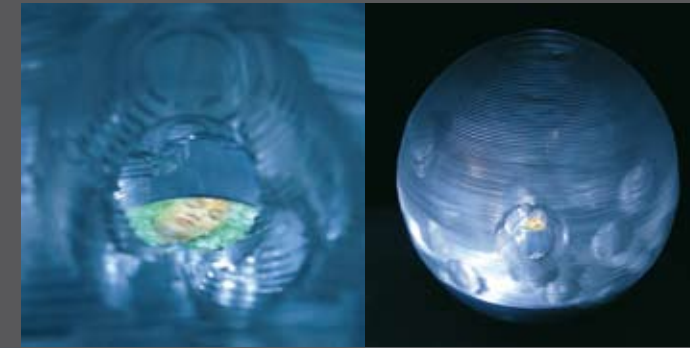
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Bea Hauser: Each Video is a Form of Invention. In: AZ Schaffhausen, 10.03.2005.

M'ARS Centre of Contemporary Arts Moscow: Art Digital 2005 Moscow, Digitalized Love, Moscow 2005.

Olga Horoshilova: Katja Loher, Sylvie Rodriguez: Love.com The State Hermitage Museum. In: Time out St.Petersburg, December 2005.

Andrei Vorobei: Swiss video installations on show at the Hermitage Museum. In: St.Petersburg Times, 23.12.2005.



**Miniverse 3** 2009, Videosculpture  
Acrylic sphere with video screen, 30 cm diameter



**Miniverse 2** 2009, Videosculpture  
Acrylic sphere with 6 video screens, 55 cm diameter



**Miniverse 4** 2009, Videosculpture  
Acrylic sphere with video screen and kaleidoscope, 35 cm diameter



**Miniverse 5** 2010, Videosculpture  
Lacquered sphere with video screen and kaleidoscope, 26 cm diameter. Photos: Marco Monti



## IMPRESSUM

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