

NILE KOETTING

Unattended Access

Parliament is pleased to present Nile Koetting's first solo exhibition at the gallery.  
Unattended Access from 17 March to 6 May 2023.

Two people are speaking on a video call. One shares the contents of their screen in real time. In the image on-screen, both participants (dis?)appear in a *mise en abyme* of their own likenesses. A message appears: “To avoid infinite mirror, don’t share your entire screen...”

Nile Koetting’s work actively complicates the *mise en scène* through the *mise en abyme*. In this instance, one might begin with the theatre as an apparatus – but in doing so, one must not confound the theatre with the beginning – which organises the spectacle as a distillation of effects onto a designated stage. In his representation of the theatrical apparatus, Koetting extracts individual elements, warps them into uncanny figures and combines them into assemblages indistinguishable from the architectures of waiting rooms, transit centres, the dematerialised workplace, generally speaking. We enter into these assemblages, not quite as spectators, perhaps not as performers either, but most likely as additional props in the scene. After all, if all the world is indeed a stage, you and I are not going to be cast in the lead roles, right?

Which is to say, Nile Koetting’s appropriation of scenographic elements is not summed up by a concept of performativity, since his notion of the subject is too broad for the human to encompass. Making oblique reference to the Japanese tradition of Noh Theater for example, he disembowels the theatre, bringing the make-up room into view as the site of spiritual transformation. Through the transposition, the make-up room itself undergoes its own metamorphosis, now illuminated like a casino, it casts light on the role of chance in change and fortune in becoming.

Because everything is change. Koetting uses the ubiquitous, infuriating Loading... symbol, a circuitous icon that is never complete, to question the false teleology of optimisation processes. If we are continuously buffering, when do we get to play? Sleepy trusses seem unable to uphold the illusion any longer, and the infrastructure of the piece is collapsing. At the same time, stage lights follow their own *parcours* within the exhibition space, as though the performance were carrying on anyway. The temporality of this performance is spliced once again by an ambient sound piece, which inserts the sounds of an audience from some unknown future into the scene. Of course, the scene might be illegible to most viewers now, but that does not mean that the storyline will remain incoherent or meaningless to others in time.

Behind the scenes, backstage, becomes an impossible category in Koetting’s work. There is no end to the apparatus. Even at this small scale, with the tiny screens showing moving

images, and the little sofas, it seems that the miniature figures do not curry the favour of an audience but test out the different settings for themselves. In this inversion of roles, whereby performers become consumers, audiences the hopeful candidates, there is recourse to a higher power that goes by the name of Efficiency. In a world of immaterial labour, there is no spatial or temporal boundary to the site of work. While Fordism fetishized the singular gesture, now the efficient workflow spills out across every aspect of life. In re-staging work, incorporating the management consultant's contrivances of optimization, Koetting presents to us the ultimate spectacle, the tragi-comedy of existence: There is no avoiding the infinite mirror here.

Nile Koetting was born in Japan in 1989. He lives and works in Berlin. His work has been exhibited in Palais de Tokyo, Centre Pompidou x Westbund Museum, Tai Kwun Contemporary, Fondation Hermès Tokyo, Sharjah Art Foundation, Somerset House, Kunstverein Göttingen, Moscow Biennale, ZKM Karlsruhe, Hebbel Am Ufer Theater, Western Front, Mori Art Museum, Kunstverein Hannover, Thailand Biennale and Kanazawa 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Arts.

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