



Above, below and right: 712 Interviews?, 2005. All images courtesy: Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin

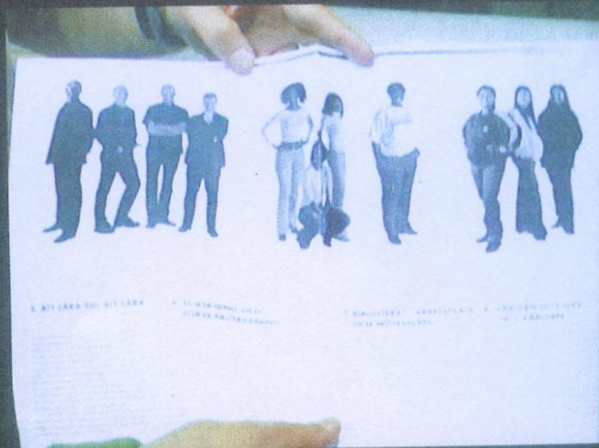
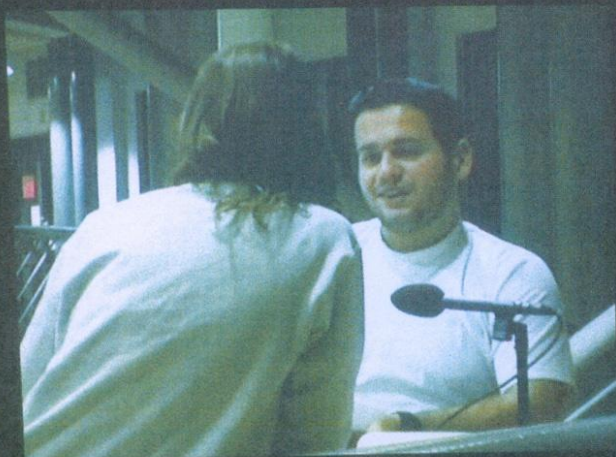
LAURA HORELLI

MIKA HANNULA





712 Interviews?, 2005.





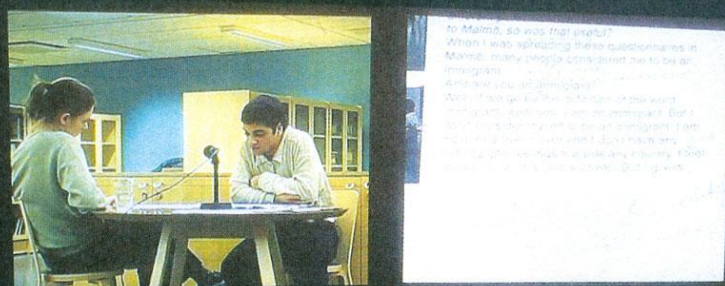
SOME of us begin by focussing on the smallest detail, via which the whole wide world can be opened and addressed. Others start off with the big picture and then narrow it down, editing a huge theme towards the human scale. It is fair to say that Laura Horelli's strategy belongs to the latter category – she is not afraid of big issues such as globalisation, collective identity and immigration. Although well aware that she doesn't know enough about these overtly complex themes, she is close enough to the dilemmas to trust her interpretation of them.

Horelli has recently finished *712 Interviews?*, a long-term project dealing directly with immigration, integration or the lack of it. She has worked on the 16-minute video-loop installation with two adjacent projections since 2003 when,

on a residency at Rooseum, Malmö, she took part in 'In 2052 Malmö is no longer Swedish', a project presented as a part of the 2005 exhibition 'Whatever Happened to Social Democracy'. However, Horelli's interest in the topic began in 2001, when she asked all kinds of ethnic and cultural organisations and groups active around the Frankfurt area to represent themselves, to explain who they are and what they do, and collated her findings in a booklet.

In Malmö, a post-industrial multi-cultural city in southern Sweden, a city with a lot of immigration but also strong financial support from the state, Horelli wanted to find a personal way of dealing with this big issue in this particular location. From the end result, it all seems so simple, yet the process is interesting.





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Horelli examined those studying at Malmö University's department of International Immigration and Ethnic Relations, did some reading, a lot of preliminary interviews and learnt sociological methods of qualitative research. She then chose students dealing specifically with Malmö and, from these, selected those with the most interesting variety of outlooks, working closely with them to write the script and edit the footage.

What we see is not a clear-cut documentary, as Horelli foregrounds the structures of the process. We become simultaneously aware of the way the stories are told, by whom and what they are saying. After several meetings, in-depth interviews were conducted with each and, out of this raw material and constant consultation, a text was produced which the participants then read out. We can see the intimacy of the relationships between Horelli and the students and the deep commitment of all involved. The transparency of the storytellers' narratives becomes the very force that unites the piece as a whole, as together they take a universal theme, filter it through this involved process, and produce a unique and particular story.

Horelli has participated in events such as 'Plateau of Humankind' at the

Venice Biennale in 2001 and Manifesta 5 in San Sebastian, 2004. She was also invited to take part in the Nordic Pavilion of this year's Venice Biennale at which Horelli stated clearly that she wanted to make a site-specific work, but was denied prior access to the building, as it had been reserved for other artists. She was instead offered a possible alternative space elsewhere in the city and so declined the offer – an act of courage that is as infrequent as it is admirable. When asked what she is going to do next, she claims to have no idea. She is, of course, if not lying, then at least, in a self-mocking way, playing the part of the insecure. While she continues to work with crucial social and political issues, it is worth asking how she finds the necessary equilibrium between the universal and the individual. 'It is a constant search for a balance between personal involvement, while at the same time articulating a version that opens up, and does not only endlessly refer to itself or other works of art. It is a balance that can only be kept in sight while continuing the search.'

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