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Rote Zora - A Video by Oliver Ressler

28 min., dt./engl., 2000

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Recently, the political past of the German minister of foreign affairs, Joschka Fischer, was taken as an opportunity to critically review the years around 1968. The media and the present minority politicians did not aim for a reasonable discussion of the various methods, trends and effects of any political groups which began after 1968 as extra-parliamentary opposition groups that were also a breeding for the later mili-tant resistance. The goal, was more the instrumentalizaton of the myth surrounding the generation of '68 by conservative and reactionary political powers. The surest method of defamation is the separation of incidents and persons from their contexts. The communication of information is limited to randomly chosen dates with no rele-vance to the area of politics, but rather to the personal sphere so that a differentiated formation of opinion is not possible. Hidden behind seeming objectivity often lies the naked criminalization of other positions in favor of the moralization of a personal posi-tion.

"Rote Zora" by Oliver Ressler works with the genre of television reporting from a criti-cal standpoint. As an alternative to reporting that is characterized by an exclusive (or presumed) rule of law, the

video offers an investigation - regarding content - of a militant group of women who made over twenty politically motivated attacks in the 80's and also perpetrated diverse other offences. The *Rote zora* fought against atomic, genetic and reproduction technology which were understood as being part of the dominating ideology. The attack targets were companies like Bayer, Schering or Siemens, meaning the research institutes and the property of "representatives of the patriarchal order" (RZ 1983). The *Rote Zora* created a radical political opposition to the powers that be and counted on a "politics of vandalism".

The video's central element is an interview with Corinna Kawaters in the summer of 2000. Kawaters is the only woman in *Rote Zora* who was ever found guilty of being a "member of a terrorist organization" (§129a). Another conversation was shot with the sociologist Erika Feyerabend. As an employee of the Essen gene archive, she was pulled into the police investigation of the *Rote Zora*. Differing from the sensation and sound-bite dependent media, the video makes a personal narrative possible and produces an image of the social revolution "terrorism" that goes beyond brutality and any opposition to democracy.

Apart from the interview, Oliver Ressler works with *Rote Zora*'s visuals such as the typography of their flyer and illustrations. They create stroboscopic breaks in the current of the interview images. This use of related materials not only serves to document or reconstruct the *Rote Zora*'s visual rhetoric, but also simultaneously investigates its political practice as aesthetic practice. The inclusion of foreign material takes place, on the other hand, at a noticeable distance, which is characterized by an aesthetic proc-essing of the images. The original newscasts are inserted into the image with fat, colorful frames. In another sequence of "Rote Zora", a clip of the commercial film "Black Thunder", USA 1997, is inserted in to the

picture. During this clip, a secret service agent reports facts on a terrorist organization to her superior. The inserted sequences make clear how open the borders between the objectivized, governmental news reports and the fictive story of a television or cinematic film actually are. Accordingly, the video also documents how Corinna Kawaters' published fictive novel - Kawaters worked as a journalist and a writer - ironically became the main piece of evidence in the process against her.

In the end, the video shows the launch of a homemade rocket toward an office tower in the style of a music video. The scene comes from the film "An Act of Sabotage" by Christopher Anderson, USA 1998. The boisterous voice of Rio Reiser from "Ton, Steine, Scherben" accompanies the scene, "Hal-lelujah! Der Turm stürzt ein" (halleluliah, the tower is caving in). Putting this music to the scene was Corinna Kawaters' idea. Oliver Ressler not only made her the central figure of the work, he also asked her for suggestions on the work and critique.

The work makes an investigation of the content of the *Rote Zora* possible, and also leads, on another level, to a discussion on the mechanisms of the media's methods of presentation by opening television reporting to an unusual method of presentation. The question of to what extent art can create a space beyond aestheticizing artificiality where subjects, which are no longer dealt with critically in the media they originally appeared, can be discussed, is especially interesting.

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