

Thursday, February 20. 2014 – Interview mit Claudia Schmid im Goethe Institut Toronto von Jutta Brendemühl

[The World Redrawn: Claudia Schmid's artist portraits](https://blog.goethe.de/arthousefilm/archives/227-The-World-Redrawn-Claudia-Schmid-artist-portraits.html#extended%C2%A0)

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Claudia Schmid, born in Cologne in 1956, studied at the Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna for a solo career as a flutist. She changed over to visual arts at the art Academies in Vienna and Dusseldorf. In 1991 Schmid began to work as a film author and director for German television. Over the years she has realized about **15 documentaries with a focus on artist portraits**, among others **“Attempts at Love - Werner Schroeter”**, **“The Silence of Innocence - The Artist Gottfried Helnwein”**, **“The Redrawn World - The Artist Heinz Emigholz”** and her latest, **“Richard Deacon - In Between”**.

After presentations at Art Cologne, Museum Ludwig and Tate Modern, **Claudia Schmid is the Goethe-Institut’s guest at this year’s Reel Artist Film Festival** Toronto with her portrait of

British sculptor Deacon.

She will be in conversation with art journalist Terence Dick and show excerpts from her films in our free "Culture talks @ Goethe" at the Goethe-Institut Toronto at 5.30pm, before her film screening at 9pm at the TIFF Bell Lightbox.

Why the title "In Between" for Turner Prize winner Richard Deacon? In all of his works, Richard Deacon explores the "in between", both in form and philosophical content: The relationship between space and form, between negative space and full shapes – presence and absence. Between organic and industrial language of form, amorphous shapes and rational thinking. The ambiguity of language and form, the material as a substance and its malleability. The artwork between the observer and the world, between intimacy, privacy and society. "In Between" is the window between the outside and the inside, between reality and fiction.

In this latest film, the sculptor and filmmaker Claudia Schmid meets the sculptor Richard Deacon. What's the difference between film-making and sculpture-making?...

Even though the basis for the creative process is a different one, there are still similarities in my approach. Any one of my sculptures is the result of a direct reflection of society, its outward forms and my vision and direct dialogue with form and space. A feature of my films about artists is a complex, wilful individuality – together with a metamorphosis of the artistic approach to the work that I absorb and reflect upon. Following this, a sculptural body takes shape out of the condensed film material and its complex individual threads. It is three dimensional – in the same way as a sculpture or a Bach fugue. The creative process of condensing and constructing is similar.

As a trained artist and musician yourself, how do you find a balance between closeness and distance towards your films' artist subject, between your own background and practice and their perspective and oeuvre? All my artistic activities – be it music, painting, sculpture or, as in this case, filmmaking – are based on the relationship between abstraction and empathy, closeness and distance. From cinematic observation as a basis to the abstraction of the sum of all that is captured by the senses and the reflection on content and the subsequent reduction to the essence. My past as an artist provides the basis for understanding but does not obstruct the openness inherent in taking a step back to contemplate. For me, humility is every bit as important as the urge to bring about the artistic vision.

Before you worked with Richard Deacon, you portrayed the politically outspoken and provocative German artist Gottfried Helnwein. Quite a difference to Deacon's oeuvre and interests, or not? I am interested in original personalities – headstrong, largely inaccessible artists who have a unique and complex view of the world and explore this in their art. Richard Deacon is radical in his complex, essential dialogue with space and form, conceptualization and appearance. Helnwein with his critical view of society. He puts his finger into the wounds and does not allow society to engage in collective amnesia. He is a provocateur who plays with the images in his audience's heads and enters into a politically considered dialogue with them.

What did you learn about Werner Schroeter while making your film that you didn't know

about him before or perceived differently? When working together with Werner Schroeter, I was permitted to take part in both his excessive lifestyle and his creative process. His passionate, uncompromising approach to life is the basis for his creativity. I got acquainted with a person and an artist who reflected on society with great intelligence and abstraction and who uses his immense artistic and musical knowledge to create works that brim with poetry.

How do you tell a story, shape a filmically captivating narrative, from watching an artist work? Say Berlin experimental artist-filmmaker Heinz Emigholz, who just premiered his latest piece at the Berlinale... I observe and internalise the artist, his creative process and his works, immerse myself in his thoughts, his language of form, his artistic endeavours, his view of the world -- and then attempt to weave the individual threads into a three-dimensional whole, a kind of atomic model. In this regard, it is important for me to capture the essence of the artist and his work without compromising their inherent complexity. Through time and consolidation, the film makes it possible to gain another profound view of the artist and his work. Like hardly any other artist, Emigholz explores with great sensitivity all facets of the artistic and cinematic language and how they are perceived.

Your next project: My current film project deals with violence against women worldwide. When working on my films on Schroeter and Helnwein, I had already developed an interest in exploring the nature of power and violence. The fact that violence against women and a modern form of slavery exist to this degree around the world and are still scarcely perceived or taken seriously – this is what led me to make a film about this subject, without a sensationalist or journalistic bent. I would like to give a voice to women from five countries who have suffered violence of the worst kind, but who have never had the chance to break their silence. It was important for me to meet with these women on an equal footing, to absorb all facets of their stories and to map out the intricate structures of violence against women.

interview by Jutta Brendemuehl, Toronto

Image: Heinz Emigholz during the shooting of Claudia Schmid's film, courtesy of Emigholz and Schmid

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