

“Dear President/
Your profile is vague, /
You have no arms, no hair, no legs, and no sex /
Your enemy is your lover. /
I need make-up, underwear and hormones! /
Dear visitor,/
Are you optimistic, /
When our country is at war? /
Is freedom more masculine than genocide? /
Is a lie more feminine than allies? /
What is the difference between terror, horror, and war? /
What is the difference between museum, artwork, and enemy? /
It sounds all the same to me!”

Text by Aérea Negrot

from Pauline Boudry/ Renate Lorenz, *Silent* (2016), HD video, Color, Sound, 7:34 minutes.

„The HD video *Silent* (2016) by Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz felt painfully timely on the opening night of the Biennale de l’Image en Mouvement (BIM) in Geneva, in the immediate aftermath of Donald Trump’s election to the US presidency. Zoe Leonard’s text piece *I want a president* (1992) was still circulating manically across social media and its comforting echo chambers, as if to compensate IRL wrongs by means of poetic justice—and there I was, upset, enraged, speechless.

Silent acts as a reminder of the relation between mutism and trauma, between the deceptive multiplication of information and the actual escalation in shutting up freedom of expression and non-conforming positions, identities, agencies, bodies. Shot in Berlin at Oranienplatz (“after the refugee movement Kreuzberg/Berlin and Chelsea Manning,” the artists write) and featuring transgender musician Aérea Negrot, the video opens with the image of a podium full of microphones, behind which the protagonist remains silent for 4 minutes, 33 seconds in homage to John Cage’s famous 1952 composition, before erupting into song. Beneath sealed lips, eloquence resorts to body language, and Negrot’s body powerfully argues against repression. Installed in a clinically white cube with snow-white carpeting, to be accessed with disposable shoe covers, the work elicits further associations with how whiteness-as-norm is constructed and sanitized.“

Barbara Casavecchia, writer and curator, contributing frieze editor in Art Agenda Reviews, Noc. 29, 2016.