

BERLIN

**HEIKE BARANOWSKY**  
 KUNST-WERKE

What's wrong with this picture? The German artist Heike Baranowsky would be happy to explain the strange things going on in her videos. But the explanations—which amount to digital manipulation and changes in camera perspective—don't seem to help. Baranowsky, who lives in Berlin and Los Angeles, is a master of deception. Her mesmerizing loops challenge our perception of time and space while remaining completely realistic. The artist seems to practice a mobile form of *trompe l'oeil*, hoping the spectator will at once suspect the truth and believe the lie.

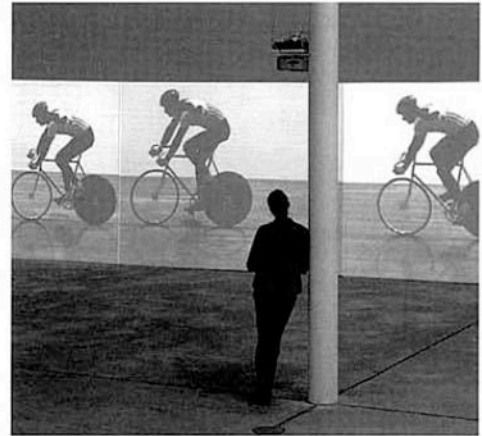
Take the video triptych *Der Radfahrer (Hase und Igel)* (The cyclist [Hare and hedgehog]), 2000. The fable is revived through a pair of identical cyclists, speeding along an indoor racetrack counterclockwise. This same sequence is projected at three different speeds: real-time in right frame, 10 percent slower in the middle frame, and 20 percent slower in the left frame. As one contemplates the entire triptych, it is not apparent that the images are being shown at different speeds; instead, it appears as if one cyclist is overtaking the other in the next frame, although the pass never actually occurs. The race is decided entirely by the human eye and its celerity in making complete narratives out of visual fragments. *Mondfabrt 2001* (Moon tour 2001) provides another optical enigma. A serious full moon bounces giddily across the wall, as if following the lyrics of a song written in the night sky. What is the source of its cadences? The camera operator, sort of: Baranowsky remained completely still while filming, but she was traveling on a ferry from Harwich to Hamburg. The moon turns

out to be dancing to the tune of the sea, the gurgling surface of the planet.

Throughout, Baranowsky opens an abyss right in front of the spectator's eyes, splitting sight from perception. In many ways, her videos function like bad seeing-eye dogs, leading us down a path that makes sense but doesn't work. When one tries to look at the actual manipulations—to catch different projection speeds of the same sequence—the images become more dizzying, more confusing than the lies they perpetuate. Baranowsky's work is not so much about showing the difference between truth and falsehood as about manifesting the eye's ability to experience the fantastic and the improbable, even in a realistic setting.

Along with her careful work on the video sequences, Baranowsky uses the exhibition space itself as a tool. The twin images of a forest in *parallax*, 1999, appear to be divided by the shadow of a pillar in the exhibition hall, but Baranowsky has separated the two projectors just enough to raise a doubt about the shadow's actual origin. *Gras* (Grass), 2001, a close-up image of moving reeds, is projected onto a sheet of glass, leaning against yet another pillar. The projection of the reeds, which seem to sway in a thin fish tank, throws an intense green light on the floor and the pillar. Since the pillar reflects the light directly back onto the image, a glowing vertical streak appears to cut across the reeds like an auratic intervention from above. Or is it just another one of Baranowsky's tricks? The doubt lingers just as long as the pleasure.

—Jennifer Allen



Heike Baranowsky, *Der Radfahrer (Hase und Igel)* (The cyclist [Hare and hedgehog]) (detail), 2000, color video projection. Installation view.