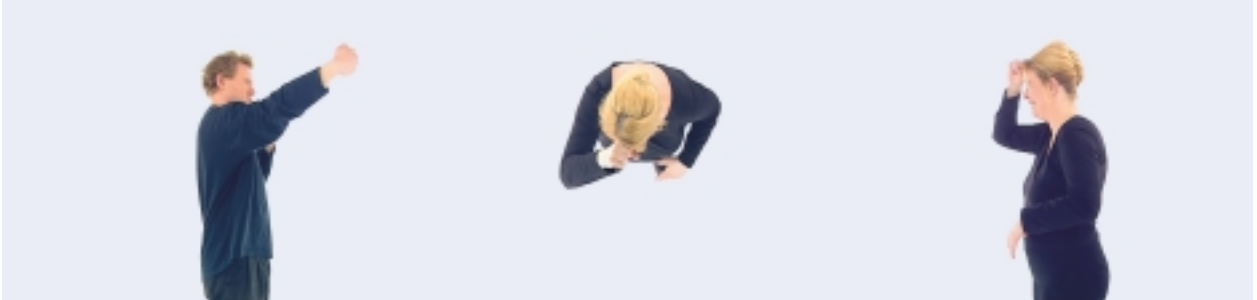


Bettina Henkel

## Community Interpreting

Video Installation with Synchronously Controlled  
DVD Video Projections/Video Monitors



In *Community Interpreting* two deaf persons, a woman and a man, tell each other jokes in sign language. These sign language jokes are specifically based on visual, spatial and gestural elements for which there are no direct equivalents in spoken language. Thus, they cannot really be translated. Sign language differs from spoken language in that its structure is non-linear. Its content, consisting of both iconographic and arbitrary elements, is represented "as movement" and "in space." The title *Community Interpreting* comes from the field of translation studies and refers to the inscrutable, context-sensitive aspects of interpreting/translating. The conversation involving two people telling jokes was recorded simultaneously by six cameras along the three spatial axes (x, y, z). The projections/monitors display various jokes being told either in parallel or serial fashion, with the jokes signed alternately by Alexey and by Gitta Svetlov-Palecek. The work is viewed on six video projections or monitors arranged to form a video surface, whereby both persons are simultaneously displayed from the front, in profile and from above. The video monitors or projectors synchronously display the various jokes being told in a number of different spatial perspectives, whereby the respective spatial perspectives switch as if at random among the various projectors/monitors. Subsequently, the views within each screen undergo dynamic changes, switching positions with one another so that they are recombined in all possible spatial constellations. Viewers will try to extract meaning from the signed content and probably notice that the two protagonists are telling each other jokes, or at least something funny. Their interaction is so affirmative that viewers are fascinated even though, as people are able to hear, they do not "understand" anything.

Translated from the German by Mel Greenwald

Sponsored by ACT-Media TV-Produktionsservice GmbH/Ulrich Wolkenstein, Ars Electronica, Office of the Chancellor Section for Artistic Affairs.

Credits to Gitta and Alexey Svetlov-Palecek, Peter Kogler and Wolfgang Stengel.

Camera: Martin Kreuzer, Sound: Michael Priester, Light: Roland Scholz,

Recording Technology: Othmar Ernst, Set Construction: Kurt Vozenilik, Editing: Martin Novak and Coordination: Ursula Giegerl.