

Kunsthaus Glarus
Melanie Gilligan
Popular Unrest
12.03.–17.05.2017

In apocalyptic scenarios employing contemporary high-definition aesthetics, Melanie Gilligan (b. 1979 in Toronto, lives and works in New York) examines the constantly changing and schizoid experiential realities of everyday life in the current economic system. In her serial films she dissects the constitutive structures of contemporary neoliberalism into fictionalized narratives. The fictionalization often takes the form of science fiction: events are frequently set in strange, disturbing worlds of an unspecified future time. The basic economic conditions of these worlds reflect those of today and are expanded on narratively. *Popular Unrest* (2010) is set in a world not unlike today, in which all forms of work, exchange, and social interaction are calculated and optimized by a system known as «The Spirit.» Unexplained murders take place and in an equally mysterious way, otherwise disconnected people form groups and feel a deep and a permanent bond with each other. *Popular Unrest* depicts a reality in which the individual is reduced to physis and biology, and thus directly subordinate to the requirements of capital: hotels provide employees for warming beds in every room; people unable to prevent their foreseeable diseases are punished with fines; and the unemployed settle their «debt» to society in the form of physical energy cycled back into the system. The five episodes of *Popular Unrest* suggest, on the one hand, that exchange value has absolute dominance over life; on the other, the question remains whether the groupings can truly offer a promising way out of these structures.

The installative setting of *Popular Unrest* is inspired by the anonymous, antiseptic design look of offices and conference or waiting rooms of multinational companies. Melanie Gilligan's precise analysis of the systemic interrelationships between work, economics, politics, and technology, and the individual's role within this network of entanglements, are presented in specific displays, that are both familiar to us but also have an alienating effect—especially here in the museum. Melanie Gilligan's video works, including *Popular Unrest*, are often devised as multi-episode TV-drama series and are freely available on the Internet. These various levels, or «institutions» of exploitation, distribution, and presentation form an additional layer for reflecting on her work. Melanie Gilligan writes regularly for publications and magazines such as Artforum, Texte zur Kunst, Mute, and Gray Room. Critical writing is an essential part of her artistic practice.