What are the production values?

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- 1 The question of taking everyday events as a way into the imaginary is raised in varying ways by seven recently published monograph catalogues (*Francis Alÿs*, *Johannes Kahrs*, *Gillian Wearing*, *Sarah Jones*, *Alain Séchas*, *Monica Bonvicini* and *Laetitia Benat*). The imaginary is made visible by appropriating and manipulating pre-framed images in psychogeographic sequences of which videos offer a trace, or by using the techniques of film editing, which are reappropriated by painting. At the heart of these stratified, fragmentary visions, active memory is regulated by the play of repetition, scanning and rhythm, and filtered by sensorial experience. This is the case in *Laetitia Benat's* work, whose "delayed seduction" is subtly brought out by Guillaume Nez in the catalogue for the new collection of the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-arts in Lyon.
- 2 "From television to newspapers, from advertising to all the commercial epiphanies—our society makes a cancer in sight, measuring every reality by its capacity to show things or its own self and restricting communication to ocular journeys. It is an adventure of the

eye and of the drive to read. The economy itself, transformed into a 'semicracy', is fomenting the hypertrophy of reading. In the place of the production-consumption pairing we could put its general equivalent: writing, reading. Indeed, reading (of images or texts) would appear to constitute the extreme point of the passivity that characterises this consumer as *voyeur* (both troglodyte and itinerant) created by the 'society of the spectacle'." So argues Michel de Certeau in *L'Invention du quotidien, arts de faire*.

- 3 The thread running through the work of certain artists and critics has woven an ambulatory mode of thought that is inspired by and infused with the everyday. It passes through architecture in the work of Monica Bonvicini, through urban walks and the picturesque for Francis Alÿs, through the editing techniques and *clichés* of cinema for Johannes Kahrs, through documentary and psycho-reality shows for Gillian Wearing, through photographic portraits for Sarah Jones and through comic strips for Alain Séchas. If the practices of these artists and the media they use are all distinct, what they all share is a way of revealing new questions and renewing the use of art as a "poetics of social interstices". Of course, the authors still need to fulfil their contracts, to engage in an experience of art that goes beyond their own expectations of art as regards the subversion of authority (see here Joshua Decker's text in the Monica Bonvicini catalogue) and to produce texts of which they are themselves the subjects.
- 4 Jean-Charles Masséra takes up the challenge for the work of Gillian Wearing by analysing two pieces, *I Love You* and *Drunks*. He raises the question of the image's meaning (testament) for the person watching it, "unless, that is, the point is to reverse the direction of gazes, to permute the positions allotted by the social order [...] Passers-by as silent actors of public space" (p.32). He also raises the question of his own experience of history. The artists mentioned here all substitute aesthetic propositions for ways of constructing the real. Thus Monica Bonvicini twists the codes of representation of buildings and appropriates basic building materials. Her interview with Andrea Brouwers is enlightening in this respect: "I am not interested in architecture and genres. Architecture is a way of representing power; it dictates private and public fashions in behaviour and institutionalises an aesthetic."
- 5 The trick played by art when it poaches from the everyday is to turn the trivial into a theatre of experience in which the narrator becomes an everyman. Sarah Jones's use of a domestic style of photography is deceptive. Her territory is that of the icon and the truth it reveals, a truth rooted in the *Châtillonnais* area. Her photographs of countryside whose denizens are seen by renovated wash houses reference the Baroque aesthetic and its political subtext of the religious (re)conversion of the people. Its use for the Fondation de France's *Nouveaux Commanditaires* programme underscores the symbolic dimension and converts the principle of conversion into one of interaction.
- 6 This sensorial reading of the real involves procedures that have the artist present in the city as on a stage. This is the case with Francis Alÿs and Alain Séchas. In his urban walks, the former suggests a sculptural construction based on the mental landscape of the *flâneur*. With his *Collector*, a sort of small car in magnetic metal, he has invented a metaphorical object and established walking as an artistic discipline. The experience of duration, which is at the heart of the theatricality analysed by Jean-Christophe Royoux, and the breaches opened up in the real by these practices, gesture towards a system of constant re-framing that is close to editing.
- 7 There is a "cinematics" at work here that we also find in Johannes Kahrs. To some extent, he too dialogues with Baroque painting. The typologies of gesture and composition that

he finds in posters or action films, reworked in layers and reproduced in painting, show him to be using painting to critique cinema in what is one of the emerging tendencies of this new century.

- 8 Séchas's use of drawing, enlarging his works to make posters for the new Strasbourg subway, also contribute to this new approach to traditional media. Sculpture/painting, sculpture/architecture, sculpture/film—these are the instruments of a constant reinvention of the everyday, undertaken in what is seen as the “living organism” of the city.