

## AN INTERRUPTION

Lucas Cejpek on Laure Prouvost

Laure Prouvost is dissecting Jean Eustache's documentary film *Le Cochon* – on a Saturday afternoon I'd prefer to be seeing his feature film *The Mother and the Whore* with its endless conversations – and now I'm watching a pig being slaughtered on a farm, interrupted by videos of the artist and her friends. In the lobby of the *Topkino* a young woman is offering strawberries to the audience, "Strawberries!," because all of the senses are important to her, as Laure Prouvost explains to me after the presentation, smell and taste. In Eustache's film, people eat before and after the slaughtering. In Prouvost's video there is one scene with a suckling pig, and strawberries come up again and again, but so incidentally and quickly that I cannot recognize them as being a leitmotif. "Do you hear me, or shall I close the door?" Laure Prouvost asks before the presentation, and a man's voice answers from the audience: "Close the door, please" – with which we are in the midst of her work: her *MONOLOG*, which can be accessed on the Internet, begins with the sound of a door slamming, whereupon her voice is heard: "Thank you for coming," and if you click on her homepage, you'll hear glass shattering and see a little tiny picture postcard, very southerly, sea and sky-blue, which leads to a catalog raisonné: "Look this way": sounds, music, voice recordings, and commentary accompany and interrupt found images and her own images, which are provided with subtitles and intertitles: everything moves incredibly fast – as in *Strawberries* – or stands still for some time – a traffic light showing red, for example – and often things get loud, immediately followed by an

apology: "It hurts. It hurts you." Mistakes are a part of art, Laure Prouvost says; at the beginning of *Le Cochon* the sound failed, and the blackouts when the film was interrupted were too long, but the whole thing was an experiment, mixing up media, in a cinema with a café and a bar: when the room gets quiet, you can hear the voices of the customers and people passing by on the street: one man is talking on the phone, apparently standing in the emergency exit, because it's raining, as I find out for myself afterward. It was raining while I was sitting in the movie theater, watching as the pig's rear legs and snout are bound up, and as it is laid on a block of stone so that it will bleed out. Then it is laid on a door leaf and shaved, and then it is laid in the straw, where its head is cut off and then its legs, so that the torso can be cut open – the remaining blood is siphoned from the heart and emptied into a coffee cup, a big cup without a handle that you have to use both hands to drink from and in which you can dunk pastries – the entrails are removed, and the ribs are split and to finish off, the backbone is also split, with a hammer and chisel. Then the skin is folded up and carried on a shoulder into the house, up the steep steps, and there on the wall hangs the head of the pig. Before this, the legs have already been carried in a basket up into the house, where in the meantime the meat has been cut into small pieces so that it can be run through the meat grinder and the seasoned ground meat can be put into the thoroughly washed intestines, which are measured off by hand and coiled up on extended arms: 50 minutes of black-and-white film and approximately 30 minutes of color video; to conclude, there are 11 more minutes of color film, *Speak* by John Latham – You know John Latham, Laure Prouvost says to me.

– No, I say. – Sixties, she says, I was his assistant, but now he's dead. – the film consists of vibrating circles of color with a droning soundtrack. The people in the audience start talking to each other: shortly after the presentation started, a man came in and immediately went back out, followed by two other men. In the middle of the showing a man went out and a short time later came back in. A woman sneezed and the woman who introduced Laure Prouvost left shortly before the end and left the door to the lobby open just a crack.

Translated by Geoffrey C. Howes