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Student Media Culture (MA)**“... so schallt es heraus”****„Echo – ...so schallt es heraus:“**

The title refers to an old German saying „Wie man in den Wald hinein ruft – so schallt es heraus.“ The translation would be “As you shout into the woods, so it will sound out,” or “As the question, so the answer”

I am attempting to examine how the self is constructed, formed, and made visible in differing configurations of media technology. Nowadays we are accustomed to a very intimate relationship with several apparatus e.g. external memory, telecommunication, and locomotion. Although we are now so familiar with these techniques, we encountered a sublime feeling when a new technical futuristic horizon, like emailing, video conferencing, or mobile Internet access emerges. Do you remember the feeling when you sent or received a photo via email for the first time? Do you remember the time when you first walked through the woods, calling somebody with your mobile? In



Fig. 1: Exhibition: “Hört, Hört – Seht, Seht!”



Fig. 2: "Echo-spot" in Benneckenstein/Harz

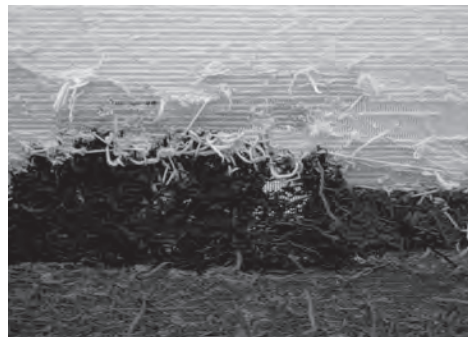


Fig. 3: Back side

these moments we can see ourselves facing the distance, like the wanderer in a superior nature, in the romantic picture of the sublime. We are fascinated by the media landscape. After a short while the media itself becomes invisible, we see only the content and forget about the technique.

The visitor of the gallery (Fig.1) where „...so schallt es heraus.“ is exhibited can regain this consciousness of the media and the in-between. At first sight s/he is not confronted with anything sublime: a tapestry work, showing meadow and woods in the German Harz region (Fig.2). The specific characteristic of the image hides behind. The pictured location actually exists and a very nice sounding echo. The image in the gallery is connected with this place via a bidirectional live audio stream. The gallery visitor's voice is streamed into the valley, sounding out of a loudspeaker. The echo rebounded by the woods is then rerecorded and transmitted back into the gallery, sounding out through speakers behind the image. The very simple act of a call, using this technology, becomes something more meaningful.

The old-fashioned tapestry image is a visual representation of the landscape in the Harz region. At the same time the pixel-like structure with the woven strings on the back (Fig.3) refers to the digital image. Apart from the visual representation of the "real" space and image space, the audio connection adds another layer to the referential network. The speaker on the meadow replaces the wanderer in the landscape. The echoing forest becomes an agent of the person shouting into the image in the gallery. Out of the simple bidirectional connection between two places evolves a complex network of relations.

Echo is the name of the legendary nymph Ovid describes in "Metamorphosis". She misleads people with their own voices, disorients Narcissus on his way through the forest. In the modern natural sciences the echo became a metaphor of localisation and orientation. The echo sounder measures time between sending and receiving of a signal. The visitor in the gallery is not able to localize himself by shouting in terms of Euclidian space. The signal one sends through the internet is influenced by variables such as the ping of the internet connection. The correlation of data flow is too complex to follow, but one can become aware of one's subjectivity facing the media landscape. The shouted "echo!" becomes the ping of self-awareness.