

DAVID ZINK YI

LUDWIG MUSEUM



DAVID ZINK YI, *Untitled (Cuba-Project)*, 2005. Video still, detail of the installation *Independencia I*.

A man is sitting in a rowboat with his back to the viewer. Before his — and our — eyes is the weather-beaten Havana skyline; behind his back, invisible and in the far distance, Florida. An unusual view, it is in fact forbidden to travel by boat off the Cuban coast — there is always the possibility of an escape. The film shows the rowing man's movements in a single shot for almost eight minutes; despite all his efforts, he hardly seems to get going. There is a similar image on a second screen opposite: in the foreground is the back view of the same man, traveling along the Malecón, Havana's ocean promenade, on a motorbike.

The two projection screens form the narrow, transparent walls of a box-like space in which viewers become witnesses of a 'true story.' The protagonist of both films narrates, in Cuban Spanish, off camera, the myth of a "magical space without an entrance or an exit," created from a hollowed-out tree trunk, its openings covered with animal skins, through which a feeble light passes into the interior. In this space lives a king who is also a god. To pass the time he jumps between the two membranes and constantly invents new rhythms through which he communicates with the outside world and at the same time receives news from it.

"Independencia I," the title of the whole installation, refers to the independence with which a drummer's hands beat out two different rhythms — "this thing that we carry inside, this thing that divides us." Placed between the two screens, viewers occupy the place of the mythological god-king in the drum. His rhythmic "independencia" is paradoxically based on the condition of being shut in, and is in a relationship of dialectical tension with it. It would seem obvious to suggest that the situation of the "space without an entrance and without an exit" can also be read as a metaphor for life in the Cuban political system. The narrator's laborious progress indicates striving for independence. Zink Yi's unsentimental work leaves it open whether the narrator is to be seen individually or collectively, and whether independence can be achieved, or remains the hope principle.

**Barbara Hess**

*(Translated from German by Michael Robinson)*