



Canadian Art
2009
Wojciech Olejnik



BERLIN | Johnen Galerie
MIRCEA CANTOR

In "Preventative kiss for suspicious war," the Romanian artist Mircea Cantor uses a stripped-down approach to address conflict, policing and subjugation. Such situations always contain more than one voice or mode of interpretation, and thus contradictory perspectives are incorporated into Cantor's work. The approach is particularly effective in the video *The leash of the dog that was longer than his life*, which is composed of two divergent scenarios that seem to cancel one another out. In one part of the video, two people play volleyball as a chained, barking dog looks on, excited by the action and the bouncing ball. The chain at the dog's neck demands more and more of the camera's attention as the dog resists against it. Eventually the camera narrows its focus to follow the thick chain along the ground. The pace is dreamlike, the uneasiness of the other part of the video gradually diffused as we wonder where the metal links will lead to. But the chain

never ends; like the long arm of the law, it is ever-present. The video ends as it begins, with conflict and restraint, abstracting this dynamic to a binary power relation between the conquering and the conquered.

Power might be described as aggression that controls the present; Cantor makes its functioning visible. He is aware that power needs a body, a place from which to operate. The issue is difficult to deal with, and maybe this is why Cantor's work is characterized by clear perspectives, strong oppositions and decisive actions. This does not mean that he avoids complicated situations. On the contrary, each of his scenarios brings forth multiple interpretations and discursive problems. For example, in *Color, silent*, a police siren and flashing lights are placed inside an actual police cruiser. While the manoeuvre might seem banal, it signifies a complicated array of power structures. The piece could be viewed as an inversion of the act of policing, or as an illustration of the social hierarchy of the policing and the policed.

Cantor exposes the fragility of our social existence using simple and calculated means. What results is a fluidity between comfort and

MIRCEA CANTOR **Dimensions variable**
2009 Metal, wood, leather, textiles,
horse manure. 5.1 m long installed
PHOTO HANS-GEORG GAUL