

Tony Conrad

Panopticon

10 March - 8 April 2023

Tony Conrad's multi-channel video installation *Panopticon*, 1988, sets five monitors within a painted cardboard model of a town. Overhead, a satellite appears to be beaming out information, and a network (made of orange plastic fencing) stretches over the cityscape. In the videos, Conrad implies he is watching CCTV footage in five different locations: the mall, the video retail store, the news station, the art gallery, the living room. In each case, the people he is watching are directed by commercial impulses, but they are also potential recruits as active producers. Made at a moment in which camcorder home video equipment was entering the consumer market in the US, Conrad's installation aimed to dispel viewers' expectations regarding high production values and narrative composition, inviting them to make their own television. *Panopticon* conflates mainstream media with disciplinary control and reflects Conrad's career-long interest in art-making as a means of deprogramming habitual norms and countering dominant capitalist logics.

Panopticon was Conrad's most ambitious video art installation to date when it was first exhibited in "Media Buff: Media Art of Buffalo, New York," at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University in 1988. In the following year, Conrad re-installed it for the Albright-Knox's group exhibition *In Western New York 1989*. Its elements were later rediscovered in Conrad's studio by curator Cathleen Chaffee and exhibited in the 2018 retrospective *Introducing Tony Conrad*. *Panopticon* is given a slightly different reconfiguration again at Galerie Buchholz in Cologne. Together with art historian Annie Ochmanek, the gallery has also assembled here documentation of the work's initial contexts of creation and exhibition, and a selection of video materials showing Conrad's contemporaneous involvement with cable access television. A new essay by Ochmanek will accompany the show. *Panopticon* is the sixth solo exhibition of Tony Conrad with Galerie Buchholz.