

**Anat Stainberg / Norberto Llopolis Segarra**  
**Now or Never**

The setting of the performance *Now or Never* is both simple and the same each week: two chairs, a monitor, a camera, a man and a woman, their actions and a conversation broadcast over the speakers. Anat Stainberg and Norberto Llopolis Segarra play with situations from a real relationship, using simple daily actions and intimacy as the starting points. The moments that they show are extensive, subtle, sensual and sexy but the behaviour of the two is certainly not the only thing that is important.

*The performance begins. A monopoly game is on the ground in front of a monitor. The man and woman play the game in their underwear and shoes. A camera records everything. On the speakers we hear a domestic conversation but this conversation is not the conversation the couple are having during the game; this belongs to another moment. Welcome to the life of this couple!*

Compare the performance to a soap opera. A story put together in such a way that you can easily follow it, even when you haven't watched it for a month. An episode never consists of only one story but shows various strands each of their own duration. *Now or Never* also consists of different storylines. The monopoly game stops and the next situation is something completely different: a sort of pas-de-deux that keeps midway between a dance performance, a wrestling match and performance piece from the 1970s. Now on the monitor we see the couple playing monopoly: the earlier episode is reused. This recycling goes further than only using their own material, for every now and again it seems there are also definite references to earlier examples from dance history (Graham, Rainer), performance (Nauman, Acconci, Abramovic), visual art (Kinetic Art) and theatre (Kantor). What first might seem to be a real-life soap opera, based on moments from a couple's ordinary life together, becomes a layered performance where the narrative is formed not so much by the development of boring triviality in an unusual, idiosyncratic dance but through a complex exchange of disciplines and the apparent appropriation involved with this process. The question remains how intentional is this: Stainberg has a background in theatre and Segarra is a dancer, so particular movements, actions and sequences simply belong to a standard vocabulary. Along with using the images on the monitor and the episodic working methods, is this also another way of building the time element into the performance? And by regularly mixing fact and fiction so that it is never possible to make a distinction between them, does this lead to confusion?

*On the monitor another situation is playing; the two run circles around each other trying to pull the other's underwear down. In this image there is also another monitor showing a third storyline. Does the conversation come from here?*

Choosing to wear only underwear and shoes puts the emphasis on the sensuality of the naked body as well as the public context where the couple now find themselves. The "practically being together", as Stainberg calls it, is achieved by the manner of acting and presenting, the bringing in of conversations, the babbling sound of two lovers who have long been together. By not acting but being conscious of the performance and the fact that this takes place in an exhibition space enables the natural relationship between the two to actually be 'ordinary' and not dramatic or theatrical. This conscious mixing of the performance space and the viewer, the neutral, human editing never happens in a soap

opera. To fully appreciate the subtleties, you have to have seen it yourself and not via photos or video.

The subtleties and sensibility together with the complex structure and the 'image within an image-effect' (the performance containing a monitor that shows in turn another episode of the performance containing a monitor, etc), make this piece considerably more exciting than a soap because nothing that happens is predictable. What choice will be made in the next episode for a new direction in the relationship between the two, which new discipline with its specific moments and natural expressions will be used, what surprising new visual invention will be shown and how will the tensions change between the intimate and the public realm?

*The game stops, the man and woman dress, then walk towards the monitor and the camera. One moves the monitor, the other takes the tape from the camera. They take their clothes off again: a new episode begins. Together they now interpret a living kinetic sculpture: for the viewer it is a detached, autonomous image but for the performers themselves a question of perfect physical harmony. What could happen in next week's sequel?*

Maaïke Gouwenberg

(She is the former director of kunstruimte Expodium, Utrecht and is a participant in the 2006-2007 session of the Curatorial Training Programme at de Appel, Amsterdam).

Anat Stainberg (I, 1971) is a performer; she recently graduated from DasArts in Amsterdam.

Norberto Llopsi Segarra (Esp. 1977) is a dancer/performer and recently completed the DasArts masters-programme.

*Now or Never* can be seen every Sunday afternoon at 3pm from the 1st to the 29th of October and during the opening of the exhibition of Lucy Stein on the 23rd of September from 5pm. The final episode will be performed on MuseumNacht, at 9pm on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November.