

la grande surprise, 2002



2 DVD Players, 2 TVs, 14 chairs
360 x 90 x 60 cm

"For more than 20 years, I built up my know-how for the company. They can be looking a long time for that. And then one day, with a single stroke of the pen, the whole management level is eliminated. A flat and transparent management structure, quick decision-making processes, and then a couple of young punks, the ones with the flamethrowers. They now take care of the Asian region. Into the market and smoke them out. Of course, some of them come back in bodybags, a handful of ashes. But half of them make it. The market it's a battlefield. Business is war. Blood and tears."
(Urs Widmer: Top Dogs, 2004)

The hostile world of top management, the merciless struggle for the few existing jobs and the political discussion surrounding the recession - whether it's now being avoided as a subject or not - these matters continue to shape the news and not only during the few weeks of last summer's election campaign. With his 1997 play "Top Dogs", Urs Widmer produced a work that deals with the inhumane conditions of the struggle for work and exposes the inherent warlike structures of this situation. Martin A. Dege takes on the subject via a game, which addresses these existential threats in a roundabout way.



Well-dressed people – men and women – assemble a row of chairs one by one in an interior highly reminiscent of a typical office space. Each new arrival is given a seat. The picture created by Martin A. Dege in his video "La Grande Surprise 2002" seems to contrast with the threatening situation of the bitter struggle for a job. But then this miraculous vision is transformed into just the opposite when we notice that the tape is running backwards. That the figures are nonetheless walking forwards subverts the unambiguous picture. In the process, not only is our sense of time shattered, but also our feeling for direction.

Holger Birkholz



Demoverision "la grande surprise, 2002 A"
Demoverision "la grande surprise, 2002 B"