

BLACK BOX: NIRA PEREG: *67 BOWS*

August–December



Still from Nira Pereg's *67 Bows*, 2006. Courtesy of the artist and Braverman Gallery, Tel Aviv

Nira Pereg (Israeli, b. Tel Aviv, 1969) creates documentary-based video works that transform everyday actualities into dramatic scenarios. This *Black Box* presentation features *67 Bows*, 2006, a work inspired by visits to the Karlsruhe Zoo, where Pereg studied a flock of flamingos. Employing various camera angles, the artist offers sumptuous close-ups of these exotic animals calmly going about their instinctual business. Over the muffled noise of the birds' squawks and clucks, she adds a provocative, intermittently startling soundtrack, implying disturbing human intrusion into their peaceful realm and evoking a sense of suspense and heightened apprehension among viewers who must question the relationship between what they see and what they hear.

During your academic training what was your preferred medium?

My favorite form of art to watch was film, but my favorite form of art to make was multimedia installation. It has a lot to do with my love of editing, for creating a context through the sheer fact of juxtaposition.

What did you discover during the making of this work?

The work actually started from an interest in discovering individual behaviors in a group setting. I realized that in order to find particular qualities in flamingos I must try to set up a situation in which group behavior is expected. Flamingos form interesting communities, since they seem to be very harmonious as a group but they have no leader. They just share this communal sense of consciousness.

So once I found a way to set up a group response, I could look at the ones who didn't cooperate. It's a crucial work for me; during the production it became clear how radical even the subtlest forms of resistance are.

What has pleased or surprised you most about viewers' responses?

I consider this piece quite a hard one, even a bit sad. But I was happy to find that people always laugh when they see it. I think that if you stay with the piece for some time it fluctuates between these two qualities.

For a longer version of the Q&A with Nira Pereg, see hirshhorn.si.edu.

Black Box is organized by associate curator Kelly Gordon. Support for the *Black Box* program is provided in part by Lawrence A. Cohen/Ringler Associates.