



1. **first contact**, film material no 4 Newspaper, edited by Paolo Caffoni, Clemens von Wedemeyer. Published by Spector Books Leipzig and Archive Books Berlin/Turino, Design: Till Gathmann
2. **Intro**, 2009, 16 mm film loop, B/W, silent, 3 min. PRESS BUTTON TO START
3. **Found Footage**, 2008–2009, Digital video loop, 31 min
4. **Last Cannibal World**, 1977, film poster for Australian release
5. **Vitrine** with National Geographic Magazine from 1972, and other material about the Tasaday
6. **Wikipedia**, 2010, digital print on MDF
7. **The Gentle Ones**, 2009, HD video loop, 28 min
8. **How to Deal with the Uncontacted?** Interview with Geoffrey Frand, 2009, HD video loop, 35 min
9. **How to Re-establish the Truth About the Tasaday?** Interview with John Nance, 2008, HD video loop, 55 min
10. **How to Create an Unbelievable Fiction?** Interview with Ruggero Deodato, 2008, HD video loop, 35 min
11. **Wood**, 2009, Digital video loop, 6.30 min
12. **Against Death**, 2009, 35 mm film transferred to HD video loop, 8:28 min.

Online: A Message from the Stone Age, Directed by John Nance, 1983, 16 mm transferred to video, 15 min [www.stpaulst.aut.ac.nz]

Clemens von Wedemeyer The Fourth Wall

In 1971, a group of 26 people were ‘discovered’ in the rainforests of Mindanao, an island of the Philippines. The group of cave dwellers, who came under the protection of an eccentric millionaire and self-proclaimed activist for minorities’ rights, Manuel Elizalde, attracted immediate media interest and coverage. Elizalde, who also ran for a post in the then government of Ferdinand Marcos, closed the area off shortly after the ‘discovery’, under the pretext of protecting the stone-age people from interference from the outside world. After the initial media hype, which made them world news, the group of people called the Tasaday was lost to oblivion again.

When Swiss ethnologist Oswald Iten entered the area in 1986, he found the members of the group inhabiting houses, wearing jeans and smoking cigarettes. He published an article ‘*The Tasaday – a stone-age hoax*’ and accused prominent supporters of Elizalde like Charles Lindbergh, German anthropologist Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt and John Nance of fraud. After 15 years, the Tasaday were in the news again, the subject of a sometimes bitter controversy.

Clemens von Wedemeyer’s work *The Fourth Wall* blends found footage, printed matter like magazine articles and books, and newly produced video material to problematise the issues around the Tasaday. Whatever their true ‘identity’ was, it can never be found out. Even the statement of some of the members, who said that they had been asked by Elizalde to perform their tribal identity, is dubious. If there ever was any truth in the story of the Tasaday, it is the truth about the precarious state of any idea of authenticity.

The title *The Fourth Wall* refers to a term in theatre theory: the actors in a play, surrounded by the walls of the stage, respect an imaginary fourth wall that exists between them and the audience. They act, as if the audience isn’t present. While the audience sees what is going on on the stage, the play unfolds as if there were no spectators. To be able to act convincingly the actors need to ignore their knowledge that they are watched and only the audience is allowed to take full awareness of the whole situation, which could lead to the conclusion that the play gains its credibility only by the simultaneity of being acted for an audience and the feigned ignorance of the presence of the audience; the ignorance

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towards the play's nature as a play. This leads to an asymmetric power relationship insofar as only the audience has full authority over the entire situation. It is the audience that directs the play and can, for example, terminate it any time. Furthermore, it could be said, that the play only exists for the audience.

It is obvious what this means for the relationship between scientists, like ethnologists, and their subject: the scientist/observer creates the subject of his or her observation, he or she creates it according to his or her own desires, needs and intentions. The fourth wall – the impenetrable, invisible wall – keeps the subject in a state of powerlessness that allows them only to fulfill either the observer's desire, or terminate the play and disappear in silence. If there is any authenticity then it is the authenticity of the observer's desire that creates its subject to its own likening, and the authenticity of the subject's desire to respond to the observer's quest for authenticity. An endless cycle begins. The only truth about the Tasaday is probably the truth about the illusions and tales, the lies and hopes, the projections and desires of Western civilization that constantly creates its own counter-image, its alienated phantasm of authenticity.

Dr Leonhard Emmerling

Dr Leonhard Emmerling was the director of ST PAUL St Gallery from 2006 to 2010. He is currently the Head of the Visual Arts Division of the Goethe Institut, Munich, Germany.

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Guide to the exhibits



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