

Belief Systems, among Media, Market, and Humanity:

### **Mythology and Modernity.**

Anke Hoffman

Monika Oechsler's video work, commissioned for the 7<sup>th</sup> Werkleitz Biennale, *There is Only One Life* (2006), explores our modern lives and world in the reflection of spiritual and philosophical ideas. The filmic work takes the currently observable reenchantment with religious and mythical concepts as a starting point to illuminate the spiritual search for meaning in consumer society beyond traditional denominations and doctrines. Comparable to popular psychology, alternative systems of belief also function as methods of self-valorisation, and are in demand as such.

The artist takes recourse to the myths of the teachings of the kabbala, a tradition of belief that has its origins in the writings of Judaism, and which since the beginning of the twentieth century, has spread through occult circles, esoteric currents, and New Age Movements, becoming popular. At the centre of the artistic work is a graphic novel, *Promethea* by Alan Moore. The novel in the form of a science fiction comic combines a scientifically dominated perspective with the myths of the kabbala.

*Promethea*, the central female novel figure, is represented in four various incarnations by four actresses. The textual fragments consist of arrangements of fictional references from the narrative *Promethea*, texts by the English poet William Blake, and song lyrics from the bands The Verve and Radiohead. The figures are set in the mythology of a popular world religion searching for meaning in several locations in contemporary London: the business landscape of Canary Wharf, a tube station, and the historical Abney Park Cemetery.

*There Is Only One Life* assembles various dialogues, monologues, and places in a temporal historical sampling of the female characters (Promethea), who themselves stand for references from antiquity, classicism, poetic world explanations, and fantastical figures. The symbiotic connections of the various influences from mythology, religious culture, and superstitions are visualised, and the wish for enchantment, identity, and transcendence is equally expressed.

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