What happens when we encounter a film that we don’t know to be either factual or fictional? Why can blurred boundaries between the factual and fictional give cause to strong affective resonances, which are these and how does a viewing subject navigate them? In The Doc, the Mock, and the What? Miriam von Schantz embarks on an experimental path of both methodological and theoretical nature in her attempt to shed light on the specificities of the events of spectating where the viewing subject finds it difficult to know if a film is a documentary or a mockumentary. Starting with a screening of Exit Through the Gift Shop (Banksy 2010) at a cinema in Stockholm where emotions run high she finds it imperative to take the empirical nature of the problem seriously. Working through a theoretical grounding in the philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, von Schantz offers a methodological proposal she calls a method assemblage for mediamateriality. Conceptual in nature yet attuned to the actual receptive context, it thinks the event of spectating as the formation of a moving-image-body, what she calls a mib, where a flux of spectatorial contractions continuously shift the mibs capacity for affection. Through the enactment of an experimental reception study where six data-producers offer both written as well as visual data pertaining to their encounters with Exit Through the Gift Shop as well as I’m Still Here (Affleck 2010) and Catfish (Jost and Schulman 2010), von Schantz concludes that the series of encounters of the study has produced an event of realing, which is an existential destabilization of the viewing subject-as-spectator. Following this she argues that such event is capable of producing a mockumentality, a mental ecology that manifests through practices of becoming-political, of rearranging the dominant regime of truth. Considering a post-truth atmosphere to be at work throughout society, she offers in conclusion a note on the possibility to work with the method assemblage for mediamateriality as a moving-image-pedagogics in the aim of strengthening the capacity for a critical-diffractive thinking that is response-able to the realities we do when we ‘see film’.

The Doc, the Mock, and the What?
Events of Realing, Mockumentalities and the Becoming-Political of the Viewing Subject

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