

SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY

Johanna Jaeger - repeating accidents

When Thinking Finds Its Place in the Visual

One characteristic of contemporary conceptual practices is that – unlike in classic conceptual art – images as aesthetic phenomena are once again at the centre of artistic engagement. It is not just a methodically precise control that takes the lead here, equally central is the reflection about the tools used, and revealing them. The resulting images, especially photographic ones, take up their own space in this context, where knowledge, thought, perception, and experience are brought into a new relationship.

The practice of **Johanna Jaeger**, who opens her fourth solo show at **SCHWARZ CONTEMPORARY** entitled 'repeating accidents', stands in that tradition and continues it. The at first sight contradictory title – accidents cannot be repeated – points to her method of finding specific (conceptual and/or technical) frameworks that enable her to work during her process on a performance of visual phenomena.

The point of departure for the series *desktop horizon*, central in the exhibition, are two photographs of sunsets – symbols of yearning, reproduced thousands of times, and yet elusive – which Jaeger dissects into hues of colour and assigns them numbers. These colours are then 'performed' sequentially and individually in eleven photographs. The setting found for this cannot be directly identified, but it is certain that we are dealing with an abstract-reductionist as well as a stylized reconstruction of a 'sunset mood'. On closer examination, and with the title *desktop horizon* in mind, we can identify a bundle of light falling on a desktop, diverging above the table's edge across the plane. The result is an unostentatious as well as imaginary impression of a horizontal line that is differently charged in each photograph. At the latest with the decoding of the place the photograph was taken, the experimental set-up and thus the (re)construction of the 'natural phenomenon' is revealed in the eleven works. Technically, Johanna Jaeger achieved these interlaced effects that are somewhere between 'really true' and 'not real' by imposing the respective colours – with the aid of colour filters in the darkroom – onto a motif of her studio table, on which a ray of sunshine fell at the moment the photograph was taken. With this series, which impresses us with its conceptual conciseness as well as its aesthetic freedom, Jaeger does not merely address the

illusionary character of photographic imaging methods, dissecting this moment, but also shows the place where her thinking about all this begins: her studio table.

While Johanna Jaeger dislocates the sunset to her desk in *desktop horizon* (at least technically), her second central work, the video *clouds passing by*, brings the sky from the infinity of space to the ground floor of the gallery, letting cloud formations travel through it. The visual opulence of what has been recorded, however, stands in clear contrast to the chosen form of representation. The artist deprives the projection of light by projecting onto a dark green shimmering wall whose rough surface is reminiscent of the structure of asphalt (a stylistic element from the 1970s that is to this day part of the gallery space). The radical decision to have the recording appear only subtly in the space raises the question of where a work can be made material. The artist could not only have not found a better place, but also no better motif to process this question, because with it, an intellectual space opens up – especially when she says that the view out of her studio window for her is not just a constant, but also a ‘placeholder for thoughts’. So *clouds passing by* is to be understood as a kind of parable where the artist writes down for us that her work has its place in thinking. Here, she is wholly a conceptual artist. That she succeeds at the same time in assigning her thinking a place in the visual – even if usually only with ephemeral motifs – demonstrates that she masters her artistic means and knows how to sharpen them aesthetically.

Conceptual thinking and aesthetic concision are also evident in *clouds & pebbles (making 2 of 1)* and *repeating accidents_1 (pebbles)*: in the first series, the artist initiates a game of confusion. What we see is different from what we know. With the aid of a trick, Johanna Jaeger breaks a stone visually apart – separates it into two halves – and puts it together again. Factually impossible, but an easy effect to produce with photographic technology. This trickster artist is interested in questioning existing orders and expanding (both seriously and tongue in cheek) the horizons of beholding that go beyond the variability of ways of seeing. That her control instruments cannot (and need not) always be controlled becomes clear when in *repeating accidents_1 (pebbles)* ink runs over a depiction of pebbles, and the visual information oscillates somewhere between concretion and abstraction. This is where her work is generally located: in these intermediate spaces of the ‘ungraspable’.

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The exhibition will be on show from September 4 to October 17, 2020.

For further information, please contact us at: mail@schwarz-contemporary.com