

difference a bend #2

Anja Majer, Rebecca Michaelis and Arne Schreiber

March 31–April 28, 2012

Opening: Friday, March 30, 2012, 7 p.m.

at Stedefreund, Straßburger Str. 6–8 (courtyard), 10405 Berlin

Part #2 of the exhibition series DIFFERENCE A BEND

“In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal space that virtually opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives me my own visibility, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent. Utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does really exist, and as it exerts on the place I occupy a sort of return effect; it is starting from the mirror that I discover my absence in the place where I am, since I see myself over there. ... The mirror functions as a heterotopia in the respect that it renders this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the looking glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived, it has to pass through this virtual point, which is over there.”

Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” trans. Lieven De Caeter and Michiel Dehaene, in *Heterotopia and the City*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 17.

The reflection in the mirror is thus always the inversion of a material, physical world of objects and persons into an immaterial image, which demands that the viewer reposition himself in relation to his physically perceived location. Within the actuality of space and time, the perceiver moves along shifted, bent paths running parallel to reality. In the process, the interplay of observation, perception and conceptualization is constantly engaging with the parallel conception of images.

Arne Schreiber’s picture-object #301-303MKS facilitates conscious perception of the viewer’s location by mediating between physical/material and immaterial images. In both its tripartite construction and its material composition, it calls to mind a folding makeup mirror, in which viewers can see themselves—both physically and intellectually—in the exhibition space around them. The continuity of the reflection is broken, however, by parallel linework applied with acrylic paint, a ruler and a notched trowel, created via a process of manual repetition and the deviations that entails. Each of the artist’s individual actions produces a physical relationship, which is precisely what enables the gaze to shift between perceptible, physical presence and conceptual parallel construction.

Another investigation of the viewer’s position between physical and intellectual perception is the piece *Still playing* by Anja Majer. A flat-screen TV mounted on the wall shows a video loop of the color blue. Stuck to the screen is a picture of a bird, thanks to which the blue is promptly experienced as its physical counterpart, the sky. As a virtually generated image, though, the blue monitor also refers both to the blue screen used as a background for compositing multiple video images together, and to the computer error screen known as the “blue screen of death”—and thus to our perception of content and materiality. While the bird image initially grants access to a simulated reality of an actual realm of experience, in its physical nature as a sticker it simultaneously marks a “real” boundary between the physically perceptible and the dematerialized image. *Eject*, another piece by Majer, expands the artist’s inquiry into various levels and spaces of perception.

Rebecca Michaelis has a very different way of connecting a physically present object with the idea of the image as a space of imagination. Taking her own biography and the history of Stedefreund’s current location as her starting points, she presents an object titled *Gneez*: a five-pointed sheet-steel star powder-coated in green. The piece grows out of the idea that symbols, in ways that are both tangible and intangible, simultaneously occupy spaces (physical and mental) and express specific cultural mentalities and identities. Thus the star may be read, in the context of the exhibition space on Straßburger Straße, which served as the ruling party’s motor pool during the GDR era, as a symbol of the socialist or communist worldview. On the other hand, the artist is also taking up the star as an abstract sign that fulfills specific formal requirements. In the process of perception, the concurrence of this purely abstract form with the narrative engendered by the possibility of cultural-historical interpretation mediates between reality and fiction. Here, Michaelis finds, the activity of painting comes into contact with the activity of reading: “A succession of abstract signs, of letters, gives rise to places, people, conflicts in the world of the reader’s thoughts; the abstract signs become a world of their own.” In this connection, the title *Gneez* has a literary analogue as well: It comes from the book *Jahrestage* by Uwe Johnson, in which “Gneez” refers to a fictional city in Mecklenburg, whose geographical location corresponds roughly to that of the real city of Grevesmühlen.

By contrasting the conceptual differences between the artistic positions of Anja Majer, Rebecca Michaelis and Arne Schreiber, it becomes possible to investigate pictorial conventions and conceptions. The image is interrogated not only as illusionistic space, but also as a mirror of the world or a window, and thus understood as part of the multimedia interplay of an art exhibition.

Zur Ausstellungsserie difference a bend

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