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Invisible Manoeuvres –

Reserves of Interpretation and Regions of Definition

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Anna Artaker und Meike S. Gleim, Silvia Beck, Burak Delier, Francis Hunger, Nadia Kaabi-Linke, Susan Schuppli, Juliane Zelwies

Curated by Sabine Winkler

Sabine Winkler

Curator of the Exhibition,
Galerie Wedding – Raum für
zeitgenössische Kunst, 2015

Translation by James J. Conway

Although both visibility and invisibility have always been regulated, the issue of shifting relationships of regulatory technologies and their fields of application is increasingly apparent. This exhibition investigates political agendas which are increasingly shifting into secret, informal domains and questions the strategies and legitimations employed in the process. Along with mass surveillance, policies of secrecy reveal themselves in the forthcoming trade agreement, or informal practices such as lobbying, shadow exchanges and shadow banks. In this context, invisibility becomes a privilege which guarantees greater room to manoeuvre for an economised politics, compounded by bio-political control and digital surveillance.

One characteristic of these policies of secrecy is that workers' representatives no longer participate in their negotiation, while civil rights are invalidated in the name of the economy or security. Has the invisible hand of the market strayed into politics here, and not just as metaphor? The invisible hand represents the non-visible objective of productivity and acquisition, a sort of side effect which is meant to indirectly and automatically serve the common good (Adam Smith).¹ According to this interpretation, the invisible hand of the market doesn't refer to the self-regulation of the market – which, as we have seen time and time again, doesn't exist – rather a higher objective which is visible to a greater or lesser extent. This mechanism refers to the operating modes of ideology: the actual objective remains secret. Today, at any rate, it is no longer the promotion of the common good which is concealed, rather its non-promotion. The invisible hand has transformed into a variety of invisible manoeuvres.

For decades, the staging of visibility and representation has been preached as a necessary strategy of self-exploitation. Visibility was declared a value, virtual presence a necessary instrument in the quest for realness – paradoxically. On the other hand, the NSA affair has demonstrated that the original objective of the World Wide Web, the free digital transfer of knowledge and exchange of information, has been penetrated by economisation and surveillance. The potential of virtual presence and communication is co-opted by acquisition processes, through the appropriation of data. The non-visible objective is monitoring and exploitation, which like Smith's common good was supposed to come about through the promotion of self-interest.

The cards are being reshuffled in the struggle for visibility and invisibility, and this has consequences for civil rights and democracy. The artists' works investigate categories of interpretive sovereignty and power of definition in the context of aesthetic, ideological and technological domains and questions the aesthetic manoeuvres by which classification systems are broken down. To what extent are aesthetic practices themselves subject to these mechanisms?

1 In Adam Smith's economy it is self-interest which serves as the apparent objective while indirectly serving the common good. In neoliberalism the economisation of all sectors, among other things, serves to eliminate social systems.

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Anna Artaker and Meike S. Gleim

PENDANTS

8 pairs of images, each image consists of 560 puzzle pieces, UV direct print on cardboard, 42 x 30 cm, 2012–2015

Fotos: Ulrich Dertschei

The series **PENDANTS** consists of eight paired images which correspond in form and, at a second glance, content. Each image is presented as a completed, 560-piece jigsaw puzzle, with some pieces exchanged between corresponding images. Here Anna Artaker and Meike S. Gleim draw on Walter Benjamin's »Arcades Project«, specifically the section entitled »Iron Construction«. They pick up on the observation »that technologically innovative iron architecture initially imitated classicist forms and so neglected the innovative potential of the material. [...] Forms which represented a promise of technological and social progress when they first arose appear in dystopian contexts decades or centuries later. The utopian spherical architecture of the French architect Claude-Nicolas Ledoux (1736-1806) would become reality in the second half of the last century in the form of radar monitoring systems«. Using the method of montage, Anna Artaker and Meike S. Gleim analyse zones of significance in the promise and denial which accompanies technologies, between use, misuse and menace.

Anna Artaker lives and works in Vienna.

Meike S. Gleim lives and works in Paris.

Silvia Beck

Raster (draft)

Installation, 2015

Silvia Beck investigates structures, mechanisms and codes of behaviour in social and cultural power systems. How do these systems function, who determines the guidelines, who holds interpretive sovereignty? Silvia Beck discovers opportunities for breaking down these predetermined categories and definitions, by simultaneously fulfilling and fracturing expectations. She fictionalises reality, drawing us into the slipstream of parallel narratives of suggestion, which are either drawn together by the observer, or elude interpretation altogether. Which methods of representation are implemented in the service of power politics, and who is staging whom? The artist collects data material from films, television, literature and reality, analyses it and stages possible scenarios with fictive identities and indices. Silvia Beck will be developing a work on site.

Silvia Beck lives and works in Berlin.

Burak Delier

Crisis and Control

HD video, 15:09 min, 2013

Burak Delier filmed office workers and managers on the job; during the interviews he asked the subjects to assume a yoga position. While attempting to keep their bodies under control in these altered postures, they sounded out individual crises. This denial of a discrepancy between posture and narrative situation reflects efficiency and stamina as neo-liberal values, even at break time. The higher objective is optimised usability, not just within the domains of work and leisure, but affecting every individual act. We pretend we have control over the crisis, whether it relates to subjective, societal or economic developments: interpretive sovereignty and definitions of power keep the ideology running; inconsistencies

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and the contradictions to which they give rise are trained away, voluntarily/involuntarily, without anyone noticing.

Burak Delier lives and works in Istanbul.

Francis Hunger

Deep Love Algorithm

HD video, 32:33 min, 2013

In **Deep Love Algorithm**, Francis Hunger explores the history and evolution of databases in the bio-political context of Post-Fordism. This investigation is depicted as an unrequited love between journalist Jan and writer Margret. The relationship between the two represents an algorithmic form which tries and fails to achieve its ideal application. As a cyborg Margret embodies historical development processes from a position of resistance. She is depicted as a young woman, but in reality she is over 80 years old. In a form of time travel, she and Jan visit locations which were significant to the invention and development of databases. They analyse algorithmic functional modes, consequences of abstraction and unpredictability, as well as the effect of algorithmic optimisation on production and living conditions.

Francis Hunger lives and works in Leipzig.

Nadia Kaabi-Linke

Faces

32 digital prints from an archive photograph

22.8 x 25.8 cm, 2014

Photo: Andy Stagg

The photo series **Faces** arose out of an exhibition at The Mosaic Rooms in London. Nadia Kaabi-Linke referenced a former resident of the building in which the exhibition took place: Imre Kiralfy, who organised major spectacles including »Savage South Africa« at the Greater Britain Exhibition in London (1899). **Faces** is based on an archive photograph, a group photo which shows Africans dressed for war, armed with shields and spears. It was Cecil Rhodes, founder of the British South Africa Company and with it the leading proprietor of gold and diamond mines in the empire, who commissioned »Savage South Africa«; by staging and representing Africa's inhabitants as »savages« he sought to legitimise his violent methods of exploitation on the continent.

Nadia Kaabi-Linke shows the Africans in the group photo as individuals, returning their subject status denied them in the group portrait by depicting them in individual portraits. This intervention in the representational form lays bare the motif's colonialist roots.

Nadia Kaabi-Linke lives and works in Berlin.

Susan Schuppli

Tape 342: A timeline of testimony

9 digital prints on perspex, 60.7 x 60.7 cm, 2008–2015

Archive video issued by the Watergate Tapes Library. It shows Richard Nixon and Rose Mary Woods at work. Nixon had all conversations in the White House recorded from 1971.

Susan Schuppli investigates the relations between witness statements and evidence, between subject and object in the context of secret policies, dependencies and the rule of law. She analyses conditions and inconsistencies in a witness statement by Richard Nixon's secretary Rose Mary Woods in the context of the Watergate affair. At issue is the eighteen and a half minutes of a recorded conversation between Nixon and his chief of staff Haldeman which were »accidentally« erased by Woods. In court Woods reconstructed

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the apparent mishap: during the transcription of the tape the telephone rang, whereupon Woods activated the wrong foot pedal, erasing five minutes of the tape. In 1974 it was already established that the act of erasure was attributable to the operation of the record/stop button. Thus Woods' demonstration in court was not so much a re-enactment as an original performance.

Susan Schuppli lives and works in London.

Juliane Zelwies

No more words, no other thoughts. About the rituals of speaking.

Part 2: Common land, common fears

HD video, 40 min, 2015

Juliane Zelwies managed to get the Toronto Debating Society to instruct her in the rules of debating. The group decided to fulfil her request using the topic »Immigrants make a society stronger«. It's an issue which divides Canadian society, as much the subject of discussion and controversy as it is in most western countries. The pro and con arguments which were presented illustrate similarities in the way this discourse is conducted and repeatedly reproduced in different countries. In the debating club there was no direct expression of xenophobia from the »con« side, rather they formulated concerns about the loss of values and identity, and of social status. The experience of commonality in the form of a collective fear of loss can be seen as a reaction to such phenomena as neoliberal euphemisms, denial of risk and the abolition of social systems.

Juliana Zelwies lives and works in Berlin.

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