

poetics of reality, politics of reality

Brigitte Kowanz and Troika

1 April – 2 June 2021

The exhibition *poetics of reality (encoded)* brings together, for the first time, the works of the Austrian artist Brigitte Kowanz and the London-based artist collective Troika. Their dialogue explores experimental approaches to human perception and the representation of reality through coded language.

The title *poetics of reality (encoded)* refers to language and text images that are part of our reality in the form of codes. On a formal level, this becomes apparent in Kowanz's works by means of Morse code, which is inscribed into neon tubes with short and long segments. Troika transfers digital systems and codes, such as algorithms, into their visual language, which are physically revealed through color pixels or abstract patterns. In the concept of poetics, the theory of poetry, the logical and consistent rules from which language can be built up and represented as code, become clear. In addition, however, reference is also made to levels of meaning that lie beyond our visible reality. These manifest themselves in the emotional participation of the viewer, who becomes part of the work and whose perspective shapes the reality of perception. Troika's *Unstable Constructs* (2021) illustrate that even an apparently firmly constructed element such as a column, by changing its surface, can be questioned. In the central installation *Relations* (2021) by Kowanz, the tangible exhibition space and virtual mirror space are intertwined, increasing the oscillation of light. It also mirrors the two canvases from Troika's series *Irma Watched Over by Machines* (2020), in which recordings from surveillance cameras during Hurricane Irma in the original RGB color spectrum of the digital image sensors were manually transferred into a painterly composition. In these works, two different perspectives of reality become apparent: the objective view of the machine and the unmistakable content of the recording of a natural disaster.

In addition to the strong and tangible presence, artistic attitudes and reflections on the immediate present are articulated in the works. Kowanz relates to climate change by using Morse code to transfer the dates of the Paris Convention into spiral-shaped neon lighting, as evidence of contemporary European history. Elsewhere, an iPad visually and acoustically signals the dates the first e-mail was sent and the opposing neon tubes of *World Wide Web 03/12/1989 08/06/1991* (2017) reproduce the dates the first website was launched. The extent to which digitization permeates not only daily communication but also the individual perception of physical reality is explored by Troika in works comprised of thousands of dice. This manual imitation of algorithms as an artistic technique is reflected in the reaction to the rapid technological and associated social change. The dice in Troika's *Hierophany* (2019) are presented next to Kowanz's dynamic wall work *Chances* (2020) as a symbol for luck, chance and fate, which all lie beyond actual reality.

In this context, the exhibition unites works from two artistic positions that, beyond powerful aesthetic and conceptual perceptual phenomena, unfold their own contemporary poetics in the interlacing of virtual and real space.

Exhibition text by Madeleine Freund

max goelitz