

Sies + Höke Galerie

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Pressrelease

***The Digital Divide* by Henning Strassburger**

September 6 – October 5, 2013, Opening: Friday, September 6, 6 – 10 pm

Tying in with DC Open, Sies + Höke is pleased to present *The Digital Divide*, a group show conceived by Berlin based artist Henning Strassburger.

The Digital Divide is a painting exhibition, in which the dividing line between the influence of the digital space and a very clear shift towards a certain materiality that is deliberately set against the digital is to be shown. The emphasis will be on the fact that the digital space is treated as being equal to painting; it is not considered a different medium. So painting, in its most extreme way of thinking, can only take place on the computer, ready to be printed on demand, without the product being questioned as a painting. The mode of the collage-like, with which digital influences are added from the outside, seems to have been overcome. At the same time there are forms of paintings that, although there is no direct reference to digital influence, but since the so-called digital natives have produced them, those who have grown up with the computer from the beginning, have a conscious understanding of an accelerated self-image culture within them.

On the other hand, a shift towards materiality is now evident, with a targeted addition of different material in order to emphasize the characteristic style of the analog. It almost seems as if there is a certain suspicion being brought towards the image on the part that is overcome by an explicit manifestation in the real physical space.

Working closely with my fellow artists, symptomatically almost exclusively via email, Skype, WhatsApp or facebook, I tried to compile an accurate selection of works that deal with these issues in practice.

Shila Khatami's works engage with aesthetic boundaries that illustrate a shift in the classical understanding of painting as an illusionistic space towards the pictured space. She achieves this through the use of commercially available flat perforated panels as an image carrier. Although Khatami paints in a conventional sense, the image is rasterized by the dominance of the background material and thus transformed into a representation of painting. Through this small intervention in the material Shila Khatami's paintings primarily perform their very own digital translation and at the same time also anticipate it.

With **Molly Zuckerman-Hartung**, however, the materiality urges towards a completely different direction. Although her work does not initially raise the question of the digital, it is characterized by a visual language that has accelerated medial superposition of image information. There is no coherent picture of space shown, but instead an overdriven one. At the same time the image is not allocated within an illusionistic space, but as if vehemently distrusted, a real one. By adding material, Zuckerman-Hartung repeatedly bursts the picture frame, on the one hand slowing down the visual perception of the image, on the other hand, as it is simply another source of image information, accelerating it.

Such problems **Jaakko Pallasvuo** got rid of from the outset. His paintings are available as instant files that can be printed if required, the file is deleted afterwards: The virtual becomes the original. With this pragmatic attitude he never questions his prints status as paintings, the digital barrier is simply not there. It is interesting that this is not about fancy Photoshop aesthetics, but rather an awareness that the term painting has long since extended so that it can take place outside the actual medium, and also adapt prevailing conditions. Thus, the file for the background wallpaper in the exhibition could easily be distorted to fit the gallery space; by email Jaakko Pallasvuo wrote: "Stretching the file makes sense with my aesthetic / practice anyways."

In consideration of an artistic practice that questions the painted image as an excessively mystical medium, the discourse that **Nolan Simon** leads is extremely interesting as well. His small pictures are obviously painted flat, without great scenic ambition and sophistication; the motifs are casual, boring or plain kitsch. But it is a clever deception. Simon chooses his precise motifs from the mass media; we know them so well that we almost look right through them. He then projects the motifs onto the canvas and paints them one to one; corrections seem inadmissible. By changing the image section the now sleeked up motifs imprint themselves onto the viewer like an after-image, the fast and diluted process of painting generates information errors and quite calmly Nolan Simon creates a manual image that communicates on one level with the digital flood of images and expands it at the same time. So when looking at a single picture of Simon, in reality one looks at thousands of images already used, without realizing it at first.

The works of **Jordan Wolfson** have to be seen somewhat outside of the exhibition. They form the sharp dividing line to painting, showing how far the discourse has progressed. Although his work is primarily conceived around his animated films, the large inkjet prints form an independent body. In this he directs his digital film aesthetics back

towards a certain pictorial space by blurring the templates in Photoshop, layering them and relinquishing a moving scene in favor of a single motif. In this case, the digital image is almost always blended with hand made drawings. Here Wolfson touches those fields that can be defined as the domain of painting directly, without him crossing the border.

This also becomes clear when one considers the inkjet prints sealed in transparent resin by **Andrei Koschmieder**. Although these are photo templates of hands, they are partially liquefied with a watercolor-like treatment and smooth washed without ever manually using a brush. From a technical point of view, he acts like Wolfson, he transforms his motif, but from the outset in what is described as painting. Through the transparency of the image carrier, the works also preserve a notion of the digitally projected. Koschmieder develops a digitally painted, strangely hybrid image that through its precision almost seems sacral.

Wendy White, who is represented with the largest piece in the exhibition, has two pictorial worlds collide directly. While the lower part is actually painted, the upper part is a digitally printed panel that forces a very clear line onto the image. It is clear that they are not competing or collaged elements, but rather that an understanding of painting is propagated here that has absorbed the digital space and is formally understood as an integral part. Through the formal division of labor, the digital boundary is indeed shown, but obviously declared as having been overcome.

Henning Strassburger (*1983 in Meißen) lives and works in Berlin.

Recent solo exhibitions: Soy Capitán, Berlin (2012); Kavi Gupta, Chicago (2012); Kunstverein Heppenheim (2011); Kunstsammlung Deutsche Bundesbank, Frankfurt (2010)

Recent group shows: *Berlin.Status(2)*, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (2013); *Deep Cuts*, Anna Kustera Gallery, New York (2013); Lutz Braun, Andreas Diefenbach, Hans-Jörg Mayer, Henning Strassburger, Galerie Christian Nagel and Fiebach, Minninger, Cologne (2012) *Informel Relations*, Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art (2010)

Shila Khatami (*1976 in Saarbrücken) lives and works in Berlin.

Recent solo exhibitions: Galerie Susanna Kulli, Zürich (2013); Clages, Köln (2012); Cent Treize, Paris (2011)

Recent group shows: *The Edge of Abstraction*, Hopstreet Gallery, Brussels (2013); *PUNKT.SYSTEME.*, Wilhelm-Hack Museum, Ludwigshafen (2012); *BYOB*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2012);

Andrei Koschmieder (*1980 in Frankfurt) lives and works in New York.

Recent solo exhibitions: Foxy Production, New York (2011); Johan Berggren Gallery, Malmö, Sweden (2010); *LED Screening in dialogue a sensual massage*, Seoul, South Korea (2009)

Recent group shows: *The Cthulhu Club*, Gasconade, Milan, Italy (2013); *Context Message*, Zach Feuer Gallery, New York (2012); *Grandfather Clock*, Neue Alte Brücke, Frankfurt (2009)

Jaakko Pallasvuo (*1987 in Helsinki) lives and works in Berlin.

Recent solo exhibitions: AMOA-Arthouse, Austin (2013); Future Gallery, Berlin (2011); Detroit Gallery, Stockholm (2009)

Recent group shows: *Sounds Like Work*, Kiasma Museum Of Contemporary Art Helsinki (2012); *Someone Singing Like Calling Your Name*, Saamlung, Hong Kong (2012); *DINCA Vision Quest*, Thalia Hall, Chicago (2012)

Nolan Simon (*1980 in Detroit) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

Recent solo exhibitions: Lars Friedrich, Berlin (2013); Reisebüroalerie, Köln (2012); 47 Canal, New York (2012)

Recent group shows: *Painting and Flowers*, Cleopatras, Brooklyn (2012); *In Plain Sight*, Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York (2012); *The Gap*, Sculpture Center, Long Island City, NY (2007)

Wendy White (*1971 in Deep River, CT) lives and works in New York.

Recent solo exhibitions: Maruani & Noirhomme, Brussels (2013); Leo Koenig Inc., New York (2012); VAN HORN, Düsseldorf (2012)

Recent group shows: *Hue& Cry*, Space S2, Sotheby's, New York (2012); *Dick Goody*, Oakland University Art Gallery, Rochester, MI (2012); *Informal Relations*, Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art (2011)

Jordan Wolfson (*1980 in New York) lives and works in New York.

Recent solo exhibitions: S.M.A.K., Ghent, Belgium (2013); Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2012); Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2011); Kunsthalle Zürich (2004)

Recent group shows: *The new festival*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2012); *Dimensions variables*, Institut d'Art Contemporain, Villeurbanne (2012); *Formally Speaking*, Haifa Museum of Art, Tel Aviv (2011)

Molly Zuckerman-Hartung (*1975 in Los Gatos, CA) lives and works in Chicago.

Recent solo exhibitions: Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2012); Corbett vs Dempsey, Chicago (2012); Spazio Cabinet, Milan, Italy (2011)

Recent group shows: *Painter Painter*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2013); *A Painting Show*, Harris Liebermann, New York (2011); *Informal Relations*, Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art (2010)