

A TRILLIONTH OF A SECOND

An unimaginable unit of time marks that moment in which we can detect the first traces of the Universe: gravity was created in the first trillionth of a second following the Big Bang, and out of this, matter. Our understanding of this is the starting point for Alicja Kwade's exhibition A TRILLIONTH OF A SECOND.

Computer, lamp, iPhone, mirror: almost a contemporary still life. With these items, the autobiographical interior of an artist unfolds itself. It is her own broken, now-defunct property that Alicja Kwade presents here. They are objects which emerge time and again in her work. Suddenly, an entirely different still life emerges from therein: bowls that remind one of ceramics. They are made of finely ground functional objects. Pulverized and cast in new forms, they here live second lives as cups and vases. Their original components, as well as their exact volumes, have not been changed in the process.

In this process of transformation, Alicja Kwade engages with questions of reality and our perception of the world. Is there such a thing as fundamental, evident truth? On which subjects is it possible for us to reach objective insight? And to what extent is it possible for us to reach agreement on this?

Alicja Kwade's skeptical approach towards objects reminds us that everything that materializes does so as the result of a process that happens at random and at a particular moment in time – whether the result of this process then becomes a lamp or a bowl. What do we see, how do we name it? Can a computer simultaneously also be a vase?

With her installations and sculptures, Alicja Kwade addresses the big questions: How do we describe the world? What are the roles played by material, form, and language? Through her transformations, she makes possible a new view of meaning, value, and terminology.

At the same time, she consistently occupies herself with complex scientific themes. When the existence of gravitational waves was verified in 2015, the beginning of the Universe was suddenly made visible. The start of everything was given visual form. In light of these new insights and images, Alicja Kwade creates a new artistic gravitational field, in which her objects find themselves: the sculptures are surrounded by three flat wall pieces. A gravitational wave is represented in the rotation of compass needles mounted on paper, suggesting the greater field of energy that keeps all material together.

Alicja Kwade translates themes of philosophy and natural science into her own aesthetic and material language, with a certain humor and a determination to repeatedly ask herself the insoluble questions. It involves nothing less than the use of the means of art to ask what exists, what we are made of and why.

Silke Hohmann

Alicja Kwade (born 1979) lives and works in Berlin. Recent exhibitions include solo shows at Whitechapel Gallery, London (2016-2017), Kunsthalle Schirn in Frankfurt/Main (2015), Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin (2008). In 2015-2016, Public Art Fund commissioned "Against the Run", an installation in New York's Central Park. Group shows include the 57th Venice Biennale "Viva Arte Viva" curated by Christine Macel, The Kochi-Muziris Biennale, The Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach (2014), Kunsthalle Wien (2014), Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (2013), Galerie des Galeries Lafayette, Paris (2012) and at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2011). Her works belong to several international private and public collections.