

KÖNIG LONDON

JOHANNES WOHNSEIFER

POLAROID, ALUMINIUM PAINTINGS AND ALL THE SCULPTURES OF A YEAR

7 JUNE - 13 JULY 2019

OPENING: THURSDAY, 6 JUNE 2019, 6 - 8 PM

When surface and paint meld to form a single structure, the longing for material unity quickly comes to mind, a desire that became an ingrained tradition in twentieth-century monochrome painting over several decades. The same happens with the *Aluminium Paintings* of Johannes Wohnseifer: centring around a frozen moment of a frozen transformation - and therefore around the methodical formation of image constructions - Wohnseifer's works build on the notion of translation. They build on the notion of a process that, as the aluminium is anodised, not only fuses the red or black paint with the metal parts found on the sculptures' surfaces to form a new materiality there, but also implicitly reflects the technical and medial transfer process by which the work was created.

Wohnseifer's conceptual methodology is based on the deconstruction of his own medial work processes and approaches: he dismantles pictorial elements of previous works, then reflects and reconstructs them to form a synthesis, constantly creating new works. This 'feedback' technique also underpins his *Aluminium Paintings*: their 3D-milled bodies are based on an original painting from his series of *Password Paintings* that has been manipulated and translated several times over. In other words, they are based on hidden images that re-encode the information of their content as ciphers in painting and through translation in sculptures. They are visible as no more than an imprint of a previously existing reality, created by milling out encoded image information.

Wohnseifer's *Polaroid Paintings* can be understood as an imprint but also a memento of the past, complemented by the medium of photography. They recall a moment when the disappearance from the market of media harbouring a wealth of cultural information and meanings prophesied the end of their very existence. More omnipresent than ever in the nuances of our everyday lives, the polaroid is resisting its industrial disappearance. To this day it preserves the momentary memories of entire generations, compressed into its coloured rectangular form. On the level of the image itself, however, Wohnseifer's *Polaroid Paintings* actually challenge their own functional purpose as a social and aesthetic means of documenting (everyday) reality: they present the moment that gave rise to the image through a failed depiction. Nothing in the 9 x 10 cm images (which are identical in format to original polaroids) suggests the kind of everyday snapshot or special moment we would normally expect. Far more, these small-format works suggest from a distance that a set of unsuccessfully developed photographic images has been hung up for display, referencing the creative moment inherent in the instant camera. On reflection, the principle that a photographic picture might represent reality seems once again to verge on the absurd: what

KÖNIG LONDON
259-269 OLD MARYLEBONE ROAD
LONDON NW1 5RA

T +44. 207. 258 3883
LONDON@KOENIGLONDON.CO.UK
KOENIGLONDON.CO.UK

OPENING HOURS
WED - SAT 11 AM - 6 PM
OR BY APPOINTMENT

KÖNIG LONDON

appears to be a development error in a polaroid actually turns out to be a painted image. Subtly recognisable coloured surfaces – whose merging hues evoke burn marks and whose twilight horizons seem to conjure up an artificial implosion – draw together to veil the actual moment of the images and create an ever new psychedelic, abstract images of distortion.

As with the *Aluminium Paintings*, the origins of the images in Wohnseifer's *Polaroids* are obscured in the visual information. Here too, his encoding process tricks us: referencing an extreme representation of a supposedly unchangeable, exaggerated chemical process, he uses painting to translate the traces of an unsuccessfully developed image into an independent existence that is only seemingly controlled and set in a white, polaroid-type surround. Similarly, the number of painted works and their photographic illusions generate a checksum of representational references. They show an alternative, concealed, almost mysterious and unnerving side of the works that is inscribed as a subtext into each item of visual information. Johannes Wohnseifer's Bronze sculpture, *All the Sculptures of a Year*, consists of just such an amalgam of references, their forms grouped around a central axis as sculptural set pieces. Created from the collective commissions of a 3D printer over the course of an entire year, they form a visual calendar of the artist's appropriations adoption, a formal diary entry of found footage, seeking constantly to capture in a surreal sculpture the moments of strategic artistic translation as they transform and re-encrypt into their checksums.

Text: Philipp Fernandes do Brito