

Noémi Barbaglia, Noi Fuhrer, Rosa Lüders

Shimmer

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When asked how many pictures exist in the world, Google's AI assistant works up quite a sweat. The answer—currently over 14 trillion, with that number increasing by the second—refers exclusively to analogue and digital photography. It was impossible to estimate the accumulation of paintings, drawings, and pictures that are purely digitally produced around the world. But this information suffices to make us conscious of the fact that we live in an absolute world of images. In the early 1990s, when many academics announced what they called the “iconic turn” in the humanities and social sciences, perhaps they didn't realize how right they were. The paradigm shift that was argued at the time—that visual media were replacing language and text as tools for experiencing and understanding the world—has undergone a renaissance and critical expansion over the past few years. An awareness that images are not merely passive illustrations, but contain the potential to actively shape knowledge, history, and power structures, takes on new importance in the face of the contemporary flood of images, deep fakes, and other AI-generated images.

In their works, the three artists shown in this exhibition interrogate in various and yet related ways how images can capture our world, analyze and influence it. What is the relationship between perception, memory, and dream? What mandate can images bear within them? How are they assembled and how do they construct our view of the world?

In her wall installation *Shift*, Noémi Barbaglia creates a moment of tension, a waiting, without resolution. Slats made of fiberglass and synthetic resin hang parallel to one other from magnets, like the vertical blinds familiar from government buildings, offices, and other inhospitable places. The clear structuration underscores the diffuse interstitial condition that develops with the beholders. The semi-transparent material veritably provokes the question of what lies behind, which is only vaguely visible; depending in on the light that is captured by the fibers, it is shown in ever different ways. That they are reminiscent of vertical blinds underscores this expectation of revelation. The title of the work *Shift* also promises a change. The new orientation can only take place as a mental movement while viewing; the artwork contradicts the physical transformation that it itself evokes. Barbaglia frequently works with the reciprocity of states that can be found in her works in terms of form and content. This already begins with her preferred material, fiberglass, in which fine threads are bound together to form relatively fixed, semi-transparent textiles, similar to the way Barbaglia creates vague outlines from a clear structure in *Shift*. At the same time, in relationship to the audience, Barbaglia's works mark a moment in between, like a veil separating a front and a behind, or a membrane separating two spheres from one another, but unifying them at the same time. *Shift* operates as a catalyst that brings our perception into dialogue with our imagination.

The interaction of consciousness and the subconscious while grasping and creating images is a constant theme in Noi Fuhrer's large format charcoal drawings as well. They show elements of scenes, figures, and objects whose agency and options find themselves hovering uncertainly between passivity and activity. They presents a pregnant woman who encounters us frontally. She covers her face with her hands in a gesture of retreat, of defense, of turning inward, while her pregnant belly juts out prominently. This element of conflict is further emphasized by the use of light and shadow as well as the harlequin costume. The harlequin is a typical liminal figure; sometimes a poor, clumsy servant who is the target of mockery, then again an entertaining jester, but always a marginal figure in society. As in Barbaglia, the impalpable aspect of Fuhrer's works also results from the artistic technique used. Her pictures are created using consistently vertical lines that result in a diffuse shimmer when seen from dis-

tance. But, merely because of their size, it becomes difficult to grasp the entire picture when her drawings are seen from close up, so that viewers have to constantly try to find a balance. A challenge that the artist poses herself while drawing, so that the question of the self-definition of the picture can also be transferred to the production process. In this context, the interaction of perception, imagination, and memory is a central aspect of Fuhrer's work. Many of her drawings are based on photographs that seek to capture a moment that has already passed or felt differently than we remember it, than the photograph shows. Technical reproduction cannot be compared to our sensual perception, which includes more than just visual information. Our personal and cultural memory influence how we see pictures, what we see in them and how they leave an impact upon us. The visual cortex in our brain, the part that is responsible for processing visual data, is also highly active when we dream, and thus constantly produces pictures of its own. The decoding of visual data in our brain is not objective, but shaped individually by experience. Impressions from outside are permanently compared to prior experiences. Fuhrer operates in the same way in her working process, by exploring the transcendence of perception and imagination.

How images construct themselves, create and dissolve contexts, and point beyond themselves are issues in the works of Rosa Lüders. The wall objects made of spray paint, aluminum, and tape frequently show playfully incidental motifs: flowers, clouds, fruit in collaged segments. They seem to result from a sweeping view of the world that spontaneously gets caught on details. Lüders focuses consciously on the close up to see the contexts behind. The titles of the works themselves sound like incidental, associative thought fragments linked to what can be seen. Equinox presents at its center an hourglass surrounded by flowers and floral ornamental tendrils. Visible strips of tape structure and accentuate the construction of the image. For millennia now, the two equinoxes, when the sun stands directly over the equator, have marked important dates in many different calendars. They mark new beginnings, change, the fleeting moment of balance. The cultural charge of the equinox contrasts with the child-like, naïve way in which the work is painted and drawn, formed by punching sheets of aluminum of various thickness. This apparent contradiction stands for Lüders' approach to seek the large in the small, the complex in the simple, the valuable in the cheap. The materiality of the works continues this play. The reflecting aluminum shimmers from afar with a seductive gleam, then from close up to reveal its wrinkles, dents, and folds. And just as in Barbaglia and Fuhrer, depending on the beholder's standpoint a different view of the work results. What seems coherent and smooth from a distance reveals itself up close to be a collage of three-dimensional elements.

All three artists interrogate the picture as such for what it is and what it could be. What is revealed, what is hidden? They demand of their audience attentive viewing, to discover what is behind. Pictures are essential tools for exploring the world around us, recognizing structures and revealing their construction, but they are not clearly structured statements, but forms of possibility that can be interpreted in various ways.

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