

Lange bevor Licht zum Gegenstand mathematischer und physikalischer Forschung wurde, haben es die Menschen unterschiedlicher Kulturkreise als göttlich verehrt. In seiner Hinwendung auf das Göttliche, aber auch auf das Immaterielle, das Gute und das Leben stellt das Phänomen Licht eines der religiösen Ursymbole der Menschheit dar. In all seinen Erscheinungen – Sonne, Mond, Sterne, Blitz, Feuer – entsprach das Licht dem Wesen der Gottheit. Nach dem Johannes-Evangelium ist Jesus Christus das Licht der Welt, das die Finsternis erhellt, und nach dem Koran ist Allah das Licht des Himmels und der Erde. Auch zahlreiche Texte, Rituale und Symbole des jüdischen Glaubens feiern Gott als das Licht allen Lebens. Gemäß der Kabbala ist die Seele des Menschen als Licht des Herrn zu verstehen. Die Menora, der siebenarmige Leuchter, gehörte zum Kultgerät in der Stiftshütte und versinnbildlicht in allen seinen Details Gottes Heilsgeschichte mit seinem Volk.

Michael Wegerers Zugang zur Malerei führt grundsätzlich über das Phänomen Licht. Den ausgestellten *Scan Paintings*, von Hand ausgeführte Vierfarb-Siebdrucke, liegen als Ausgangsmaterial digital erfasste Bilddaten – Scans – zugrunde. In diesem Fall hat der Künstler verschiedene Scans von Neonlichtquellen gefertigt, die in ihrer Vergrößerung und handwerklichen Umsetzung auf transparentem Japanpapier einen malerischen Raum für sich beanspruchen und für Wegerer zudem den Status von Gemälden erlangen. Um die Aura des Originals und die durch zum Beispiel kleine Reflexe oder zufällige Fehlstellen gewonnene malerische Anmutung zu akzentuieren, unterlegt Wegerer die Blätter teilweise mit einem Goldgrund, der als Gestaltungsmittel schon in der byzantinischen Kunst und später in der Zeit des Mittelalters von großer Bedeutung war und starken Symbolcharakter besaß. Der Goldgrund verleiht den Farbflächen und -verläufen Wegerers Bilder ein besonderes warmes Leuchten und erzeugt wie der Effekt altmeisterlicher Lasurtechniken eine bildräumliche Tiefe. Den ehemals durch goldene Grundierungen unterstrichenen sakralen Gehalt mittelalterlicher Buch-, Ikonen- und Tafelmalerei hebt Michael Wegerer in seinen Werken auf eine allgemeine spirituelle Ebene. In den *Scan Paintings* vereint der Künstler Traditionelles mit Zeitgenössischem. Er verwandelt farbig reduzierte und von Wellenstrukturen durchdrungene Bildräume in kontemplative Energiebereiche und führt die digital zergliederte Spektralnatur des Lichts in eine Art transzendente Ordnung zurück.

„The noise was heard around the world“, beschreibt Emmett Williams, Fluxuskünstler der ersten Stunde, im Rückblick das internationale Echo auf die 1962 im Rahmen der Internationalen Festspiele neuester Musik im Kunstmuseum Wiesbaden aufgeführten *Piano Activities* des US-amerikanischen Komponisten, Musikers und bildenden Künstlers Philip Corner. Hinter dem Titel *Piano Activities* verbargen sich an mehreren Abenden aufgeführte

Performances, die eine sukzessive Klavierzerstörung als Endpunkt hatten. Mit Sägen, Hämmern, Bohrern, Steinen und Ähnlichem bearbeiteten und zerlegten die jungen Pioniere der Fluxus-Kunst – George Maciunas, Dick Higgins, Wolf Vostell, Ben Patterson, Emmett Williams, Alison Knowles und Nam June Paik – das ehrwürdige Instrument, das repräsentativ für konventionelle Konzerte stand. Es ging ihnen vor allem um eine Musikalisierung des Geräusch- und Lärmhaften jenseits dessen, was ein herkömmliches konservatives Klavierkonzert imstande war zu leisten. Der Erkenntnisgewinn der Pianozerstörung war eine Öffnung hin zu bis dato Ungehörtem.

Mit diesen und ähnlichen für das damalige zeitgenössische Publikum revolutionären Inszenierungen von Destruktion und Dekonstruktion mögen wohl die historischen Grundlagen für die als Kooperationsarbeit von Michael Wegerer und der Komponistin, Pianistin und Performance-Künstlerin Judith Unterpertinger alias JUUN entwickelte multidisziplinäre Installation *PIANO SUBLIMATION* gelegt worden sein.

So wie auf die systematische Zerstörung des von George Maciunas 1962 für fünf Dollar gekauften Pianos der kreative Prozess der Bildung der Gruppe der Fluxus-Künstler und deren weitere Musikperformances folgten, bildet der nach und nach zersägte Konzertflügel des Wiener k. u. k. Hof- und Kammer-Klavier-Fabrikanten Friedrich Ehrbar den jeweiligen Ausgangspunkt der visuell-klanglichen Zusammenarbeit von Wegerer und JUUN. Die Einzelteile des aus der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts stammenden Ehrbar-Flügels und deren räumliche Dimensionen dienen auf vielfältige Weise als Grundlage für die entstehenden Kompositionen und Siebdrucke – die Dekonstruktion des Instruments also als Voraussetzung und Chance für neue kreative Ansätze und Möglichkeiten.

In wechselseitigem künstlerischem Dialog entstehen im Rahmen minutiös festgelegter Abläufe Sounds und Grafiken, die prozessual in musikalische Loops, performative Elemente, Videos und rauminstallative Objekte überführt werden. JUUN entlockt durch manuelle Bearbeitung den Einzelteilen des Klaviers Töne und Klänge, deren Intervalle und Systematiken Wegerer seinerseits in einem weiteren Arbeitsschritt in geometrische Strukturen umsetzt, die wiederum von JUUN als bildnerische Partituren gelesen werden, aus denen sie neue Musik komponiert. Die unterschiedlichen Sound-Files werden sukzessive übereinandergelegt, so entsteht eine heterogene Musik, die sich als Teil der Installation den Ausstellungsraum akustisch erschließt. Die räumliche Komponente der Musik findet ihre Entsprechung in den auf transparentem Floatglas gedruckten Grafiken Wegerers, die, aneinanderlehend, den Blick in mehrere Ebenen der Verdichtung und Reduktion erlauben.

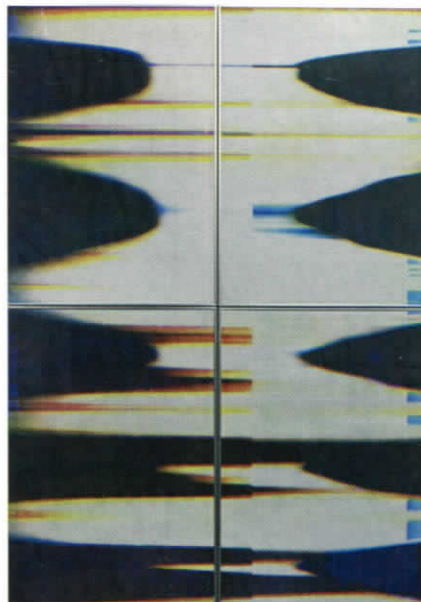
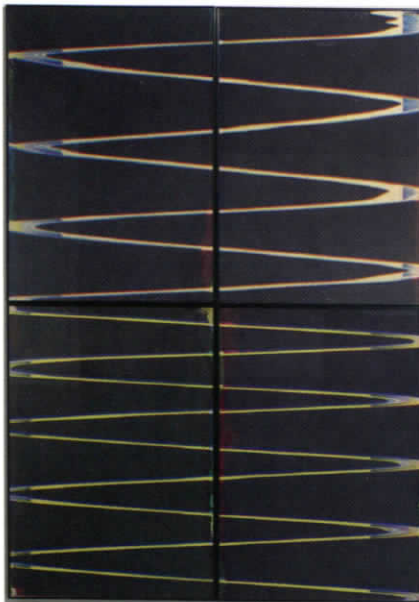


Links:

Visual Sound PS1 2013 70 x 100 cm Siebdruck auf Floatglas

Rechts (v.l.n.u. unten):

Neon 2, gescanntes Neonlicht (4-teilig) 140 x 200 cm Siebdruck auf Japanpapier
 Neon 1, gescanntes Neonlicht (4-teilig) 140 x 200 cm Siebdruck auf Japanpapier
 Neon 3, gescanntes Neonlicht (4-teilig) 140 x 200 cm Siebdruck auf transp. Karton







Manfred Wakolbinger, Leopold Kogler, Michael Wegerer – in collaboration with **Judith Unterpertinger (aka JUUN)** – and **Gerhard Kaiser** engage in an artistic dialogue. Though very different in their artistic approaches, a closer study of the four artists' works reveals parallels in subject and content. One overriding parallel is an exploration of the closely related oppositional terms of "image" (Bild) / "representation" (Abbild) and "space" (Raum) / "framing space" (Umraum). The artists understand the image not just as a reflection of the world but as a reflected translation of things perceived and imagined.

Oppositional terms like interior and exterior or microcosm and macrocosm have been a focus of the works of **Manfred Wakolbinger** for many years. In his copper sculptures, often combined with glass cubes or cylinders, the surrounding space plays an important role, as it describes the so-called negative space that separates the object from its surroundings.

In the photo series *Galaxies* Wakolbinger blurs all spatial dimensions. Taken in Sulawesi, Indonesia, the underwater photographs of sea squirts – the smallest of which can be just a few millimeters in size – make reference to the endlessness of outer space. In a work of animated film Wakolbinger, a passionate diver, goes on to negate size relations completely. In the images projected on the wall the smallest of creatures assume astronomical proportions, while galaxies seem so tiny as to only be recognizable under a magnifying glass.

The artist traces the source of his inspiration – both in general and for these works in particular – back to his childhood. As a five-year old Wakolbinger got caught up in the general euphoria as space travel began. *Sputnik*, the first human-made satellite, was shot into orbit in 1957 by the Soviet Union. Ever since then Wakolbinger has been dwelling on the possibility that despite their physical limitations, one day humans may travel outside the solar system, defying both spatial and temporal boundaries. With this background information, the sculpture *UFO#3* also almost becomes self-explanatory. Though its exterior appearance suggests an overdimensional scyphozoa jellyfish, the title of the work evokes associations with outer space.

Fascinated by the legend of the bird-of-paradise from Indian mythology (which Wakolbinger chanced upon in a text by the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk) the artist developed a series of copper sculptures that he calls *Forces*. Later, in the same context as the works in copper came a series of photographs (*Desert Flights*) in which the egg motif also appears.

According to legend, birds-of-paradise live in the region between the earth and sun. They mate while flying and lay and incubate their eggs while traveling downwards to earth with the help of the sun's heat. The young birds hatch, fly upwards and assume their place among the other birds-of-paradise. Some, however, fall back down to earth, lose the ability to fly and only move about on their two legs. These creatures are ever attempting to lift up and reach the divine spheres. In vain. Here Wakolbinger presents what might be a symbol for humanity, which often travels beyond its own boundaries, eager to unite the regions between heaven and earth, without considering the consequences of its actions.

Landscape representations and the contemplation of nature are the central focuses of **Leopold Kogler's** paintings. The study of the vastness of a landscape and the precise, detailed depiction of natural objects are two of the artist's primary interests. For Kogler a painted picture can be seen as the transformation of things perceived and the formation of a subjective view of the world.

Reminiscent in their meditative quality of Asian painting or of German romantic landscapes, Leopold Kogler's paintings and works on paper are full of magic and mysticism. With a deep affinity to nature, Kogler is able to create atmospheric spaces that set our senses in motion. Again and again he depicts regions and impressions of his native Lower Austria. Here he is not interested in creating a faithful reproduction of natural objects or scenes but rather in reflecting nature through his personal sensibility. The large-format, three-part canvas that forms the last work of the series *Horizonte (Horizons)* has a direct symbolic quality that extends beyond the surface of the picture itself. Kogler transforms a landscape that has almost been dissolved in a veil of light and lavish blue into a contemplative energy field. In different ways he is able to intensify the impressions of those who pause to marvel at his work.

In Kogler's pictures the realm of landscape becomes the realm of consciousness or a kind of in-between space that is referred to as "ma" in Japanese and defined as a philosophical and spiritual dimension. Similar to the hazy, forceful natural scenes of the English artist William Turner, Kogler's motifs can be categorized somewhere between figuration and ephemeral insubstantiality. His inner sensibility seems to be turned outwards in the pictures and things concealed reveal themselves in a diffuse light.

In the last year and a half Kogler has also been working on small-format images on paper that serve in a way as a counterpoint to the monumental paintings. The stereotypical motifs – ferns, grasses, leaves or blossoms – appear to have been x-rayed or placed under a magnifying glass. For the artist, however, a representational reading of his pictures is secondary. Of far more importance is the view of nature as a continual process, the opposite of a fixed state. *Panta rhei*: Everything flows! This well-known phrase, which has been traced back to Plato or Heraclites, stands for the flow of time and the continual progression of events. Here it is a kind of maxim. On a spiritual and philosophical level the idea penetrates everything and has stood for ages as one of the most fundamental aspects of the existence, development and passing of the individual and collective alike.

Long before light became a subject of mathematic and physical examination, humans from different cultures worshipped it as a kind of god. In its divine nature and in its connection to the immaterial, goodness and life itself the phenomenon of light is one of the most fundamental symbols for humanity. In all its manifestations – sun, moon, stars, lightning, fire – light corresponds to the essence of divinity. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus Christ is the light of the world, illuminating the darkness. And the Koran says that Allah is the light of both heaven and earth. Numerous texts, rituals and symbols of the Jewish faith also celebrate God as the light of all life. The Kabala says that the soul of humans is the light of the Lord. The menorah, the seven-branched candelabrum, was a ritual item in the tabernacle – in all its properties it stands for God's salvation of his people.

In essence, **Michael Wegerer's** approach to painting leads one to the phenomenon of light. The so-called *Scan Paintings* presented in this exhibition were created from digitally created image data-scans. In this case the artist makes scans of fluorescent lights and enlarges and prints them on transparent washi paper, lending them the quality of paintings, which is how Wegerer refers to the works. To create the original, painting-like impression – also yielded by spontaneous effects and imperfections – Wegerer first applies a gold background to the paper. Found in Byzantine art and later in the Middle Ages, this element is of great importance and highly symbolic. The gold background lends Wegerer's pictures a particularly warm glow and creates – as does the glaze technique taken from the old masters – a spatial depth. In his works Michael Wegerer uses the gold priming also found in medieval book, icon and panel illustration to raise religious content to a more general

spiritual level. In the *Scan Paintings* the artist combines traditional and contemporary effects. He transforms image spaces permeated with mute colors and wave-like forms into contemplative energy fields, shifting the digitally parsed prismatic nature of light back to a kind of transcendent order.

"The noise was heard around the world," is how Emmett Williams, one of the original Fluxus artists, describes the international response to the *Piano Activities* of the U.S. American composer, musician and visual artist Philip Corner, which were performed in 1962 at the International Festival of New Music at the Museum Wiesbaden. The *Piano Activities* were a series of performances on different evenings, which served to successively destroy the piano itself. With saws, hammers, drills, rocks and similar objects the young pioneers of Fluxus art – George Maciunas, Dick Higgins, Wolf Vostell, Ben Patterson, Emmett Williams, Alison Knowles and Nam June Paik – modified and dismantled the noble instrument, which stood for conventional concert music. The idea was to turn sounds and noises different from those created in a conventional piano concert into music. The results of the piano destruction opened up a new realm of sound that has not been heard again since.

With these and similar performances of destruction and deconstruction, which for audiences at the time were quite revolutionary, the historical foundation was laid for the collaborative work of Michael Wegerer and the composer, pianist and performance artist Judith Unterperinger – alias JUUN – and their multi-disciplinary installation *PIANO SUBLIMATION*.

In the same way that the systematic destruction of a piano bought for five dollars by George Maciunas in 1962 led to the creative process of the formation of the group of Fluxus artists and further musical performances, the piece-by-piece sawing up of a grand piano made by the Vienna-based Friedrich Ehrbar (official craftsman of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy) provided the point of departure for the visual and audio collaboration between Wegerer and JUUN. The individual pieces of the mid 19th-century Ehrbar piano and their spatial dimensions serve in different ways as a foundation for the compositions and silkscreen prints subsequently created – the deconstruction of the instrument as a precondition and opportunity for new creative approaches and results.

In a reciprocal artistic dialogue, meticulously controlled sounds and graphics are generated that are converted to musical loops, performative elements, videos and installation objects. Through the manual manipulation of individual components of the piano, JUUN evokes sounds, the intervals and classification of which Wegerer integrates into geometric

structures. These structures are in turn read by JUUN as a pictorial score, from which she composes new music. The various sound files are placed successively one over the next and in this way a heterogeneous music is created that acoustically integrates the exhibition space as part of the installation. The spatial elements of the music find a kind of correspondence in the images of Michael Wegerer printed on transparent float glass, which lean on one another, offering a view into the various layers of compression and reduction.

Concepts of continual transformation and a constant shifting of artistic direction characterize **Gerhard Kaiser's** work. The dialectical interaction of object, graphic, painting and photography describes the multi-disciplinary methods of Kaiser's art, which in its installative nature provides access to and takes possession of the interior space.

With the work *Images are always by your side* – specially created for the exhibition at the kunsthau muerz – Gerhard Kaiser has come close to realizing his ambition of erasing all borders between media and genres. Neither painting nor drawing nor photography, the incidence of light allows the black, white and transparent Plexiglas plates to reflect their surroundings and create an endless series of pictures depending on the vantage point of the viewer.

The motifs of the silkscreen prints appear over and over again on different sections of the eight-meter long Plexiglas object. Text fragments, phrases, paparazzi photos taken from print media sources, simple graphic elements and geometrical figures like circles or rectangles. The hectic throng of everyday life is depicted – motifs that can be recognized or interpreted as pictures. The 20th century is considered the century of the picture and this trend has continued into the new century as well. The daily flood of images that none of us can escape and that are perceived consciously or unconsciously in different manners dominates our conceptions of reality. The result is an unceasing series of ideas and definitions of the present, past and future, some of which are quite contradictory. Gerhard Kaiser reflects general and quite personal experiences in his artistic work, lends his own consciousness – as it were – to the picture and sheds light on reality as something that can be politically and societally modified.

At the same time the artist makes it almost impossible for exhibition visitors to exit the image or turn their backs on the reflected likenesses of themselves. With every step leading them past Kaiser's monumental work, visitors appear in an image that is continually recons-

tructing itself. The "reflected" see themselves in the distorted architecture of the exhibition space, or are superimposed over the reflections of other guests, or are inscribed in the geometrical figures described above. At times it is the exhibited works of the other artists that form the background of their likenesses. One of Gerhard Kaiser's basic intentions has always been to show what takes place inside his multifaceted sculptures. Here we are confronted with compression, reduction or with transparency, depending on our standpoint and perspective. The view into and through, deep into and behind objects, distinct visions – all these things are essential to the artist not just formally but also in a symbolic sense.

In walking around Kaiser's work viewers have the impression that the progression of images is endless. There seems to be no beginning or end. Projected onto the ground, the front side and point of departure of Kaiser's work documents the coming and going of the visitors as a live image, standing symbolically for the here and now of reality. The phrase projected in a niche of the wall on the opposite side – "Images Never End" – provides a visual demonstration of the illusiveness of the concept of pictorial representation in general: In fact, the surface onto which the projection is cast is not the wall niche itself, but photographic wall paper of the niche. The image thus becomes a subjective reality conceived as an optical reproduction.

atlas

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