

..... Johannes Deutsch
 Iridescence as Method

Since the late 80s, Johannes Deutsch has been shifting back and forth among the media of painting, computer graphics, sculpture and (in the broadest possible sense) architecture. In doing so, he has been primarily interested in two issues: the origination and modification of mental imagery, and the correlation between interior and exterior spaces. Deutsch tests the possibilities of color and light as conditions for space and form—on one hand as images on canvas, on the other hand as three-dimensional objects (images in spaces and spatial strata). In going about this, he decisively takes leave of perspectivist vision and seeks in stratified space an appropriate correspondence to the contemporary experience of time and space.

Parallel to this, he works on the specific possibilities of the computer image. In the digital processing of photos, the artist fragments and distorts excerpts of reality in a way that the limits demarcating human being and architecture as well as material elements (eyes, noses, lips, hands, concrete components and metal objects) and abstract ones (colored surfaces, light effects, textures) indeed persist but can no longer be grasped in a tangible way.

In his glass strata objects first presented in 2004, Johannes Deutsch reassembled the print matrices of his first computer images from the early 90s. Like a palimpsest, up to 20 layers are arrayed serially and change their effect depending on whether they are viewed from the front or the back, the lighting situation, and how the light rays strike them. “The computer images of my glass strata objects are figured, almost fairy-tale-like. (...) The way the colors of these objects come across is subject to fluctuations and depends on how the light hits them. The graphic objects display parallels to medieval stained glass windows: when observed under conditions of backlighting, they glow out of the depths of their layers. When illuminated from the front, the colored foils appear opaque and have



a matte finish, are full of traces of their diaphanous make-up,” the artist commented. This work is a new take on the role individual and collective remembrance plays in the development of mental imagery and the experience of reality, questions that he has been coming to terms with since the late '80s.

Deutsch has been getting back to his roots technically as well by presenting these figured, multi-layered images in handmade wooden frames. His way of operating with traditional art forms has a certain ironic, wink-of-the-eye quality to it now that he has taken the possibilities of experiencing immaterial imagery to its very limits (and even gone beyond them). The notebooks (about 30 x 40 cm) and the steles (about 150 cm tall) explicitly allude to bourgeois and representative forms of artistic communication. The former play on the tradition of family photos and simultaneously thematize experiences of daily work on the electronic screen. The steles occupy a position between arrays of columns in Antiquity and conventions applicable to monuments—they are space-determinative; are, with respect to their subject, lapidary first and foremost. As monuments, they thrust the viewer back to subjective states; on the other hand, in their fabulous, dream-like graphic energy, they transcend the limitation of plasticity and architecture.

Presented in lecture halls and corridors as well as in the offices of a liberal arts university, they persist in operating at the boundaries of public, semi-public and private spaces, at the transitions and breaches between traditions and the present.

Translated from German by Mel Greenwald

Monika Leisch-Kiesel ■■■■■■■■■■

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Changieren als Methode

Seit den späten 80er Jahren changiert Johannes Deutsch zwischen den Medien Malerei, Computerbild, Skulptur und (im weitesten Sinne) Architektur. Dabei interessieren ihn primär zwei Fragestellungen: die Entstehung und Veränderung von Vorstellungsbildern und die Korrelation von Innenraum und Außenraum. Deutsch erprobt die Möglichkeiten von Farbe und Licht als Bedingung für Raum und Figur, einerseits als Leinwandbild, andererseits als dreidimensionales Objekt (Raumbilder, Raumschichtenbilder). Dabei verlässt er entschieden das perspektivische Sehen und sucht im Schichtenraum eine gegenwärtiger Zeit- und Raumerfahrung adäquate Entsprechung.

Parallel hierzu arbeitet er an den spezifischen Möglichkeiten des Computerbildes. In der digitalen Bearbeitung von Fotos fragmentiert und verformt der Künstler Wirklichkeitszitate so, dass die Grenzen von Mensch und Architektur, aber auch von gegenständlichen (Augen, Nasen, Lippen, Händen, Betonteilen und Metallobjekten) und abstrakten Elementen (Farbflächen, Lichtwirkungen, Texturen) wohl gegeben, doch nicht mehr fassbar sind.

In den 2004 erstmals präsentierten Glasschichtenobjekten assemblierte Johannes Deutsch die Druckmatrizen seiner ersten Computerbilder aus den frühen 90er Jahren neu. Gleich einem Palimpsest liegen bis zu 20 Schichten hintereinander und verändern ihre Wirkung je nach Vorder- und Rückseite, Beleuchtungssituation und Lichteinfall. „Die Computerbilder meiner Glasschichtenobjekte sind figürlich – fast märchenhaft. ... Die Farbwirkung dieser Objekte ist Schwankungen unterworfen und hängt vom Lichteinfall ab. Die Bildobjekte weisen Paralle-