



Jägerstraße 52-54, 1200 Wien
www.mzbaltazarslaboratory.org

Daniela Zeilinger & Janine Schranz: Blend together

Opening: 11.03.2022

On view: 12.03 – 26.03.2022

Opening hours: Fr 4–7 pm, Sa 12–4 pm and by appointment

The exhibition Blend Together by Janine Schranz and Daniela Zeilinger, presented at Mz* Baltazar's Laboratory as part of this year's Foto Wien, follows on thematically from the joint exhibition Passepartout, on view at hoast in Vienna in 2021. Whereas last year's attention was focused on processes of selecting, cropping and fading out, this time the focus is on situations of transparency and blending. While at hoast the focus was on techniques of inclusion and exclusion within a given architecture or within the image field, the exhibition at Mz* Baltazar's examines possibilities of communication between inside and outside, from artwork to artwork, and between real space and image space.

In recent exhibitions, Janine Schranz has been transferring some of the basic conditions of photography into concrete exhibition architectures in experimental installation arrangements. In her contribution Blend Together for Foto Wien 2022, conceived together with Daniela Zeilinger, the exhibition space Mz* Baltazar's Laboratory also serves her to "contemplate the space following photographic parameters," as the artist herself says.

Circular glass panes are hanging in the exhibition space. On them, fragments of a text can be read: "Migrating waves from different centers (as on the surface of a pond) can pass through one another without conflict, adding themselves to one another as they pass."¹ The quote is taken from the book Language of Vision (1944) by György Kepes, a member of the New Bauhaus and a student of László Moholy-Nagy. The catastrophic historical background (1944!) behind the utopian vision of conflict-free political coexistence expressed in the metaphor of permeable waves has been given a terrible and worrying actualization in the events of recent days and weeks. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to understand Janine Schranz's use of the quote as an unquestioned adoption of a modernist ideal.

At first, however, the glass objects, through their placement in the space, actually do invite one to look through them at the exhibition space, the other visitors, and further through the display window at the urban outdoor space, as well as at the works by Daniela Zeilinger hanging on the wall. These views through the round glass objects, together with their form and materiality, suggest an intentional analogy with the camera lens. Yet the objects resist their integration into a traditional definition of photography as a "transparent presentation of a real scene."² They confront the viewer as objects that can be experienced haptically, with specific material properties. Glass pigments applied by screen printing were baked into the glass at high temperatures. Different degrees of dilution result in subtly varying shades of gray. Depending on the exposure to light, which is constantly changing due to quiet movements of the panes, their opacity changes and with it the perception of the information shining through them. Approaching the works, one perceives

the grainy texture of the printed surfaces. Thus, the status of the objects fluctuates between that of the lens and that of the screen. What at first glance appears to be an affirmation of modern enthusiasm for transparency reveals, upon closer inspection, a critical treatment of a modernist utopian myth.

If Janine Schranz examines the real space of the exhibition by means of parameters of photography (and vice versa), Daniela Zeilinger's works engage with the ontological status of the pictorial space as well as the pictorial object. What is the pictorial content of *Blu* (2022)? Or simply: what do I actually see in this picture? An image of an image? There are several indications for a spatial depth, a pictorial space. The spatial demarcation of the image carrier against real space is repeated several times within the image. From this spatial division, one can also infer the process of production as a multi-stage one, a temporal succession of the different layers of the picture. The colors of the central image shine and glow in a way that seems to indicate different light sources behind the depicted image carrier or outside the pictorial field, and suggest a certain surface texture of the depicted objects – maybe even a partial inversion of the image's colors. All of this is admittedly speculation, because it simply cannot be discerned with absolute certainty.

You might also ask yourself whether what you think you see in the picture "really" exists or has ever existed – in contrast to painting or drawing, which one immediately recognizes as something made, and whose pictorial content one would only grant reality in a figurative or referential sense. But is the question of the reality of the photographic image object still relevant at all in the age of digital image production - in the face of "deep fakes"? It seems much more productive to use the inscriptions that photography as an artistic practice has left in our cultural memory as points of contact to explore the critical potential of any image production in experimental arrangements. In the case of Daniela Zeilinger's images, it is precisely the aforementioned uncertainty about their ontological status that speaks most directly from them. This effect is not a coincidental product of the pictures, but a declared goal underlying their production. What is true for the pictorial object, applies to an even greater extent to the referent of the image – what the picture is "about." Thus, different reference systems and their corresponding possibilities of interpretation constantly cross each other.

On the occasion of Zeilinger's contribution to the exhibition *Passepartout*, on view in 2021 at hoast, I spoke of the uncanny, the eerie, inherent in her pictures. According to Freud, the uncanny is determined by a strangeness in the familiar. In Daniela Zeilinger's work, the familiar processes of perception are unsettled, alienation effects similar to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* are deliberately employed. The individual parts of the picture do not fit together into a coherent whole into which the viewing subject can immerse itself in order to lose and forget itself in it. The uncanniness that haunts the viewer is rooted in the desire to create an intelligible whole to which the subject can relate clearly and thereby constitute itself as such, or at least perform its subjectivity. But perhaps this also explains the fascination with the uncanny, its titillation. With Slavoj Žižek, and following Jacques Lacan, one might say, "The subject's effort to close the ontological gap retrospectively creates and sustains that gap."³

Michael Wonnerth-Magnusson

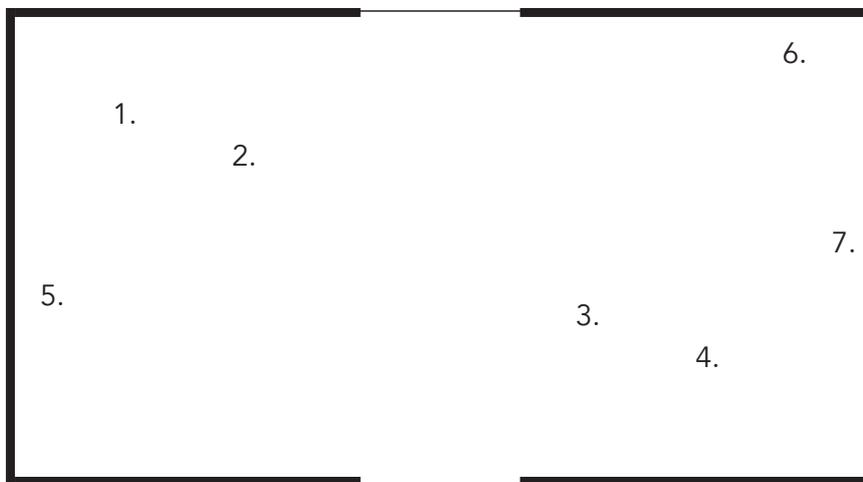
¹ William Ernest Hocking, "America's World Purpose," in *LIFE* (17. Apr. 1944), quoted in György Kepes, *Language of Vision*¹³, first published in 1944, Chicago 1969, S. 77.

² Beatriz Colomina, "Le Corbusier and Photography," in *Assemblage*, No. 4 (Oct. 1987), p. 7.

³ Slavoj Žižek, *Die Tücke des Subjekts*, Frankfurt am Main 2001, S. 217.

MZ* O-M BALTAZAR'S LABORATORY

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1./2./3./4. Janine Schranz

migrating waves from different centers (as on the surface of a pond) can pass through one another without conflict, adding themselves to one another as they pass, 2022

ceramic pigments screen printed on glass, ø 48 cm, Ed. 1 + 1 AP

5. Daniela Zeilinger

Blu, 2022

Analogue C-Print from slide, 190x150 cm, Ed. 1 + 1 AP

6. Daniela Zeilinger

Siam, 2022

Analogue C-Print from slide, 20x26 cm, Ed. 1 + 1 AP

7. Daniela Zeilinger

Ray, 2022

Analogue C-Print from slide, 20x26 cm, Ed. 1 + 1 AP