

DANIELA ZEILINGER

Wo ist die Realität? Wo haben Sie die?

16 July – 10 August 2022

Opening: Saturday, 16 July, 4 – 7pm

What can photography tell us about reality? This question is central in Daniela Zeilingers experimental works. Since its coming in the mid-19th century, photography has been confronted with one accusation: the alleged promise of directly depicting reality. The concept of indexicality describes the idea of a causal relation between the photo and reality, just as smoke refers to fire. However, techniques of development and their manipulation seem to paint a very different picture. Moreover, the relationship between photography and reality is neither stable nor congruent, as Roland Barthes notes: "There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past."⁵ This suggests that photographic works show us reality, of course; the only question is which one.

In Daniela Zeilinger's studies, various light-dependent techniques—from the mobile phone camera to the diapositive to direct exposure—are multiplied, layered and interwoven with drawing and painting techniques. In each image, the collaborative system that makes its creation process possible is realised. The relations within the system generate a choreography of multiple realities that overlap, merge and distort each other. This internal co-dependency also exposes the different capacities for agency in the sense of a living materialism according to Jane Bennett: "Humanity and nonhumanity have always performed an intricate dance with each other. There was never a time when human agency was anything other than an interfolding network of humanity and nonhumanity; today this mingling has become harder to ignore."⁶

The different framings in *Bro* give an indication of the many layers that, stacked on top of each other, add up to the image. The layers were created using different exposure processes and captured in various stages of development. Individual elements reveal themselves: a cable leading into the picture; the artist's feet; a small blue flower. Some of the layers have been inverted, a reference to the fact that analogue film first captures its scenes on negative before a positive print is made in the darkroom. The process of translation constantly generates new possibilities, some of which materialise as reality. Thus, new realities emerge with each layer, each translation and each overlay in between. Similar to the geological layers of the Earth's crust, which tell of past ages through their individual composition, the image sheets refer to their different processes of formation. In *Bro*, we can see through several, partly contradictory realities to the system of those carrying out the action, consisting of the artist's body, various cameras, dia slides, pigments, paper, ink, the employees of the development studio, the transport of the works, the author of this text, the visitors

5 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*, New York 1982, p. 76.

6 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter. A Political Ecology of Things*, London 2010, S. 31.



of the Salon Elektrohalle and its team.

The images of the *Haiku* series were created on light-sensitive paper produced by the artist herself, which was then directly exposed. On a closer look, you can recognise a black square with the white pictogram of a sun, which suggests that the image was exposed on the display of a laptop. Depending on the duration of the illumination and the texture of the paper, the photograms appear sharp or blurred. They encounter elements of Japanese calligraphy that are subject to their own temporality: For example, the length of a line corresponds to the duration of a breath of the artist. Isabelle Graw attributes the "notion that photographs contain traces of life" to "index effects", "a phenomenon simultaneously owed to the objective automatism of the technical apparatus and deliberately produced or triggered by the photographer or artist."⁷ These semi-conscious, semi-unconscious actions testify to the different contingencies of the participants, which in turn construct the realities of the *Haikus*.

In an interview with Lutz Dammbeck, the cyberneticist Heinz von Foerster answers a question about the limits of reality with a counter-question: "Where is the reality? Where do you have it?"⁸ This suggests that reality is never singular or universal, but composed of multiple, simultaneous interferences that reflect the different perspectives of the participants. Daniela Zeilinger's works invite us to become part of her realities, her systems of techniques, creatures, actions, references and processes. – Sophie Publig

7 Lost Traces of Life. A Conversation About Indexicality in Analog and Digital Photography Between Isabelle Graw and Benjamin Buchloh, 2015, in: Texte zur Kunst, URL: <https://www.textezurkunst.de/en/99/verlorene-lebensspuren/> (4.7.2022).

8 Heinz von Foerster interviewed by Lutz Dammbeck, *Das Netz*, GER 2004.

