

DAVID MUTH
2023 | SELECTED PROJECTS

PROCESSES & TRACES

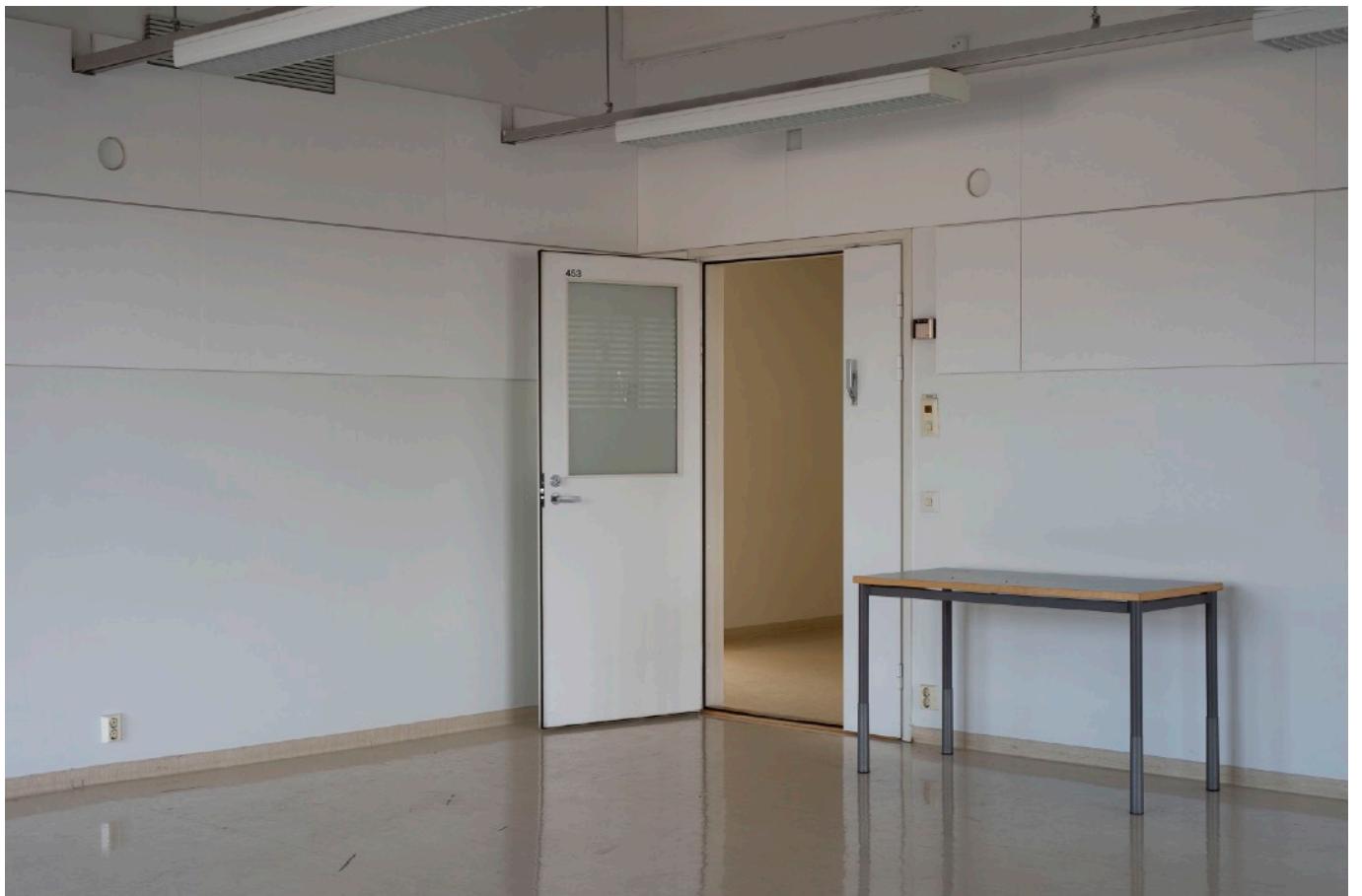
PHOTO SERIES | 2015 - ONGOING

Pictures from Athens: Courtesy of the Athens Biennale

The photographs of the series "Processes & Traces" function as snapshots of very slow transformations – settings changing gradually over time. The images depict processes of metamorphosis, decay, and intertwined with the material "bare bone" structure one is able to identify cultural signifiers – in other words, the onlookers projection onto "the world". For us, former narratives appear to resonate within the materiality of those semi-dilapidated arrangements. How did a particular constellation form?

Signifiers shift, they come and go, and this all happens against the backdrop of currently dominant way of "seeing things" – in itself an ever changing "entity", particular to certain regions or locations. When viewed collectively, the images of the series appear to hint at some sort of an overarching paradigm. Is this an attempted depiction of the discourse between the "natural" and the "cultural"? Or actually, doesn't the distinction between those traditionally binary entities fade away at a second glance – as if the arrangements were all part of a something slowly evolving?

One image shows the urban landscape of Turku – a conglomerate of local shops, some about to be closed, some about to be opened – modifications reflecting the ever changing zeitgeist, in a part of town that probably lost its commercial significance. Other photographs depict a former luxurious hotel in Athens that is – after functioning as a school for a couple of decades – currently being used as a cultural space. In contrast, the nearly abstract images of Kakolanmäki show traces of the building's former usage as a prison – detailed views of the walls of individual cells that once were decorated by its former inhabitants in an attempt to personalise the space.



Processes & Traces

Rettig 2021 #01

C-Type, 90 cm x 60 cm



Processes & Traces

Rettig 2021 #02

C-Type, 90 cm x 60 cm



Processes & Traces

Turku 2018 #01

C-Type, 90 cm x 60 cm



Processes & Traces

Athens 2017 #01

C-Type, 90 cm x 60 cm



Processes & Traces

Kakolanmäki 2015 #02

C-Type, 90 cm x 60 cm



Processes & Traces

Kakolanmäki 2015 #04

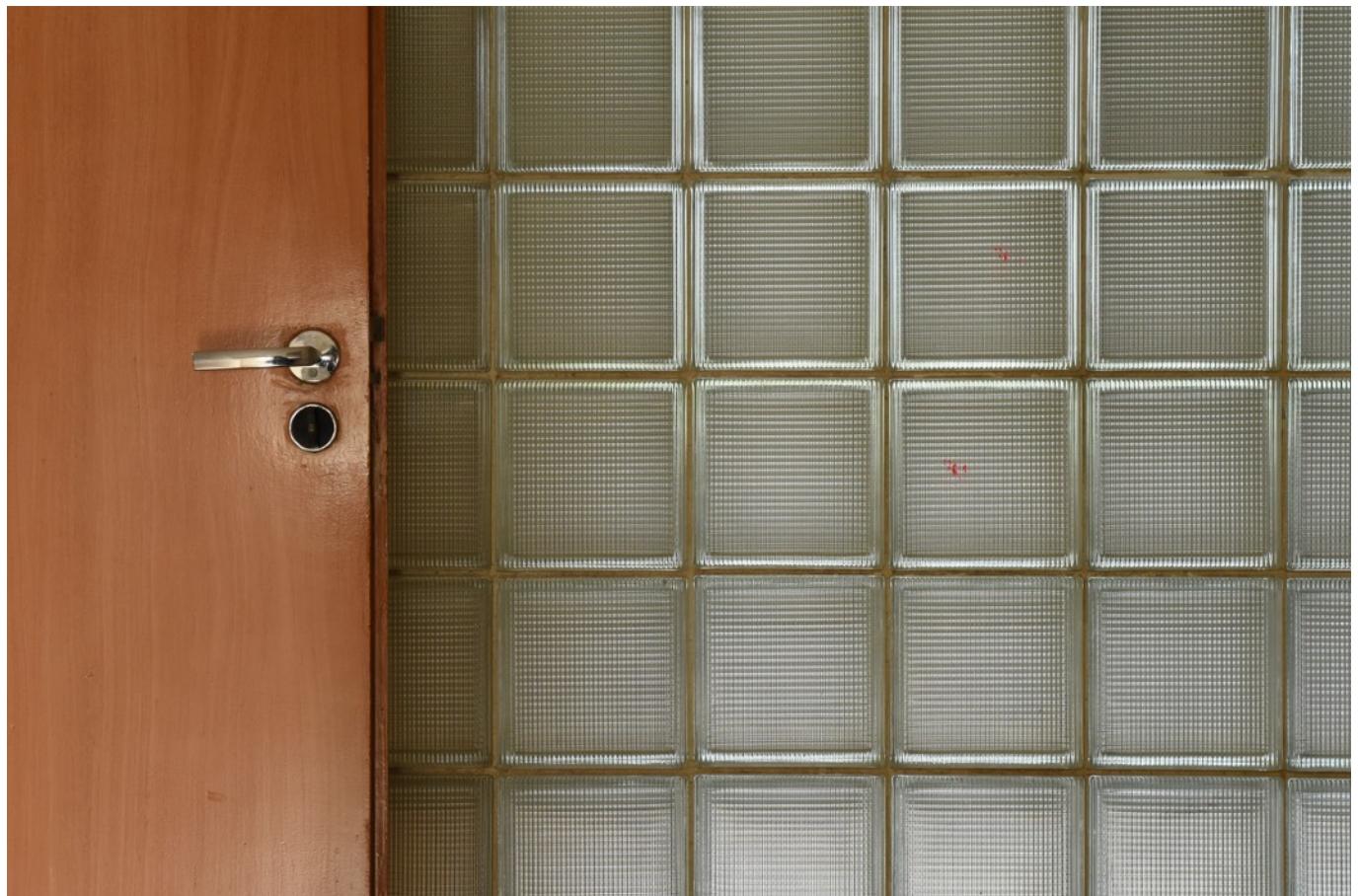
C-Type, 90 cm x 60 cm



Processes & Traces

Kakolanmäki 2015 #03

C-Type, 90 cm x 60 cm



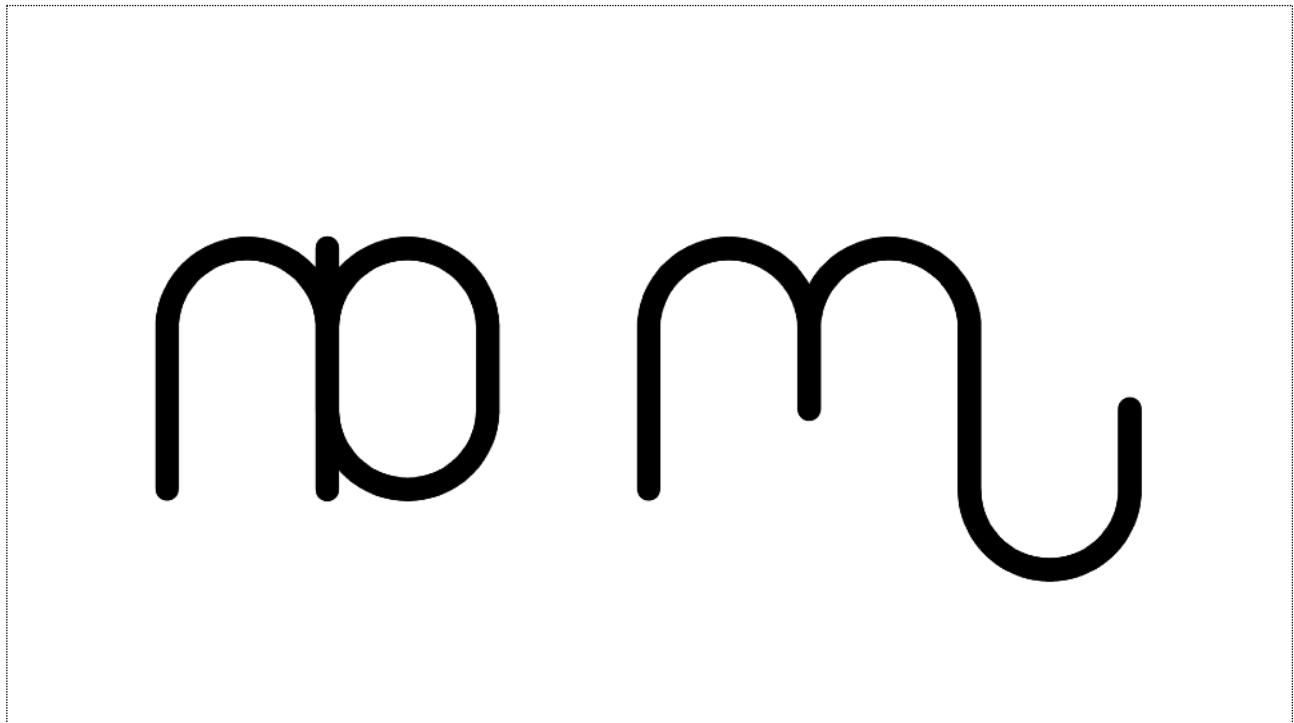
Processes & Traces

Kakolanmäki 2015 #06

C-Type, 90 cm x 60 cm

SUPERPOSITION 50x02v03 SALOME SCHMUKI & DAVID MUTH

CZECH REPUBLIC/SWITZERLAND/AUSTRIA/FINLAND 2021 | HD VIDEO | BW | NO SOUND | LOOP | 07'21"



Black forms are successively drawn on white background. They look like letters; the beginning of a text or a message. Seemingly familiar at first, they cannot be recognised. After a set of forms is complete, the process starts over.

Salome Schmuki's and David Muth's project *Superposition* explores shapes generated by a set of rules based on fragments such as strokes, arcs or circles that also writing systems consist of - systems that were developed or "evolved" in different places and over long passages of time. The specially created algorithm endlessly produces variants of writing attempts: approximations of existing letters, but with oddities, unusual turns or endings.

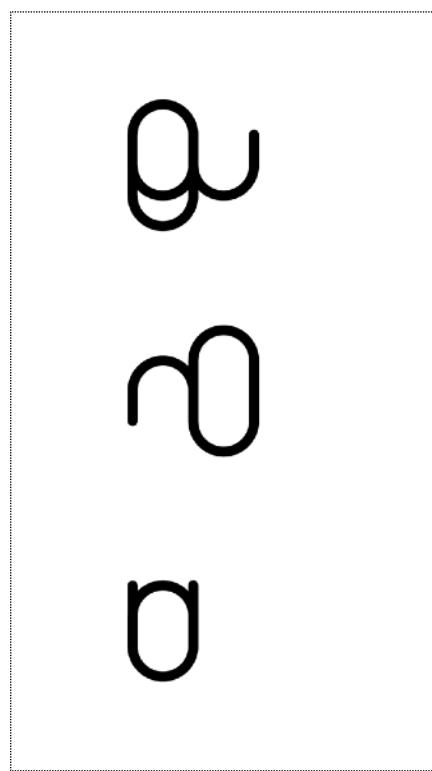
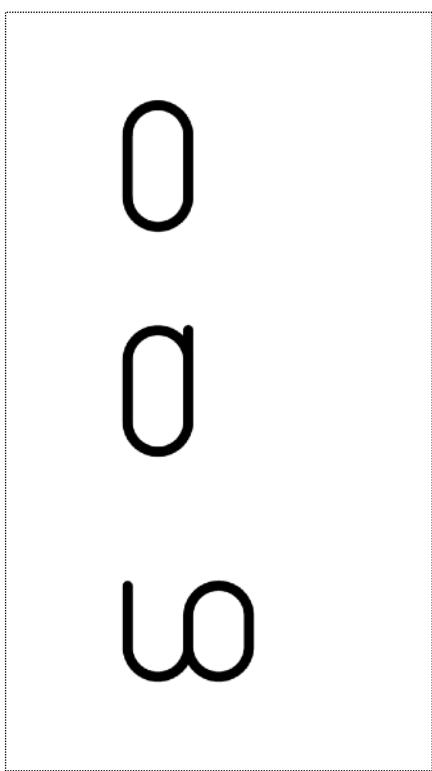
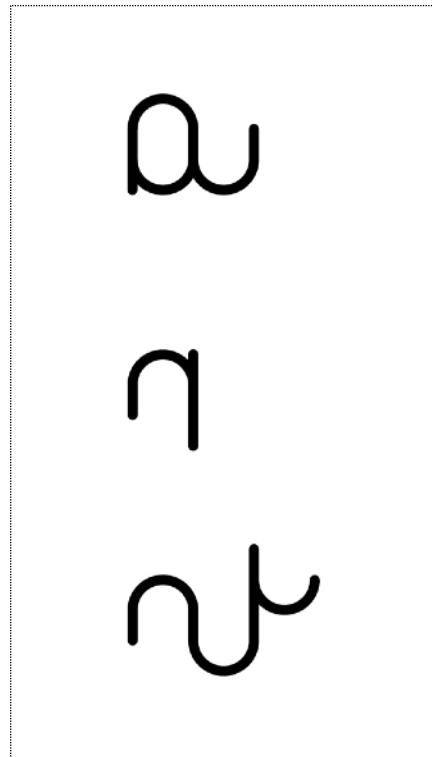
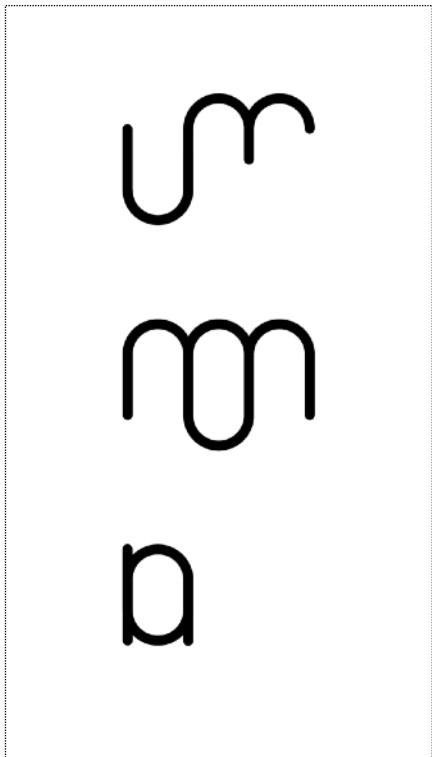
The video is also available reversed (white lines on black background) for projections.

DISTRIBUTION

AV-ARKKI, Helsinki, Finland



Superposition 36x03, Installation View, Salzburg 2020 (in collaboration with Salome Schmuki)



FOOTNOTE #03: GOLD & CLOUDS

FINLAND/CZECH REPUBLIC 2018 | HD VIDEO | COLOUR | STEREO | 03'30"



Production Credits

Concept & Realisation: David Muth

VFX Consulting: Fredrik Enges, Martin M. Michl, Franz Schubert

Music: David Muth

Supported by:



SCREENINGS & EXHIBITIONS

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2023 | Mediahuone, Taiteen talo, Turku (solo) |
| 2019 | Mediabox, Forumbox, Helsinki (solo) |
| | Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin, Video Library |
| 2018 | MUU Gaala, MUU Galleria, Helsinki |
| | MUU Gaala, Sergey Kuryokhin Center for Modern Art, St. Petersburg |
| | MUU Gaala, Taidekeskusahjo, Joensuu |

FOOTNOTE #03: GOLD & CLOUDS

According to the French poststructuralist philosopher Jean Baudrillard, everyday life unfolds in a system of signs, a "car" for example implies "driving pleasure", "progress", or "independence". Baudrillard plays with the re-articulation of theories of structural semiotics - terms such as signifier and signified, coined by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Following this approach, one can enquire to what extent a particular "object-signifier" has undergone shifts in meaning over time.

The aircraft once stood for technical progress and the latest evolutionary step in military technology – and technology per se meant military superiority in a post-industrial era marked by enthusiastic nationalism – then, since about the 70s (a date chosen knowingly arbitrarily), it has been increasingly considered as an object which can be instrumentalised for terroristic activities with relative ease. Cheap flight deals offered by discount air lines, a development that began approximately in the 90ies, have made distances appear smaller and smaller (already before the plane has been co-symbol for globalisation), and in addition stripped "traveling by air" of its hitherto semi-luxurious connotation (the once fashionable term "Jet Set" now appears rather outdated). Finally, the aircraft has become a symbol for the rapidly progressing depletion of fossil fuels - natural resources that were created over geological time frames, now to be extracted in a crescendo of global consumption: aircrafts have turned into one of the motors of man-made climate change, and the frequent traveler is confronted with the term "carbon footprint".

For the subject or individual an aircraft offers the possibility of rapidly overcoming distances, in return for subjecting oneself to being "locked up" for a certain period - subjugating any sense of individual autonomy to total confidence in technology and the crew operating the aircraft (this can be seen as one of the reasons why the suicide of the German-Wing pilot in 2015 became such a collective traumatic experience).

The video piece "Footnote #03: Gold & Clouds" aims to be a meditative reflection on the object "aircraft". It has been conceived during a stay at the Saari Residence in Mynämäki, Southwest Finland, and finalised during a residency at the Brno House of the Arts.

DISTRIBUTION

AV-ARKKI, Helsinki, Finland

FOOTNOTE #02: HIETAMÄKI

FINLAND 2017 | HD VIDEO | COLOUR | STEREO | 04'45"



Production Credits

Concept & Realisation: David Muth

Supported by:

 KONEEN SÄÄTIÖ

SCREENINGS & EXHIBITIONS

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2020 | Golden Clouds & Pitch Black, Blickle Kino, Belvedere 21, Vienna |
| 2019 | Things, G99 Gallery, Brno House of Arts, Brno |
| | Things, Kunstraum Memphis, Linz |
| 2018 | Things, Temporary Parapet, Bratislava |

FOOTNOTE #02: HIETAMÄKI

The video piece "Footnote #02: Hietämäki" seeks to reflect on the object "car": a golden car is parked somewhere in the dark, the wind is shaking the surrounding bushes. Besides that, not much is happening. The viewers are left entirely to their own projections into the scenery, accompanied by a minimal soundtrack by Carsten Nicolai and Mika Vainio.

Cars act as status symbols, and they have potential to do so on a global scale. Furthermore, a car functions - to a certain extent - as a "protective sleeve" for its passengers. No matter where we are driving to, or what kind of weather conditions we would be exposed to at any given time outside - the car operates as a technological "cocoon", it encapsulates us - and simultaneously connects us in our subjective experience of "reality" with millions of other motorists (an experience that might offer comfort in certain situations - whilst in a car, we intuitively remain part of our technologised civilisation). According to the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, the car also works as an extension of the "self" - which he cites as one of reason why logical arguments trying to highlight the benefits of the bike - e.g. in combination with environmental concerns - often fail to convince drivers : the car is the faster, kinetically stronger "I" - to a certain extent it functions as a "Robocop Shell".

Then again, the car, parked somewhere in the darkness, "abandoned" by its owners - appears to suggest something different. The polarity between the car as a technological item and its surrounding (trying to avoid the typical binary "technology" and "nature") can be felt.

The video has been realised during a stay at the Saari Residence in Mynämäki, Southwest Finland.



Footnote #02: Hietamäki, Installation View, Things, G99 Gallery, Brno House of Arts 2019

DISTRIBUTION

AV-ARKKI, Helsinki, Finland

FOOTNOTE #01: SIPILÄNMÄKI

FINLAND 2016 | HD VIDEO | COLOUR | STEREO | 05'02"



Production Credits

Concept & Realisation: David Muth
Music: Antti Tolvi

SCREENINGS & EXHIBITIONS

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2021 | Golden Clouds & Pitch Black, Blickle Kino, Belvedere 21, Vienna |
| 2017 | Mediabox, Forum Box, Helsinki (solo) |
| | Galleria Harmaa, Turku (solo) |
| | Raumkonzepte, Fotogalerie Wien |
| 2016 | MUU Gaala, MUU Galleria, Helsinki |
| | MUU Gaala, Caisa Cultural Centre, Helsinki |



The images of the video "Footnote # 01: Sipilänmäki" seem to stand still: only occasionally an ever so slight breeze in the air causes barely noticeable movements in the vegetation - little shakes that reveal the filmic nature of the source material.

A cluster of brightly-lit greenhouses appears to function on a fully-automated basis. Otherwise darkness. Both operators as well as beneficiaries of this structure are absent.



DAVID MUTH:
FOOTNOTE #01: SIPILÄNMÄKI

At the very heart of what sets us apart from other species lies our ability to cheat our circumstances. Not socially - that many animals do with great skill - but rather cosmologically. Through industrialisation we have learnt to defy some of the contingencies of nature, perhaps estranged ourselves from it. Some of those cheats, such as the 'conditioning' of the air that surrounds us have allowed large settlements to form under extreme climatic conditions. Cities like Phoenix, Arizona would not exist without it and may not exist again in the future. Many examples for such latitudinal movements exist, for instance the transposition of plants from the tropics to Europe, for research or as a gesture of imperial dominance. In order to house the organisms that naturalists were bringing back from their journeys, greenhouses began to emerge throughout Europe. At first embedded into buildings, they provided shelter for non-human inhabitants, gradually becoming a type of architecture in their own right, from the Giardini Botanici of 15th century Italy to the Crystal Palace, which marked the apex of the industrial revolution in 1851.

It was through industrialisation and the advent of electrical light, that cheats of longitude have become possible. Unlike the permanent transpositions of tropical plants those are both temporary and temporal. Night could suddenly exchanged for day under the blinding light of an electrical arc or the luminous discharge of gases, enabling growth in an environment that is suspended in almost every dimension, perpetually fertile and productive. Today, the cultivation of produce in such environments is a massively industrial practice without which populations in the northern hemisphere could perhaps not be sustained.

David Muth's work depicts those machinic environments at their most estranged, without the viewer ever gaining access to their interior, pitched against the black of night and set to a strangely harmonic electrical transformation provided by Antti Tolvi. Glowing islands of life, yet forever removed. We do not know what goes on inside but we know their bounty all too well from interfacing with their corporate front end on an almost daily basis as we stroll through our local supermarket. Now one could stop there and see Marx' second nature in full effect, perhaps detrimentally so to us as a species. A temporary cheat until our luck runs out, relegated to the place in which we belong by a vengeful nature. Many feel that way, longing for a lost parochial past marked by homeostasis rather than depletion. Yet there is another way to look at those radiant structures. That it is all a cheat, the whole planet. In this reading, the temporary black of night becomes the almost eternal darkness of space. Within it, there is the spaceship that Buckminster Fuller called 'Earth,' on which there is no homeostasis but the Red Queen rules supreme. The emergence of what we call life may have been a singular event in the history of everything and incredibly precarious, much more than a tropical plant in the northern climate. We may be inhabiting the greatest cheat of all - it may be us.

And this cheat of cheats is soon to be repeated, very likely within this century when our species is going to attempt to create a permanent settlement on another spaceship, one which to our present knowledge does not have an alive arrangement of matter. In doing so, a group of humans will perform a movement which is neither longitudinal or lateral, but an interplanetary one. And they will bring with them the humble greenhouse, to shield organisms from harsh temperature swings and a low-pressure atmosphere that is much unlike what they have evolved in. In this sense, finally, David Muth's Sipilänmäki in itself performs a movement of transposition: It hints at a future by inviting us to regard those strange architectural vessels in all their paradoxicality - in the moment before their own unmooring.

Sascha Pohflepp, 2016

DISTRIBUTION

AV-ARKKI, Helsinki, Finland

TOWARDS AN INVENTORY OF GLOBAL OBJECTS OF MERELY DECORATIVE NATURE

PHOTO SERIES | 2016



Canned Laughter, Installation View, Galleria Titanik , Turku 2017

Supported by:



Taiteen edistämiskeskus
Centret för konstfrämjande
Arts Promotion Centre Finland

BUNDESKANZLERAMT ÖSTERREICH
FEDERAL CHANCELLERY OF AUSTRIA

EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 Common Ground, Salzburger Kunstverein
- 2019 Things, G99 Gallery, Brno House of Arts, Brno
- Things, Kunstraum Memphis, Linz
- 2018 Things, Temporary Parapet, Bratislava
- Canned Laughter, Sodu 4, Vilnius
- 2017 Perfection in Impurity, Salzburger Kunstverein
- Canned Laughter, Galleria Titanik, Turku

The series "Towards an Inventory of Global Objects of Merely Decorative Nature" represents an attempt to catalogue objects that are marketed globally, and usually find their way into rather private, domestic environments after purchase.

Those objects are connecting their final destinations by their mere presence – one could argue that collectively they form some sort of a global “hyperobject”: on the one hand, they are decorative and adorn, on the other, they are ambassadors of a worldwide economic system. Multinational corporations operate as “normative vectors” – local differences in domestic tastes are becoming increasingly blurred, are evened out. The “discourse of objects” in households of various regions is subject to a process of homogenisation.

From a “global consumer” perspective it is no longer possible to know which person has been the creator of a particular object, especially if mass produced, as theorist Diedrich Diederichsen points out. For him, art objects represent a rare exemption to this rule. In this sense, the series transforms mass produced products into art “originals” by means of mere reproduction.

TOWARDS AN INVENTORY OF GLOBAL OBJECTS OF
MERELY DECORATIVE NATURE

Selected Images: IKEA Orchids



Towards an Inventory of Global Objects of Merely Decorative Nature

IKEA Orchid #01, 2016

C-Type, 75 cm x 120 cm



Towards an Inventory of Global Objects of Merely Decorative Nature

IKEA Orchid #02, 2016

C-Type, 75 cm x 120 cm

TOWARDS AN INVENTORY OF GLOBAL OBJECTS OF MERELY DECORATIVE NATURE: ORCHIDS

AUSTRIA/FINLAND 2019 | HD VIDEO | COLOUR | STEREO | LOOP | 01'40"



Towards an Inventory of Global Objects of Merely Decorative Nature: Orchids. Animation Still

Production Credits

Concept & Realisation: David Muth

Music: David Muth

Supported by:



PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Land Salzburg

ON C. D. FRIEDRICH #01: DRUMMING

FINLAND 2014 | HD VIDEO | COLOUR | STEREO | 03'55"



Production Credits

Concept & Realisation: David Muth
Drums: Veli-Matti Torkko
Sound Engineering: Erkka Kulmala
Special Thanks: Elina Ovaska

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Finnish State Art Commission

DAVID MUTH:
ON C. D. FRIEDRICH

In a series of videos entitled "On C.D. Friedrich", David Muth engages with the famous German painter and his particular approach to the depiction of landscape. In one video we are presented with a drummer sitting behind his kit who is working the drums, in another, a dancer performs moves, both of these scenes taking place in the Finnish woods. The framing of the shots has been chosen carefully according to the principles of pictorial compositions that were the landmark of German Romantic painting. Most importantly, the subjects are entirely subsumed by the landscape, as they are staged in the back of the open volume and therefore become compositional elements that are part of the wider ensemble generated by Muth's visual selection.

In Casper David Friedrich's universe, nature was posited as a mirror of the soul of individuals aiming to withdraw from the looming catastrophes of industrial alienation. But in a state of "transcendental homelessness", as Georg Lukacs so adamantly put it, individuals increasingly seem to lack the capacity to experience the difference between subjects and environments as aesthetically pleasing. The protagonists in Muth's videos don't have the experience of the "sublime" that was so important for Romanticism, and they don't admire the landscape - instead they appear to be caught up in their own universes, circulating around the suns of their own activities.

In einer Serie von Videos mit dem Titel "On C.D. Friedrich" beschäftigt sich David Muth mit dem berühmten deutschen Maler und seiner besonderen Herangehensweise bei der Darstellung von Landschaften. In einem Video wird uns ein Schlagzeuger präsentiert, der hinter seinem Schlagzeug sitzt und dieses bearbeitet, in einem anderen eine Tänzerin, die Bewegungen verrichtet - beiden Szenen spielen sich in den finnischen Wäldern ab. Die Gestaltung der Aufnahmen wurde sorgfältig nach jenen Bildkompositionssprinzipien ausgewählt, welche die romantische Malerei in Deutschland prägten. Wichtig dabei ist, daß die Protagonisten vollständig von der Landschaft subsumiert bleiben. Sie sind im hinteren Bereich des offenen Raumes positioniert und werden dabei zu kompositorischen Elementen - Teil eines größeren Ensembles, welches durch die visuelle Auswahl Muths generiert wird.

In Casper David Friedrichs Universum wurde die Natur als Spiegel der Seele von Individuen verstanden, welche sich von den drohenden Katastrophen durch die industrielle Entfremdung zurückzogen. Aber in einem Zustand von "transzendentaler Zuhauselosigkeit", so wie es Georg Lukacs so treffend ausdrückte, scheint dem Individuum immer mehr die Fähigkeit zu fehlen, den Unterschied zwischen Subjekt und der Umgebung als etwas ästhetisch Angenehmes zu empfinden. Den Protagonisten in Muths Videos bleibt die Erfahrung des "Erhabenen" vorenthalten, welche so wichtig für die Romantik war, und sie bewundern die Landschaft nicht - stattdessen scheinen sie Gefangene ihrer eigenen Universen zu sein, die Sonne ihrer eigenen Aktivitäten umkreisend.



On C. D. Friedrich #01: Drumming, Installation View, Valtio+, Kakolanmäki, Turku 2015

SCREENINGS & EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 Golden Clouds & Pitch Black, Blickle Kino, Belvedere 21, Vienna
- 2017 Nature Unmotifs, HIAP, Helsinki (curated by Mari Keski-Korsu)
On C. D. Friedrich, Galleria Rajatila, Tampere (solo)
- 2016 On C. D. Friedrich, MUU Studio, Helsinki (solo)
- 2015 Valtio+, Kakolanmäki, Turku (as part of Odotus, curated by Hanna Seppänen)
- 2014 MUU Gaala, Orion Cinema, Helsinki

SETTINGS

2007 - 2014 | PHOTO SERIES



Settings, Installation View, Photographic Gallery Hippolyte, Helsinki 2012 (solo)

Supported by:



EXHIBITIONS

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2014 | Preface, Galleria Ratamo, The Centre for Creative Photography, Jyväskylä (solo) |
| 2013 | Collection on Display IV: The Magic of the Object, Museum der Moderne Rupertinum, Salzburg |
| 2012 | Preface, Photographic Gallery Hippolyte, Helsinki (solo) |
| | Settings, Photographic Centre Peri, Turku (solo) |
| | Settings, Galleria Rajatila, Tampere (solo) |
| 2009 | A Matter Of Fact, Nest, DCR, The Hague |

The poet Konrad Bayer, founding member of the Viennese Group, sees language as a place of convention - a place where the individual is subordinate to both permanent and unnoticed correction by society.

Expanding on this line of thought, one can look at other, non-verbal domains such as architecture, design or fashion as means of language-like expression. The photo series "Settings" seeks to explore this idea focussing on architecture, landscape design and interiors.

"The elements of a total "language" are being divided and connected simultaneously, so that an intensification effect can be evoked through subtle infringements, through encroachments on neighbouring units. The signs are then no longer being conceived within their representative dimension, they represent nothing more than nothingness, they don't depict - to a greater degree they allow for "actions", they function like transformers that consume natural and social energies in order to produce effects of highest intensities."

Jean-Francois Lyotard,
Essays On Affirmative Aesthetics

Der Dichter Konrad Bayer, Gründungsmitglied der Wiener Gruppe, sieht Sprache als einen Ort der Konvention - einen Ort, an dem das Individuum ebenso stetig wie unbemerkt der Korrektur durch die Gesellschaft unterliegt.

Will man solche Gedankengänge erweitern, lassen sich nicht-verbale Bereiche wie z.B. Architektur, Design oder Mode als eine Art sprachähnlicher Ausdrucksweise betrachten. Die Fotoserie "Settings" sucht danach, diese Idee in den Bereichen Architektur, Gartenlandschaften und Interiors zu erkunden.

"Die Elemente einer totalen "Sprache" werden unterteilt und verbunden zugleich, sodass Intensitätswirkungen durch leichtes Übertreten, durch Übergriffe auf benachbarte Einheiten hervorgerufen werden können. Die Zeichen werden dann nicht mehr in ihrer repräsentativen Dimension erfasst, sie repräsentieren nichts mehr als das Nichts, sie stellen nicht dar, sie erlauben vielmehr "Handlungen", sie funktionieren wie Transformatoren, die natürliche und soziale Energien verbrauchen, um Affekte von höchster Intensität zu produzieren."

Jean-Francois Lyotard,
Essays zu einer affirmativen Ästhetik



Wien 2008 #01, Digital C-Type, 95 cm x 76 cm



Wien 2008 #02, Digital C-Type, 95 cm x 76 cm

[WALL PAINTING ACCOMPANYING THE SERIES]

Depending on what you are looking for, choose an area, a more or less densely populated town, a more or less lively street. Build a house. Furnish it. Make the best out of its appearance and its surrounding. Choose a season and an hour. Invite the most appropriate persons, provide music and alcoholic drinks. The lighting and the conversations should of course be in tune with the occasion, as should the weather or your memories.

If you made no mistake in your calculations, the outcome must be satisfactory for you.



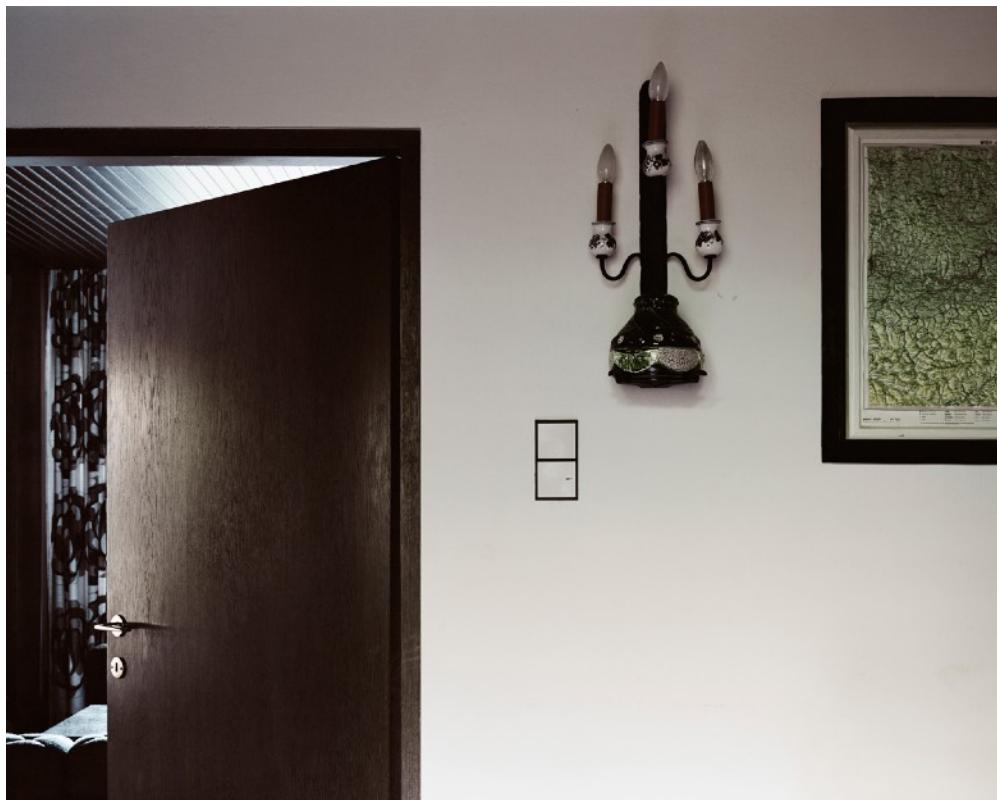
Salzburg 2008 #01, Digital C-Type, 95 cm x 76 cm



Wels 2009 #02, Digital C-Type, 95 cm x 76 cm



Wien 2009 #01, Digital C-Type, 95 cm x 76 cm



Klosterneuburg 2009 #02, Digital C-Type, 95 cm x 76 cm

PHOTOGRAPHIC TRANSLATIONS, UNADORNED SCENES ON DAVID MUTH'S SERIES "SETTINGS"

The visible and the speakable, the unspeakable and the invisible: it seems that the photographs of David Muth's series Settings explain themselves easily. The images show domestic environments, scenes of lifeworlds in the country, in the village, in the city. Outside views as well as interior ones, extracts from everyday living environments in various regions and cities. There are no panorama-like views, but mostly details of architectural complexes that Muth brings into view - whereby we usually have to add the context of the subject ourselves and therefore are more focussed on the structure of the image. Thus, we see a garage door, but without the house it belongs to; our attention shifts to the particularities of this unspectacular view - onto details such as the hedge, the floor joint, the gutter. Another image provides insight into an interior: the view loses itself over the particular design of a closet, one is puzzled about the grain of the wood, the door knob - and about what specifics are hidden behind this anonymous design. Or a situation in a corridor: a closed door, with carefully arranged objects in front, a folding chair, empty flower pots on a wall shelf - they all point beyond the image and in their arrangement remind of classical principles of composition in painting. However, it remains undecided whether a certain creative drive has manifested itself here - or on the very contrary its absence lets the setting appear banal on the one side whilst providing it with an ironic charm on the other. Herein, the representation of the human trace becomes an invisible thread that connects us to the collective body of society.

By all radicalism, however, David Muth's unadorned scenes are not subject to any gestures of social display, they remain ambiguous. In fact, Muth declares the image to a venue of discrepancy between actual lifeworld and hypothetical psychogram, hence to a game between fiction and reality, between conventional mode of representation and artistic expression. Thus all shots - analogue large-format photographs, which are connected to the original "imprint" that left its traces in this medium (Roland Barthes) almost paradigmatically - communicate the impression of extraordinary tidiness, as if something should have been covered up. It is the incongruity of representation and its effect itself that is of relevance here. The title Settings also emphasises the constructed character of the images: it underlines the arranged, the staged of the scenes - so that even on the text level a vague feeling of the over-tidy, of the manipulated is being suggested.

"In Latin "photography" probably would be called "imago lucis opera expressa", that means: through the action of light revealed, "stepped forward", "risen", (like the juice of a lemon) "squashed" image." (Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida)

FOTOGRAFISCHE SETZUNGEN, UNGESCHÖNTE SZENEN ZU DAVID MUTHS WERKGRUPPE „SETTINGS“

Das Sichtbare und das Sagbare, das Unsagbare und das nicht Sichtbare: Scheinbar leicht erklären sich die Fotografien von David Muths Serie Settings. Die Aufnahmen zeigen häusliche Ambiente, Szenarien von Lebenswelten auf dem Land, im Dorf, in der Stadt. Außenansichten ebenso wie Innenansichten, Ausschnitte aus alltäglichen Wohnmilieus in verschiedenen Gegenden und Städten. Es sind keine panoramaartigen Überblicke, sondern meist Details architektonischer Gesamtanlagen, die Muth ins Blickfeld rückt, wobei wir den Kontext des Motivs zumeist selbst ergänzen müssen und dadurch mehr auf die Struktur des Bildes fokussiert sind. So sehen wir zwar ein Garagentor, aber ohne dessen dazugehörigem Haus; unsere Aufmerksamkeit verschiebt sich auf Einzelheiten dieser unspektakulären Ansicht - auf Details wie die Hecke, die Bodenfuge, die Abflussrinne. Ein anderes Bild gibt Einblick in ein Interieur: Es verliert sich der Blick über der besonderen Gestaltung eines Wandschranks, man rätselt über die Maserung des Holzes, den Türknauf – und darüber, welches Spezifikum sich hinter diesem anonymen Design verbirgt. Oder eine Situation in einem Korridor: Eine geschlossene Wohnungstür, davor sorgfältig arrangierte Gegenstände, ein Klappstuhl, leere Blumentöpfe auf einem Wandregal – die alle aus dem Bild hinausweisen und in ihrem Aufbau auch an klassische Kompositionsprinzipien in der Malerei erinnern. Indessen bleibt unentschieden, ob sich hier ein gewisser Gestaltungswille manifestiert hat oder ganz im Gegenteil die Abwesenheit desselben, die das Setting einerseits banal erscheinen lässt, ihm aber auch einen ironischen Charme verleiht. Hier wird die Darstellung der menschlichen Spur zum unsichtbaren Faden, der uns mit dem kollektiven Gesellschaftskörper verbindet.

Bei aller Radikalität unterliegen David Muths ungeschönte Szenen indessen keinem sozialen Vorzeigegestus, sie bleiben uneindeutig. Vielmehr erklärt Muth das Bild zum Austragungsort der Diskrepanz von realer Lebenswelt und hypothetischem Psychogramm, mithin zu einem Spiel von Fiktion und Wirklichkeit, von konventionellem Darstellungsmodus und künstlerischem Ausdruck. So vermitteln alle Aufnahmen – analoge Großformatfotografien, die mit dem ursprünglichen „Abdruck“, der in diesem Medium seine Spuren hinterließ (Roland Barthes) geradezu paradigmatisch verbunden sind – den Eindruck außergewöhnlicher Aufgeräumtheit, als ob irgendetwas hätte vertuscht werden sollen. Es ist die Inkongruenz der Darstellung und ihrer Wirkung selbst, die hier zum Tragen kommt. Mit dem Titel Settings wird zudem der Konstruktionscharakter der Bilder betont: es wird das Arrangierte, Inszenierte der Szenen hervorgehoben – so dass auch auf der Textebene ein unbestimmtes Gefühl des Überaufgeräumten, des Manipulierten suggeriert wird.

„Im Lateinischen würde „Photographie“ wahrscheinlich heißen „imago lucis opera expressa“, das heißt: durch die Wirkung des Lichts enthülltes, „hervorgetretenes“, „aufgegangenes“, (wie der Saft einer Zitrone) „ausgedrücktes“ Bild.“ (Roland Barthes, Die helle Kammer)



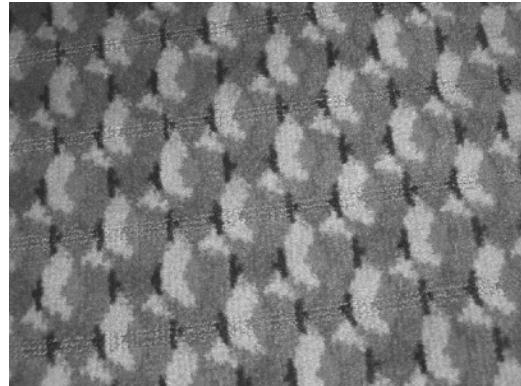
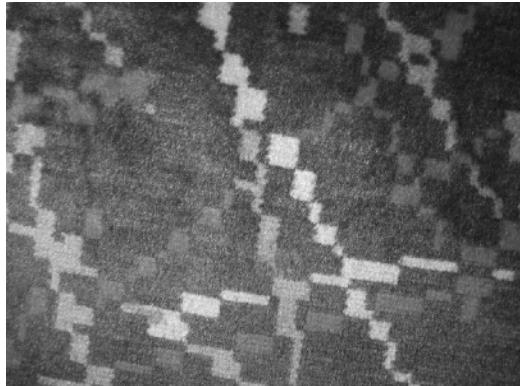
Settings, Installation View, Galleria Ratamo, Jyväskylä 2014 (solo)

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Museum of Modern Art Salzburg, Austria

PATTERNS

FINLAND/UK 2012 | HD VIDEO DIPTYCH | COLOUR | NO SOUND
UK 2008 | VIDEO "FIVE PATTERNS" | COLOUR | STEREO | 01'34"



courtesy of the artist and Edition Medienturm, Graz

SCREENINGS & EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 Breathing Presents: More is More, TEHDAS Teatteri, Manilla, Turku
- 2014 Raising the Odds, Kutomo, Turku (solo, as part of XS Festival)
- 2012 Preface, Photographic Gallery Hippolyte, Helsinki (solo)
- 2011 Viennafair (Edition Medienturm), Vienna
- 2010 Titanik Gallery, Turku
- 2009 On Escape Salzburg, Koje 38, Salzburg (curated by Amer Abbas)
- 2008 Multiplexed, E:vent, London

DISTRIBUTION (HD DIPTYCH)

AV-ARKKI, Helsinki, Finland

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

ZKM, Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, Germany

FIVE PATTERNS represented by Edition Medienturm, Graz, Austria

The term “Pattern” is little short of summing up a graphical and conceptual genre in new media - traditionally one might simply say swatch or ornament as well. In electronic arts the term describes a process driven by a structured formula, whereby a fluid matrix emerges through the repetitive assemblage of single elements, permanently rearranging itself by algorithmic means. This digital method applies mostly to the design of graphical elements, referencing classical abstract examples, or rather developing them further through the application of current technical possibilities.

David Muth breaks with this common practice, and he does so by working with this story in a pictorial and humorous fashion. Muth photographs patterns of industrially manufactured covers that adorn the seats of public transport and obviously don't promise any additional artistic value – to a greater degree their masking abstracted compositions seem to be precondition for diverse usage, resistant against contaminants. In close-ups Muth zooms into the encountered graphical structures and blends them with further patterns, as if he would like to invoke a discursive massacre. Applied arts meets fine arts, abstraction meets the real life.

„Patterns“ stehen fast schon für ein grafisches und konzeptionelles Genre innerhalb der neuen Medien, altdeutsch könnte man dazu einfach auch Muster oder Ornament sagen. „Patterns“ beschreiben in der elektronischen Kunst einen nach einem strukturierten Schema ablaufenden Prozess, der aus repetitiv auftretenden Einzelementen eine fluide Matrix entwickeln lässt, die sich immer wieder neu mittels algorithmischer Verfahren aus den Grundelementen aufbaut. Dabei werden zumeist grafische Elemente digital entworfen, die sich gerne an klassische abstrakte Vorbilder anlehnen bzw. diese mit aktuellen technischen Verfahren weiterentwickeln.

David Muth durchbricht nun diese gängige Praxis, indem er auf sehr eindrückliche und humorvolle Weise mit dieser Geschichte arbeitet. Muth fotografiert die Muster von industriell gefertigten Überzügen, die zur Behübschung der Sitzbänke von öffentlichen Verkehrsmitteln dienen und offensichtlich keinen künstlerischen Mehrwert versprechen, sondern deren maskierende abstrahierte Gestaltung vielmehr Voraussetzung für eine breite verunreinigungsresistente Benutzung zu sein scheint. In Detailaufnahmen zoomt sich Muth an vorgefundene grafische Strukturen und überblendet diese mit weiteren Überzugsmotiven, als wollte er zu einem diskursiven Gemetzel aufrufen. Angewandte trifft auf bildende Kunst, Abstraktion auf das wahre Leben.

CHRISTMAS PIECE

FINLAND/UK 2011 | HD VIDEO | COLOUR | STEREO | 03'58"



SCREENINGS & EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 Golden Clouds & Pitch Black, Blickle Kino, Belvedere 21, Vienna
- 2017 Reverse Engineering, Studio Mustanapa, Artists' Association of Lapland, Rovaniemi (solo)
- 2016 Arctic Design Week, Rovaniemi (programmed by the Finnish State Art Commission)
Reverse Engineering, Galleria 3H+K, Pori (solo)
- 2015 City of Light Festival, Jyväskylä (programmed by the Finnish State Art Commission)
- 2014 Preface, Galleria Ratamo, The Centre for Creative Photography, Jyväskylä (solo)
Supermarket, Kulturhuset, Stockholm (presented by MUU Gallery)
- 2013 UUSI MUU, MUU Galleria, Helsinki
WRO Media Art Biennale, Wroclaw
- 2012 Preface, Photographic Gallery Hippolyte (solo)
Settings, Photographic Centre Peri, Turku (solo)
Settings, Galleria Rajatila, Tampere (solo)
- 2011 dieschönstadt, Halle (curated by Katrin Hanusch)
Summer Camp, Exile, Berlin (curated by Christian Siekmeier & Robin John Berwing)
Christmas Piece, Kutomo, Turku (solo)



Keywords:

Acceleration. Christmas. Combustion Engine. Consumerism. Globalisation. Religion. Rotation. Tradition. Transformation. Tree.

The video "Christmas Piece" shows a tree being rotated rapidly by the force of a combustion engine. The machinery is being operated by Pentti Aaltonen and Markku Österman, the two mechanics responsible for engineering it. The concept of the piece has been developed in early 2010 during a residency at Galleria Titanik, Turku.

Production Credits

Concept & Realisation: David Muth, **Mechanical Engineering:** Pentti Aaltonen, Markku Österman, **Special Thanks:** Elina Ovaska, Jari Kallio, Tuire Ovaska, Kimmo Modig, Heidi Lind, Marit Leehtola, Jouna Karsi, Hanna Seppänen, Jaakko Aaltonen, Jaska Wigren & James Auger

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DELIRIOUS DEBT CRISIS: DAVID MUTH'S CHRISTMAS PIECE

A traditional paradigm of economics lies in viewing the forces of capitalism as the laws of nature: be it the "invisible hand", be it the centrifugal and centripetal forces of the market which regulate the production and circulation of goods according to Newton's laws of inertia and centrifugal force. Laws of nature appear to be deliria, states of externalisation, either to be taken into account or to be ruled out. That's never quite sure. The inhabitants of Finland are known for their elevated risk of suicide, stoic tranquility, dry sense of humour, and their own interpretation of tango. They are also fans of pointless enterprises and absurd competitions. But what is absurd in times like this anyway?

Using a fixed camera view, David Muth films a man who tampers with a strange installation between a garage and a red van in the deep snow of Finland. An engine that should propel a conifer requires his full attention. But it is still warming up, humming a little, whilst the tree appears to start movement by trembling slightly. Then another man joins in: the machine is tinkered with and hammered on, the drive belt is being helped manually, and finally the tree begins to turn. The men are watching, laughing, and gesticulating towards the camera and off stage. The tree is spinning faster and faster. The engine starts smoking. An attempt is made to save the process, but the tree itself lost balance through the rotation and seems to tilt at any moment. Or to fly. That's it. One is fanning the smoke away, the other one switches off.

"Beneath all ratio lies delirium, divergence", Deleuze and Guattari remark on capitalism, and that "the rational is always the rationality of the irrational". They argue for the liberalisation of desire; for a desire that does not follow a capitalist social order. Since it carries the foundations of the repressive order of power already inscribed on itself, even in the moments of a utopia. "The capital has no exteriority, no other", Lyotard writes in his reflections on Deleuze's and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus. In this sense, Christmas Piece is not a pure allegory on turbo-capitalism and competition creating increasingly shorter cycles of commodity production and consumption. For the apparatus surrounding the rotating Christmas tree doesn't function as optimisation machine of the productive forces, and the absurdity of the endeavour, as well as the ambiguity of the whole installation are more like sand in the gears of the circulation. The rational of the irrational becomes clear in these efforts of two engineers to win the competition for the fastest rotating Christmas tree. Or is even the cancellation of inertia held out in prospect through the rotation? A catapult that doesn't deliver a flying tree accurately and on time, but that attacks it? For now the Finnish experiment appears to have failed, but the desire remains.

DELIRIOUS DEBT CRISIS: DAVID MUTH'S CHRISTMAS PIECE

Ein traditionelles Paradigma der Ökonomie besteht darin, die Kräfte des Kapitalismus als Naturgesetze zu betrachten: sei es die „Invisible Hand“, seien es die Zentrifugal- und Zentripetalkräfte des Marktes, die nach den Newtonschen Gesetzen von Trägheit und Fliehkraft die Warenproduktion und -zirkulation regulieren. Naturgesetze scheinen Delirien, Zustände der Entäußerung, entweder einzuplanen oder auszuschließen. So sicher ist das nie. Die Bewohner Finnlands sind berühmt für ihre Suizidgefährdung, stoische Ruhe, trockenen Humor und ihre eigene Interpretation von Tango. Sie sind ebenso Fans von sinnlosen Unterfangen und absurdnen Wettbewerben. Doch was ist schon absurd in Zeiten wie diesen?

Mit fixer Kameraeinstellung filmt David Muth in im tief verschneiten Finnland einen Mann, der sich zwischen Garage und rotem Lieferwagen an einer seltsamen Installation zu schaffen macht. Ein Motor, der ein Nadelbäumchen antreiben soll, verlangt seine ganze Aufmerksamkeit. Doch der ist noch in der Aufwärmphase, brummt ein wenig, während das Bäumchen leicht zitternd zur Bewegung anzusetzen scheint. Dann tritt ein zweiter Mann hinzu: es wird an der Maschine gehämmert und geschraubt, dem Antriebsband manuell nachgeholfen, und schließlich beginnt sich der Baum zu drehen. Die Männer schauen, lachen, und gestikulieren in die Kamera und ins Off. Der Baum dreht sich schneller und schneller. Der Motor beginnt zu rauchen. Ein Versuch wird gemacht, den Vorgang zu retten, aber der Baum selbst ist durch die Rotation aus dem Gleichgewicht geraten und scheint jeden Moment zu kippen. Oder zu fliegen. Das wars. Einer fächelt den Rauch beiseite, der andere schaltet ab.

„Unter aller Ratio liegt Delirium, Abweichung“, meinen Deleuze und Guattari zum Kapitalismus, und dass „das Rationale immer die Vernunft des Irrationalen ist“. Sie argumentieren für die Liberalisierung des Begehrns; für ein Begehrn, das nicht einer kapitalistischen Gesellschaftsordnung folgt. Da diese selbst in den Momenten einer Utopie die Fundamente der repressiven Machtordnung bereits in sich eingeschrieben trägt. „Das Kapital hat keine Exteriorität, kein Anderes“, schreibt Lyotard in seinen Betrachtungen zu Deleuzes und Guattaris Anti-Oedipus. In diesem Sinne ist Christmas Piece keine reine Allegorie auf Turbokapitalismus, und Wettbewerb, der immer kürzere Zyklen von Warenproduktion und –konsumtion kreiert. Denn die Apparatur rund um den rotierenden Christbaum funktioniert nicht als Optimierungsmaschine der Produktivkräfte, und die Absurdität des Unterfangens, ebenso wie die Ambiguität der ganzen Installation sind eher Sand im Getriebe der Zirkulation. Das Rationale des Irrationalen wird in diesen Bemühungen zweier Ingenieure deutlich, den Wettbewerb um den am schnellsten rotierenden Weihnachtsbaum zu gewinnen. Oder wird gar die Aufhebung der Trägheit durch die Rotation in Aussicht gestellt? Ein Katapult, das einen fliegenden Baum eben nicht punktgenau und pünktlich liefert, sondern attackiert? Das finnische Experiment scheint vorerst gescheitert, doch das Begehrn, das bleibt.



“In societies dominated by modern conditions of production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles”

Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 1967

“With e-commerce the need to be ready for Christmas early is even more imperative as competition is from further afield and 24-7.”

Source: Get Your Website Ready for Xmas [<http://www.polr.co.uk/>]



Christmas Piece, Installation View, Galleria Ratamo, Jyväskylä 2014 (solo)

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Finnish State Art Commission