KIT

RAW

With *Ulrike Kazmaier, Dylan Maquet, Sabrina Podemski,*
Johannes Raimann, Moritz Riesenbeck

17.6.–24.9.2023

Raw means rough, crude, unrefined – and RAW images are unprocessed and unedited, a matter that has yet to be formed into an image. A RAW photo has – in a figurative sense – the quality of an analogue film roll lying in developer fluid in the darkroom. In this exhibition, the developers are five artists who approach raw data in different ways. **Ulrike Kazmaier, Dylan Maquet, Sabrina Podemski, Johannes Raimann and Moritz Riesenbeck** distanced themselves from classical image processing long ago and now use photographic equipment, technique and recordings as a source of inspiration for their artistic works, as sketches or negatives for new forms.

This happens in a direct, photographic way when we, for instance, open a curtain and a camera flash blinds our eye which then in turn produces its own image. Or it might occur indirectly when a photographic image feeds into an installation as a mere memory and we recreate the image through a feeling within us. It may happen when sculptural works with subtle allusions to their digital origins resist any clear classification or when we encounter our reflection in a round lithium disc that refers to the invisible precision mechanics hidden in a camera. And it's there when we face images in the exhibition space, leaning against its walls, wallpapered onto them, poetically obscured as though observed through a filter, or zoomed into as if on one of our displays and screens.

This exhibition, named RAW by the artists, engages our eyes, our mind and sometimes even our whole body, just like images do today on our digital devices, home that they are to our many photo albums and media libraries. Perhaps at KIT we will find an answer to the question of how we see, what we see, and whether we ourselves develop the images we encounter everywhere.

Right away as we enter the exhibition, we are confronted with a fundamental subject of photographic work: Focus. In his video *Scharfzeichner* (1) *("Sharpener" 2023, 7 min., loop, cinematographer: Enya Burger)*, **Johannes Raimann** tackles it in a manner that is almost playful. Using tracking shots of spreadsheets, telephone book entries and razor blades with so-called ant lines , he points to the relationship between photographic technology and human perception. The eye is challenged as eye test images and the grids of "Battleship" templates approach as if on a conveyor belt, only to disappear again. This is backed by a sound composition by Florian Siebenhaar, evoking a 21st century factory-floor atmosphere.

Johannes Raimann's works are not always strongly related to classic photographic images, yet the work *digital_camera*[1] (17), mounted in the corner, has us instantly thinking of a photographer's work. A devise and its purpose are presented like a picture, like a highly enlarged sectional drawing from a textbook. It vividly illustrates how a state-of-the-art digital system camera works. Almost intuitively, also through its various materials, it makes us comprehend how the photograph that ends up on our screens or on aprint comes into being. The elements of the lens are made from glass, the diaphragm from titanium and the diodes were produced on silicon wafers with an oxide layer.

Scattered across the room we see other works by the artist: It becomes apparent that we can find ourselves somewhat reflected in most of them. And thus we are stood in front of *Die Photographie ist eine metallische Kunst oder im Schweiße meines Angesichts* (2) *(„Photography is a metallic art or by the sweat of my face"),* looking at an almost square image created from forged steel which is silver-plated in some places and oxidising in others. Here, Raimann alludes to the origins of photography in the 19ᵗʰ century when metallic or glass plates were coated with a photosensitive layer of silver. The steel plate will eventually turn black as a result of contact with environmental influences (especially light) and finally become the mysterious Black Square of photographic history.

The *Bayer_Sensor* (15) with its greenish shimmer is also a mirror of the viewer. The four-part work looks as if it had been pixelated in green and red, alluding to the two essential filters in digital photography. Composed of 60 to 100 individual photographs, the images in Raimann's *Sensor_03* (4) series depict highly magnified photo sensors printed on glass, whose image-generating character now becomes the image itself. The staggered structure hints at the delicate sensor architecture which accommodates a complex structure of microlenses, colour filters, silicon carriers and circuits at a mere heigh of approximately 1 μm, i.e. 0.001 mm. Silicon is indispensable for optical sensors. The artist dedicates a series of works, *Kessler Syndrome* (7, 8, 9) to the chemical element. He carved ancient star charts into silicon discs but placed references to satellites and space debris where stars should be.

In the corridor, **Dylan Maquet's** *Tired Paintings* (5, 12) rest against the walls and seem to try to obstruct the way into the exhibition space by means of sheer size. The curved shape of their steel frames is somewhat reminiscent of exhausted and bent human bodies. A transparent fabric is strung on these frames, a skin on which here and there suggestive figures and objects are visible. The artist takes snapshots of people, situations, and spaces with his smartphone – often in a private, everyday environment – and collects these emotional moments in a Cloud like a digital sketchbook. The frame and canvas of his work indicate his interest in painting. For his *Tired Paintings*, his attention was drawn to the subject as well as the objects and materials needed to create pictorial atmospheres. The mere fact that the people in his works can only be fleetingly glimpsed at is underlined by the translucency of the medium of the image: The fabric acts as a screen, simultaneously generating and devouring light.

Darkness and brightness, negative and positive are joined together to reveal the hazy space in between. Dylan Maquet has worked on the *Tired Paintings* as a series for the past two years. Over time, he has modified the size and printing process, and the oldest works are already showing traces of the aging process. The artists consciously embraces these very traces; they reinforce the contrast between the poetically pictorial motifs and their heavy metal framing.

At the end of the tunnel, Dylan Maquet has installed another work that stands in glaring contrast to the gentle *Tired Paintings*: *Sometimes I Close My Eyes and I See You* (19) toys with a feeling of startlement, a moment of confusion and intrusion into deeper layers of our consciousness. As we step through the black curtain, we enter a small room in which we are blinded by the flash of a stroboscope firing periodic beams of light at us. Our retina unexpectedly becomes a screen on which, for one brief moment, an image appears. After it has faded away, it still remains in our memory. We have perceived it; this moment, this experience is ours. The artist who has created it for us takes a step back and withdraws.

Three self-supporting prisms, covered in prints and resembling angular advertising columns, are the image carriers for the work *Vertigo²* (10) by **Sabrina Podemski.** Here, we are not looking at a plain surface but are rather able to circle the installations as if in a sculpture garden, and can thus see each fragment of the picture from a different perspective. On these walls, the artist explores dimensions of the screenshot from a painterly and scenographic design perspective. In doing so, she pushes the boundaries of the image as a material object on the one hand and as a mere effigy on the other. To capture a screen means to save a snapshot of our smartphone or tablet screen. The screenshot is always a photo of a user interface, which can be regarded as an image. Ephemeral digital image information that is supposed to vanish after a limited period of time can be retained. Any visual information is torn out of its original context by this screenshot, just as we can tear pictures from a newspaper. What happens to the screenshots? We collect them in the cluttered and overflowing archives of our digital photo galleries, where the screenshot as the "avenging angel of traditional photography"³ hopes for an eternal life. This hope can be fulfilled by sending out image files as it multiplies the content immeasurably, or it may be disappointed when data is lost on its way through the World Wide Web, which happens frequently.

For *Vertigo*, Sabrina Podemski combines material from her image archive which comprises newspaper cuttings, paper collages, sketches, analogue as well as digital photos and scans. Assembled into collages on her desktop, she has taken screenshots and transformed them into a photo wallpaper. In the photographic sense, this makes the works part analogue, part digital. Architecture and images merge with one another, creating seemingly sacral niches that rupture the otherwise two-dimensional surfaces. Here we discover small sculptures made of different materials such as ceramics. It appears as though the plastics and the cut-outs are in constant motion, almost as if it was us who constantly changed them on our smartphones by scrolling, swiping, enlarging and reducing them. By making us face the oversized screenshot collages, Sabrina Podemski challenges us to re-experience our screen behaviour and to consider the question of how we interact with devices and their content and perceive surfaces as well as illusionistic depth. Responding to Sabrina Podemski's body of work, Leonie Pfennig quite rightly asks, "What is an image anyway, and what possibilities does it have of leaving the image carrier behind?" It is up to us to continue the path of these images by taking pictures of them, posting them to social media, sending them to friends or saving them to our phones.

In the corridor, in three lightboxes with the title *Touch it* (3), we can see **Ulrike Kazmaier**'s digitally painted hands: They follow the gesture of touch as

² *The title "Vertigo" refers to the eponymous goddess of deception, the little-known sister of Aletheia, the Greek goddess of truth.*

³ *Frosh, Paul: Screenshots, Berlin: Wagenbach 2019, p.25.*

well as wiping, acting as a fleeting tool that in turn generates a pictorial quality. The surface, which oscillates when you photograph the screen, has a transparent, magical look due to a light shining through it from behind. Is Ulrike Kazmaier playing with our collective visual memory and conjuring up Claude Monet's impressionist images of water lilies?

Another famous work of art is the foundation of her work *CMYK (Alle Farben)* (6): She scanned an Albrecht Dürer print from a book and selected a specific detail. The final foil print no longer shows any trace of the Dürer original, but focuses on hidden visual information that only becomes visible through the transition from analogue to digital and back to analogue: The structure of the paper, dots, pieces of lint, dirt and fibres: "The trivial becomes the artwork" (Ulrike Kazmaier)

The trivial, the elusive moments – from these, Kazmaier created *Possibly Maybe (Ultramarin)* (13): The constellation of wall objects is evocative of glitches, or moments of interference in the digital image. By using plaster, the artist makes the superficial texture of the artificial fur stand out. Blue paint has been applied on top of it like a fixative and makes grains of dried plaster clearly visible. Like in a zoomed in photo, certain spots are revealed that cannot be classified, that make no "sense". The artist has made this new level of meaning tangible for us by creating a 3D-relief of digital image noise.

The work *Vom Suchen und Finden* (14) *("Of Searching and Finding")* also presents a digital process on an analogue, tangible scale. When editing photos in Photoshop, individual aspects of image files can be focused on and enlarged by means of a kind of cross hairs. The four finder lines can be experienced in KIT as independent spatial elements poured from concrete. They guide our gaze into the void, into the very floor of KIT.

Let us then direct our attention to Kazmaier's *Punching ball (cosmic mix)* (16): The artist playfully translates her digital observations into the analogue structure of a sculpture. The work stems from strongly enlarged scans of the inside of a hard disk; the chromatic scale of coloured hard disks can be seen on the plinth. In the paper drawings of the ongoing series *Portraits (Come In All Shapes And Sizes)* (11), Kazmaier returns to the hands: In this work, the hand deforms clay in search of a grid structure and becomes a sensual and tactile device which inscribes itself in the work like a signature.

In the back of KIT, **Moritz Riesenbeck** has created a room within a room. The built-in wardrobe, which is evidently a valuable custom-made piece from the 1970s with a hidden fold-out bed, was taken from a household clearance in the Rhineland – it conveys a vague sense of transience. Who lived here, where is this person now, what was the reason for leaving their abode? Moritz Riesenbeck poses these questions and explores how people's lives can be archived beyond photographic documentation. After all, photography can never fully capture that which took place in certain spaces or what it is that constitutes fate. In the first part of his work *Auflösung* (18) *("Dissolution" or "Clearance")* in 2021, Moritz Riesenbeck had already examined the living space and estate of an elderly woman and probed archiving for its limits. In the current work *Auflösung II*, he expands his research into the deconstruction of memory by addressing the subject of dementia. We as the visitors can participate in this process. On the shelves of the walk-in cabinet, for instance, we can find various materials that were commissioned by the artist and that we are allowed to use: For example, the publication *Schwerkraft* *("Gravity")* by Hendrik Otremba, written for this exhibition. The eleven-page short story revolves around a person describing snatches from

their lives. While reading (or listening: the story is also presented as a radio drama), it becomes apparent that the lyrical narrator skips between the times of day and seasons of the year until finally the question emerges whether they might have dementia. However, this is not resolved. Also included is an interview with neurologist Dr Magali Keil, who works with people suffering from dementia and has a mother with the illness herself. We can also find a floor plan of the flat from *Auflösung I*. Within the open structure of the installation there is yet more to discover, encouraging us to enter into a state of mind in which we might want to imagine the missing inhabitants of this place. With *Auflösung II*, the former architecture student Moritz Riesenbeck lends shape to the profound meaning that memories of abandoned rooms and houses can hold. There is no way of knowing whether the memories presented here are wrong or right, just as we do not know whether and to what extent we can trust our own.

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Translated by Nantje Wilke