

Riotous Silence  
Sebastian Speckmann  
23–25 June 2017

Zwischenwelten  
Sebastian Speckmanns Bilderkosmos

Drawings, linocuts, woodcuts, computer printouts, collages and installations are Sebastian Speckmann's favorite artistic media. They draw the viewer into a dark, contradictory world. A cosmos evolved, in the terms "space" and "unknowable," in which one familiarizes oneself with reality, interlinking experiences and memories and relating them to actual reality.

Speckmann draws, cuts and prints. In his linocuts and woodcuts, Speckmann cuts his compositions into the plate. The bright lines or dots are cut away or stung, the colored surfaces arise from the elevated parts of the printing plate. The panels are often decorated in dark shades. The artist sets the composition with his cuts and stitches. Out of the darkness he brings out the pictures. The delicate stripes and lines bring brightness and light into the dark, rich colors.

The artist works with simple and classical means - pen and paper, knives and linoleum or wooden plate - as well as simple forms - strokes, lines and dots. In this way he approaches the complex reality. He finds his pictures both in the private photo archive as well as in books, magazines and photo books, which he discovers by chance in antique shops and at flea markets. They are photographs or graphics of familiar landscapes - mountains as well as lakes - abandoned industrial landscapes, architectural ensembles or interiors. These often very colorful pictures are processed by Sebastian Speckmann and transformed by his view into new, almost monochrome, dark pictures.

This is how they are transformed and interpreted in his artistic imagery. Speckmann's pictures are not influenced by Tristesse. They have a certain poetry and a magic of their own. Well-known scenes get - as in a dream - a surreal, simultaneously seductive and uncanny notation as well as an atmosphere that the viewer can hardly escape. Like in a film by Stanley Kubrick or David Lynch, one looks for the hidden images behind the images and moves on with his eyes, as if following a suction, cautiously.

In addition to the finding of the image, the second and final step is followed by the artist setting the image in space. In some works several images are mounted in one frame. The artist always hangs or repositions his works in a room, there is no obligatory order. Rather, the work should develop their own temporary syntax. The images as well as the memories and experiences expressed in them are placed in a new space in a new network of relationships.

In his works, Speckmann revolves around the eternal and central question in art:

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What is a picture? When does a work become a picture or an image?

What meaning do pictures have? What do reproducibility and temporary installation mean for the content, meaning, value and consistency of the image?

How are the images found and their contents altered by Speckmann's interventions in size, shape and color and composition? Questions that the artist continually asks and answers in his works.

Sebastian Speckmann also uses scanners and printers for his work. He scans his own or found pictures. Then he enlarges or reduces these scans many times over, prints them out and sticks these prints - like a wallpaper - onto the wall or even a self-made advertising pillar in the room, which the viewer can avoid. The images seem familiar, yet at the same time irritating, because objects and motifs are on an unusual scale, sometimes large, sometimes small.

The images can now become the new image carrier for their own images or they are integrated into the hanging large area and get the status of an independent image and a new composition. Speckmann's arrangements, collages and new compositions are linked to time and space. This opens up a new world in which there is a narrative logic of its own, which eludes unambiguity or remains insoluble and remains open to new additions and new ways of reading.

Often, the artist combines prints with a temporary wall painting and puts in a time that is in search of the permanent image archive, pointed the question of the value and life of images.

In another group of works, the artist intervenes even more consistently in the already existing world of images. He works on found photographs or heliogravures by scraping on the surface, scratching and erasing the paint. Then he puts new paint - pigments - on the sheet. Speckmann strikes something off the picture, takes away color and forms and adds new layers of paint. He treats the work found, the finished sheet, like a printing plate.

The original character of the page remains preserved, white border and caption remain untouched. Speckmann intervenes in the image composition, but not in the outer frame. Hybrid, new, very painterly works emerge; extended drawings or overdrawings. Works that, in their complexity, both aesthetically and intellectually, guide the viewer into Sebastian Speckmann's pictorial worlds, his pictorial cosmos.

Jeannette Stoschek