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Stephan Reusse – Artistic Processes: The Opening-up of Art

Therefore do men commit their lives to a small piece of wood, and passing the rough sea in a weak vessel are saved.

The Wisdom of Solomon: 14,5

Life is a movie; death is a photograph.

Susan Sontag

Only when we are ready will we do something OR We'll only do something when we are ready.

Peter Brook

I do not want to think. I think that I do not want to think.

I should not think that I do not want to think.

Because that too is a thought.

Jean-Paul Sartre

In the 1970s, photography was in a state of ferment and by no means could be conclusively situated in field of art. It wasn't until the 1980s that its artistic potential could be properly acknowledged, despite the fact that photographers such as Eadweard Muybridge and Karl Blossfeldt had long since demonstrated the scope of the scientifically filtered viewpoint, Alexander Rodschenko the independence of formalisations and perspectives, and Walker Evans the compositional dignity of social observation, all of whom duly influencing artistic perception across the board.

When Stephan Reusse (b. 1954) studied analogue photography towards the end of the 1970s at the Folkwangschule in Essen and began to grapple with its documentary potential during a course on photojournalism, there was no self-evident connection at

the time between photography and artistic, pictorial or narrative forms. Nevertheless, salient examples deserving of mention here include the 1974 *Transformer* exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Luzern, in which Urs Lüthi formulated an artistic statement in favour of the photographic image as a communication medium in the act of self-staging, Katharina Sieverding's presentation of large-format black and white photographs which gave the Düsseldorf art scene plenty to think about, as well as Jürgen Klauke's invention of a highly distinctive form for the artistic potential inherent within the experimental relationship between photography and performance with his "Formalisierung der Langeweile" (Formalisation of Boredom) in 1980–81.

Reusse studied at the Art Academy in Kassel from 1980 until 1986. Harry Kramer invited him to join his class, which accommodated students from a variety of disciplines – performing artists, musicians and dancers who were looking for scope for artistic development in the field of actions, performances and photography. During this period, Reusse began working on the concept of making photographs disappear only to bring them to the fore once more in paint. As a result, life-size animal photographs (giraffes, elephants, etc.) and the *Safari Deutschland* sequence came into being – performance-like self-stagings in the sense of "cinematic photography". Reusse also commenced his group of works featuring artist portraits during this period, which was dependent upon the artistic collaboration of the photographed subjects in the developing process at this time (*Collaborations I*, 1982–1989), continuing the series intermittently up until 2003 (*Collaborations II*) and ushering in a series of changes over time, both qualitatively and in terms of perspective. From 1984 until 1986, he developed a series of plant paintings within the framework of *Organic Systems I* – the so-called *Sumpfb Blüten/Pissflowers* (Portuguese: flores do paul) – which used urine and the technique of repainting the bleached-out photographic

image, a process he would subsequently revive a decade later (1996). During the 1980s, the order of the day was to create unique works of art, which could measure up to the issue of reproducibility, or which tried to capture photography in terms of painterly gestures or transform it into art within a performance. Artistic filters were called for here that would detract from the photographic processes at work.

Reusse's art has also been influenced by his two-year long working holiday cum study trip to California/USA (1988–89) – twelve months of which was courtesy of a DAAD stipend. While in the USA, he came into direct contact with the California Institute of Arts (CalArts in LA) with its socially-critical approach, methodology and ethos; he embarked upon his so-called “big trip” across America and encountered artists such as John Baldessari, Nancy Spero, Leon Golub, Mike Kelley, Tony Oursler and Jeff Koons. Reusse returned to California in 1999 for another year to teach at the California State University, Long Beach, LA, where he gave lectures on his artistic experiences with photography and media-reflexive scope for activity. He lectured at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne from 2000 until 2006.

Stephan Reusse – Artistic Processes: The Opening-up of Art is a discussion of the development of Stephan Reusse's oeuvre from 1983 to the present day. It illustrates the connections and relationships between the various groups of works and their concomitant artistic processes and strategies that have the ability to open up art in various ways. The number of references to other artists within his work is legion, whereby Harry Kramer – his tutor at the Art Academy in Kassel – plays a particularly important role; Joseph Beuys and Paul Thek have also enjoyed particular attention from Reusse on account of their respective attitudes, inasmuch as their artistic thinking is also focused upon man/mankind. Experiment, performance, so-called

“apparative realities” (Stephan Reusse, henceforward S. R.(1)), photography in terms of its linking of form and content as well as a possible switching with abstract painting, imaginary “light sculptures” (S. R.), drawings using light of his “neon works”, media-reflexive responsiveness as well as the direct approach to and work on authentic, inexhaustible images – all of this can be woven into a composite artistic fabric that Reusse, also at odds with his own thinking here, repeatedly questions and, as demonstrated by his most recent laser installations, constantly intensifies within the extensive palette of his abstract possibilities.

I have had the privilege of experiencing the development of Stephan Reusse’s artistic oeuvre since 1994. I have written many different essays about his work during this period. This particular text came about as a result of Reusse’s personal invitation. I should like to thank him most warmly for his attentiveness, generosity and willingness to discuss his work.

Blindness – Artistic Process – Joseph Beuys

Between 1982 and 1986, whilst still studying at the Art Academy in Kassel, Reusse staged different performances in Kassel, Göttingen, Kleinsassen, Rosdorf, Frankfurt, Paris, Porto and Lisbon, which he called “crypto-actions”. Within this overall framework, he made photographic images disappear which he then reactivated through painting. The word cryptic describes processes/things that take place or exist in secret; they are endowed with a specific sense of mystery and, as a result, are difficult to comprehend, that is to say, they are imbued with obscurity. At the time,

Reusse saw himself as the creator of cryptic images, which were disquieting in their very ambivalence.

Harry Kramer, under whom Reusse had studied, wrote an essay in 1986 about these “crypto-actions”. He takes Plato’s cave allegory as a starting point for his reflections upon the ability of photographic images to penetrate reality and discover secret levels of communication that call the visibility of reality into question. In Plato’s cave allegory, a connection is made between the deceptive shadow-reality of objects to the non-figurative reality of ideas, which can only be experienced within the framework of a resistant and painful liberation from false images. Swimming against the tide of the masses, the individual moves out of darkness towards the light to exit the world of obscurity and enter the world of clarity. Reusse uses this idealistic figure of thought as a gateway into the world of other modes of perception by initially alluding to the way the blind perceive reality. Although the visible world is inaccessible to the blind, they are nevertheless able to cultivate other forms of perception, for example hearing or the sense of one’s physical body (somatognosis), which can in turn be associated with an intensified perception of the world.

Reusse photographed photographs of blind people originally taken the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Using silver halide, he proceeded to make them disappear again, only to reactivate them larger than life as part of an action using a paintbrush and silver nitrate on a large piece of photographic paper. In so doing, he was motivated by the idea, as he pointed out, “of confronting one’s image blind”. He considered these paintings of the blind to be a coded statement about political ideas concerning the way people deal with other people who have to live with an organically engendered state of otherness. A person who is caught up in the illusion of normality finds it difficult to deal with this otherness, a fact which Reusse

provocatively questions with regard to the discriminatory treatment of physically disadvantaged people, whereby his understanding of the subject even goes as far as structures of fascism, its inherent contempt for humanity and even euthanasia.

Harry Kramer commented upon Reusse's methodology as follows: "The concept of 'crypto-photography' he developed has to be filed generically between photography and painting; that is to say, at that point where it presents itself as an action and leaves a palpable, legible product behind."⁽²⁾ Drips and splashes, which allow the gestural reconstitution of the image in paint to congeal into a recognisable form, focus thematically upon painting's process-based quality and demonstrate that it is indeed possible to reactivate a latent photographic image through painting. According to Kramer, Reusse fades out the social quality or characteristic of photography, for the blind are unable to observe their own image: "The image of an image becomes the dual metaphor of a blind portrait and a condition."⁽³⁾

In his brand of "crypto-photography", Reusse communicates his lack of interest in visible light as a possible parameter of photography. Instead, he is intent on finding other pathways of perception and thereby his own artistic parameters. Blindness becomes a cipher for a necessary artistic process of discovery. Reusse deployed the same process in his artist portraits group of works, which he began in 1982: the individual artists featured in these staged portraits duly received their photographs, which Reusse had caused to disappear beforehand, so that they could themselves reactivate the latent images once more, thus transforming the blank, white expression of the invisible, i.e. blindness, into the visible counterpart of their image. An early portrait piece comprising reactivations of a portrait of Joseph Beuys fixed in subsequent phases of development (1985, two parts, urine on silver halide, 150 x 118 cm) is informed by the thematic treatment of blindness in the actual developing

process, that is to say, where the form and content of the artistic effect and photographic image mutually evoke one another. A schematic image of his face looms through a layer of fat from out of a distressed white surface held in low contrast, aptly reflecting Beuys's artistic understanding of materials and processes. It is reminiscent of a skiagraphic imaging process used by Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877) in which light and shade in the photograph have been inverted. The whiteness of the image represents blindness, whereby the question of whether it is a negative or a positive, remains open. Another Joseph Beuys portrait merely shows only the artist's hat as a kind of trademark, whereas his face is concealed schematically in the whiteness of the photographic paper itself. Joseph Beuys provided his own urine for the fragmentary developing of his portrait. Reusse's reactivation of photographed images using urine, as was the case with his group of works *Sumpfbliuten/ Pissflowers* dating from 1983, belongs to the group of artworks, which – like Andy Warhol's *Oxidation Paintings* (1977), following in the footsteps Marcel Duchamp's urinal (*Fountain*, 1917) – incorporate urine as a valid material in the artistic process. As a bodily fluid and from an organic/biological perspective, urine is a by-product of the process of purifying the blood, but it can also be associated with nausea and disgust and/or carry a sexual connotation, not to mention its use in therapeutic procedures or processes. From a cultural-historical point of view, urine was used diversely as a chemical cleaning agent, in tanning and dying processes, in pottery and the production of porcelain. In conjunction with Lu Gwei-Djen and drawing upon Taoism, the Sinologist and biochemist Joseph Needham published his research findings in 1968 into the use of urine in a therapeutic context. According to this discipline, which alongside meditation, diet, alchemy and gymnastics, also recommended sexual practices for the prolonging of life and the immortalisation of the body, urine was

considered a means to promote virility – enriched with male and female sexual hormones – was dispensed both in its natural and disinfected form.(4)

Even on the periphery of Joseph Beuys's philosophy, alchemy reveals itself to be a highly allusive thematic field. Reusse's approach to and convergence with Joseph Beuys was so intensive, not least because he was deeply interested in transformational potential of alchemy. In Beuys, he saw an artist who – very much in the sense of a humanistic translation of alchemy – explored corresponding questions in his work, such as the relationship between body and mind against the background religious experience (*lapis-Christ* parallel). Like Beuys, Reusse is also convinced of the necessity to advance the artistic process, to intensify it wherever possible and thereby to open up new pathways.

The history of alchemy as a process and the production of porcelain coincide in the blending of gold and porcelain – so-called white gold. The artistic crossover here lies in the use of urine as bodily fluid, which functions as an additional catalyst in the transformation and refinement of the material. The Chinese were already capable of generating temperatures of 1200°–1350° in their kilns as early as the sixth-century BC. Whereas white porcelain had been produced in China during the sixth- and seventh-centuries AD and eggshell porcelain following in 1600, it wasn't until the beginning of the eighteenth century that porcelain was reinvented in Europe. In the early 1960s, Armin Weiss succeeded in recreating the production of Chinese eggshell porcelain in one decisive particular. He was able to prove that putrescent urine had been used in order to render the raw material, kaolin or china clay, more malleable and translucent.(5)

Reusse's research into the process in which vanished photographic images reappear also includes several attempts to make his photographic portraits last longer by means

of a ceramic processing; photographs developed chemically tend to last for a maximum of fifty years before they begin to disintegrate. Reusse would have liked to have been able to enlarge his photographic plates in order to capture the photographed individuals life-size. However, kilns capable of firing such large ceramic surfaces at the requisite temperature of 1300° do not exist. In addition, the best way to present ceramic plates is to set them into the floor of an interior space. As is the case with Reusse's carpets, incorporating the artist portraits into the floor raises the question as to whether the viewer should walk on them or whether he should walk around them.

The *Sumpfb Blüten/Pissflowers* (carnations, calla lilies) which emerge in the process of reactivating the latent photographic image, not as erect plants in their full bloom, but rather in a broken aesthetic, already prefigure their dissolution and disappearance in the very moment of their the fragmentary appearance. They manifestly concede their delicate nature and vulnerability, which denies them the possibility of presenting a powerful, eternal, i.e. a "beautiful" motif; instead, they represent in their own broken pictoriality, the ephemeral nature/vanitas of all life and beauty. Reusse captures the flowers in this intermediate state between becoming and decay and grants the viewer, by means of their enlargement, a close-up of the abstract traces of the reconstitution process, which are indivisible from the photographed motif and which dissolve its very figurativeness, translating into an artistic reality. The viewer is able to follow these traces with his eye and move fluidly between the numerous pictures on the cusp of figuration and non-figuration, ultimately wandering through the process-based topography of the painting and then, stepping back, recognise an overall view of a "Sumpfb lüte/Pissflower" from a distance.

When beauty retreats as possible subject matter for photography, then other thematic concerns come to the fore – for example: the transformation/adaptation of plants in

the context of evolution or their cultural significance as medicine.(6) Plants/flowers as symbols in paintings are usually wreathed in a wealth of cultural and esoteric knowledge. They are also sought out by intellectuals fond of experimentation and driven by anthropological inquiry – such as Antonin Artaud, Aldous Huxley, Henri Michaux or Carlos Castaneda – and found on the threshold or access point to other cultures, in their rituals and relationships to the unconscious (the substance peyote, for instance), thereby releasing culturally critical currents in their respective works. Within the shamanic dialogue between the visible and the invisible, initiated by the shaman and designed to seek out the soul of a sick person,(7) plants and flowers become the key to other forms of perception and different patterns of thinking about other/alien cultures; for example, as food for the soul or sacred plants that “drive man on to ecstasy, allow him to take a step outside himself, in order to meet the gods”.(8) Furthermore, they provide “possibilities for communication with the invisible, the powers of the supernatural, which underlie all natural manifestations and usually can only be recognised through them”.(9)

Reusse’s *Sumpfb Blüten/Pissflowers* do not use an iconographic code of any description. Viewed in the context of his crypto-photographs and his thermographs – thermal imaging of real bodies and objects – they represent a further possibility for the artist to plot a course in the field of the invisible made visible.

Reusse initiates a complex, zigzag dialogue with his Beuys portrait, in which, via the topic of blindness, a host of artistic questions, such as the problem of the artistic process, the organic functions of the human body, the way in which one encounters another artist, his ideas, his work and his humanity, are duly touched upon and interwoven with the question regarding Reusse’s own artistic perception. Up to now, the Joseph Beuys portrait is the only one from that particular group of works to exist

in the form of a carpet. In two pieces from Reusse's carpet group of work, coded messages have been woven into the fabric in Braille. Reusse's carpets are not merely highly inventive artistic adjuncts in the place where art meets design, but evince a form of their own by virtue of the material used, which itself derives from the flat weave which has been constructed three-dimensionally. By dint of its thickness and density, the surface of the carpets takes on a certain physicality and, at the same time, its own dimensionality; made by hand, they represent a contrast to the smooth, reflective and closed acrylic glass surfaces of his photographic compositions which have been produced using the Diasec process. The hand-dyed wool immediately evokes changing and thus living colours – an inner life of the carpet right down to the individual threads. In Oriental culture, carpets enjoy a close connection to everyday life and at the same time represent an artistic accomplishment, which differs from the view in Western culture. People sleep, sit and pray on carpets – and they are looked at. Carpets are produced anonymously; the question regarding artistic authorship doesn't arise. Reusse has his carpets made by hand using hand-dyed New Zealand wool and employing the tufting process. As in the case of sewing with a sewing machine, the strands of wool (face or pile yarn) are worked into an existing weft (primary backing) in the form of loops and then later slit open (velour carpet). The carpet *Organic Systems/Hanging Brain* (1995, 280 x 180 cm) depicts a flesh-coloured brain on a red background with a largely rectangular form, into the dark red similarly flesh-coloured frame of which the words "see, think, doubt, reject" have been set. The other irregularly curved, predominantly pink and red carpet *Organic Systems/Brain Flower* (1999, 390 x 290 cm) presents a series of brains in the form of blossom tendril, which is covered with the word "Freilandhaltung" (free-range husbandry) in turquoise Braille. According to Reusse, *Hanging Brain* relates to "the intuitive

working process”, whereas *Brain Flower* lends expression to the desire “for the mind to take a deep breath”.

In 2010, the exhibition *curated by_vienna* took place in the Austrian capital for the second time. It embodied a systematic cooperation between curators and galleries and, on this particular occasion, was geared towards cinematic references within the field of art.⁽¹⁰⁾ Stephan Reusse was one of the twenty artists invited to co-curate the exhibition. Inspired by his own extensive experiences with artistic collaborations, Reusse chose a number of films for the exhibition at the Galerie Lukas Feichtner, all of which had been the product of collaborative artistic endeavours: found-footage films by Christophe Girardet and Matthias Müller, including the films *Contre-Jour* (2009, 35 mm) and *Maybe Siam* (2010, video). As a tribute to Harry Kramer (1925–1997), Reusse showed his teacher and mentor’s experimental animations *Die Schleuse* (1961, b & w, 16 mm) and *Sackgasse* (Impasse) (1963, b & w, 16mm) from the 1960s which Kramer had produced in conjunction with Wolfgang Ramsbott (1934–1991).

Girardet/Müller compiled scenes from films featuring eye surgery for their short film *Contre-Jour* which draw the viewer into the cinematic action with their sharp, back-lit interplay of light and shade: “Everything may seem fragmented and disjointed – but, in fact, this is a very complex and sophisticated structure.”⁽¹¹⁾ By virtue of its proximity Salvador Dali and Luis Buñuel’s film *Un Chien Andalou* in which an eye is cut open, *Contre-Jour* presents seeing as a vulnerable, highly sensitive, operatively aggressive context, which seems to give the artistic quest for tangible images a new lease of life. The film *Maybe Siam*, however, goes right to the heart of Reusse’s artistic philosophy: it depicts images of the blind moving between rooms. Reusse included the films in the show very much in keeping with the parameters of his own

artistic perception, whereby blindness is illuminated to the same degree as the relationship between art and cinematography/cinema.

Cynicism – Nausea/Disgust – Humour – Harry Kramer

In his book, *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft* from 1983 (English version *Critique of Cynical Reason* published in 1987), Peter Sloterdijk describes the epistemological potential of a materialistic position, which does not derive from academic philosophical discourse, but from everyday life itself, a position, moreover, that exists beyond the critique of ideology. “The cynic farts, shits, pisses, masturbates in the street (...).”(12) Diogenes of Sinope, who countered the invincible, “wily dialectician” Socrates not with words, but with “bizarre behaviour”, even exasperated Plato, forcing him to argue his case so vehemently that the latter lost his composure: “in the doggish philosophy of the cynic, there is indeed a materialistic position which can rival idealistic dialectics.”(13)

In 1997, Reusse designed a carpet in portrait format (*dog/labyrinth*, 1997–98, 180 x 260 cm) for a Munich collector which depicts a labyrinth in the middle, a dog’s body severed into two pieces on the opposite edges, and traces of dog faeces in the lower section. These symbols assembled here to form a pictorial puzzle duly prompt ideas about the epistemological potential of “cynical thinking”. And yet at the same time they relativise it, for the labyrinth as a symbol of self-knowledge can also be related to the platonic allegory of the cave. Such a fusion of mutually exclusive positions might well give rise to the following scenario: Diogenes emerges from the shadows of Plato’s cave, whereupon he mercilessly demonstrates the idealistic neglect of the human body.(14) Peter Sloterdijk says of Diogenes, the dog man: “To approach with

an “understanding” smile would itself already be a misunderstanding. Diogenes, whom we have before us, is no idyllic dreamer sitting there in his tub, but rather a dog, who will bite you if he feels like it”; and: “The only characters to make an impression on him are the ones who can match him with their presence of mind, their quick-wittedness, their intelligence and independent feeling for life.”(15) And furthermore: “He is a wild, comical and wily type” at most reminiscent nowadays of “hippies, freaks, globetrotters and the whole gamut of urban alternative types”.(16)

If one considers Reusse’s *dog/labyrinth* carpet as a commentary on photography, it becomes apparent that it accentuates the labyrinthine potential of photography – a potential independent of what photography can actually show and whether the photographer views the world through a professional or an amateur eye. Roland Barthes writes: “All the world’s photographs formed a LABYRINTH”; and further, paraphrasing Friedrich Nietzsche: “A labyrinthine man never seeks the truth but only his Ariadne.”(17)

Reusse is not concerned with acquiring exclusive knowledge in the way idealistic or materialistic modes of thinking postulate; he sees himself rather as an artist charged with the duty of discovering artistic working and compositional processes that facilitate a non-dualistic, artistic view of the world which unites body and mind and which strikes the viewer as sensitive, intelligent and, at the same time, disquieting. Reusse speaks of the necessity “of abandoning one’s own private niche” and seeking out new possibilities for dialogue. The use of urine, for instance, opens up the niche of nausea/disgust, as well as man’s fear of his body and bodily fluids; it enables a liminal experience, which, concealed like a secret in the overall compositional atmosphere of the portrait, is intensified in its very intimacy by the use of another person’s urine.

Sloterdijk concludes: “As far as cynicism is concerned, our knowledge of it can initially only ever be that of intimacy.”(18)

In his existentialist novel *Nausea*, which Reusse had read during the 1980s, Jean-Paul Sartre focuses thematically upon that specific boundary of human existence where nausea and revulsion for mankind and things takes on a life of its own: not only when people laugh about the amazement of others when something improbable has happened to them,(19) but also when there are “mysteries, spiritual predicaments and ‘nothing unsayable’”(20) no longer exist. It is all about self-loathing and self-disgust, about “the IDEA (...), this thick white mass”;(21) ultimately, it is about the end which sucks up the beginning,(22) the passage of time, death itself; then again, simply about a word, “which sticks out from the grid of our sensibilities”,(23) or about life, which “could be granted a rare and valuable reality at certain moments in time”;(24) about the feeling of adventure, about the sound of a saxophone, sex, sumptuous food, about precise, sometimes overly precise observations – ultimately about the narrative as a way of life. The existential atmosphere which Sartre describes strongly influenced Reusse’s perception as a narrative fabric without him necessarily feeling obliged to subject himself to permanent existential despair.

The question regarding “the reality of ideas”, which, for example, Joseph Beuys postulates in his artistic oeuvre, resonates in concentrated form in Reusse’s Beuys portrait, as well as in each of his other artist portraits, whereby the artistic ethos/thinking of each subjects is able to find a place in that conceptual “interstice” that Reusse has provided for their participation in the processing or subsequent reshaping of his initial photographic composition. In so doing, the artists in these portraits lend his photographs an artistic surplus value by virtue of their collaborative involvement; they introduce as it were the scent of their art into Reusse’s

photography, whereas for their part, they are simultaneously subject to the scrutiny of Reusse's penetrating lens. The appreciation that Reusse affords Joseph Beuys – both as an artist and a man in the portrait – becomes a mirror image with a flip side upon which Reusse himself appears. Peter Sloterdijk discusses the phenomenon of the “psychosomatic zeitgeist”: “Cynicism is one of the categories in which unhappy modern consciousness looks itself square in the eye.”⁽²⁵⁾ Accordingly, Reusse doesn't produce soothing, consoling or even utopian paintings. Influenced not least by the non-interpretive relationship to reality formulated in Gertrude Stein's insight “a rose is a rose is a rose” (*Sacred Emily*, 1922), he shows contemporary images which, during the 1990s after his visit to the USA, departed from the self-reflexive and legitimising quality of early works and, in Reusse's own words, “have become more direct”.

In his engagement with Beuys, Reusse encountered an artistic attitude, which flatly contradicted the image of the artist that his teacher, Harry Kramer, had designed for himself. Following his death in 1997, Kramer was the first artist to be interred in the artist's necropolis in the Habichtswald near Kassel, a project he himself had initiated in 1982 for *documenta 7*, and which would later become a country park. From 1992 to 2003, artists such as Rune Mields, Tim Ullrichs, Fritz Schwegler and Ugo Dossi realised a series of sculptural works as monuments for their own graves. Kramer himself focussed thematically upon movement and stasis within his kinetic sculptures and, in an extension of his artistic philosophy, formulated an approach directly contrary to that of Beuys in the extension of his artistic philosophy with regard to the role and duties of the artist and the respective possibilities within public space of such responsibilities. Whereas Beuys wanted to abandon artistic isolation, Kramer was of the view that “melancholy, loneliness and representation of one's profession” are the

only things that would allow a self-staging/self-realisation when it came to designing one's own grave; in Kramer's view, artists had no influence upon cultural and political processes or indeed far-reaching social developments,(26) unless of course they wanted to disempower themselves as artists. Beuys on the other hand, was an advocate of forms of action within the context of an extended idea of art, which, based on human and social change, transferred the question of "social sculpture" into a "Gesamtenergiefrage" (an issue regarding the sum of all energies) which touches upon the relationship between the material and the intellectual, ultimately choosing politically visible forms of representationality with the establishment of the German Student Party (1967) and Free International University (1980).

Reusse, in keeping with Beuys's exhortation to "Show Your Wound", depicted a number of his artist colleagues in such a way that the threats and conflicts they were enduring, and were possibly at odds with in their lives, became visible – for example, the aftermath of an accident, during an illness or in the throes of an addiction. The cynical components of these stagings were also embodied by the subjects themselves – not least because they are not exaggerated, but convey instead, appropriate attitudes with a sense of combative seriousness. The portrait of Harry Kramer (1996, C-Print/Diasec, 180 x 145 cm) depicts the artist, surrounded by a selection of artefacts garnered from a flea market and then duly refurbished, in the midst of a suggestively innocuous net curtain ensemble. Kramer suffered from pneumoconiosis and respired artificially. He is sitting nonchalantly with his legs crossed on a wooden armchair with footstool, clad in a white bath robe and wearing over-sized fleece slippers, languidly propping up his right arm. He is holding a cigarette as though the respiratory tubes which, having been inserted into his nostrils and traversing his cheeks, cannot actually stop him from smoking, even in his advanced state of ill

health. The depiction of the cynical attitude, insisting as it does upon its addiction in flagrant disregard for the ephemeral nature of existence, shifts in this portrait to become a humorous exposition of a hopeless predicament. César (1994, C-Print/Diasec, 180 x 145 cm) perches on cases of wine and vodka, a clear emblem of his alcoholism. The portrait of Rob Scholte (1995, C-Print/Diasec, 180 x 150 cm) was taken after an accident in which he lost both his legs at the knee. He is sitting on a trunk in front of an airport check-in. His shoes, now redundant, have been wittily placed in front of the wooden slats of the trunk, which at first glance look like makeshift prosthetic limbs. His expression is more sceptical than desperate – with a succinct *c'est la vie* gesture, he is airing the question regarding his own state of mind. Reusse recalls that this gesture didn't really work at first. Life had been hard on these individuals. And yet the incipient cynicism turns into a self-relativising attitude to life, which takes what has happened on the chin, so to speak, without moral evaluation or, indeed, self-pity, but with the humour of despair, owning up to the mistakes that have been made and weaknesses, which are more or less visible. Accordingly, cynicism is not an end in itself, rather a means or a pathway to open up different dimensions of perception, which can subsequently lead one's thinking in a surprising direction. It wasn't by chance that Reusse – in his confrontation with Hermann Nitsch, whom he photographed first in this group of artist portraits – asked the artist to what extent obsession is important for the creation of an artwork. He wanted to answer the question for himself as to whether and when obsession can become a strategy and whether true despair can actually lead to a particular form of artistic expression. As *Collaborations* with other artists, the portraits are therefore programmatically significant, above all, in terms of Reusse's own artistic developmental process.

Performance – Giraffes, Elephants, Wolves and other Animals

In the *Safari Deutschland* series, Reusse, with manifest humour, faces up to his role as an artist at pains to explore the artistic potential of photography, whereby the question “am I taking a photo, or am I making a picture?” remains breathless and unanswered as it constantly tries to keep up with the pace, despite the legitimising filter of the painterly *gestus*, the collaborations with other artists and the performance-like presence of the artist himself in the work. “Whilst travelling, the author comes across dead objects/animals and immediately forgets that he hasn’t actually killed them himself. The adventure “photography” begins as the latent images from the big-game safari-performance are reactivated through the repainting process. The quest for the moment between the event and the staging leads into cinema” (S. R.). According to Reusse, the *Safari Deutschland* photographs construct a “cinematic reality”, whereas they become questionable as soon as they “prove to be internally true and constitute works about real objects”.⁽²⁷⁾ As soon as it is about movement, then it is about life/liveliness, which for Reusse, touching upon the Sartrean idea of narrative as a way of life, also means that “stories are being told” which, by way of analogy to the cinema, can in turn be shown as “cinematographic images”. As Susan Sontag aptly observes, “life is a movie; death is a photograph”.⁽²⁸⁾

Reusse presents himself as a “happy hunter”, clad in heavy, hand-stitched leather boots and white nineteenth-century colonial apparel complete with pith helmet. He pictures himself with a parasol, sitting on or standing over his hunting trophies – a pig (*Safari Deutschland, man/pig*, 1984, photo on baryta paper, 125 x 165 cm) or a cow; posing with a gesture of ownership, his Zeiss camera hanging around his neck,

nonchalantly smoking, ready to take photographs – and he is clearly enjoying his importance throughout, whereas the backdrop of ubiquitous trees and bushes, freshly ploughed, brown fields and electricity masts stretching across the countryside conveys an image of an arbitrary, non-descript rural German landscape. One of the works from this staging presents the composition as a physical and haptical three-part image which has been printed onto a canvas coated with photographic emulsion. A further composition from this group of works depicts Reusse standing in frontal aspect while holding a mouse as a trophy from his outstretched fingers (*Safari Deutschland, man/mouse*, 1983, photo on baryta paper, 160 x 125 cm). Carl Aigner comments here: “So in this sense, the *Safari Deutschland* series is not merely an ironically witty, socio-critical reflection on the ‘subject as the other’, but also an example of communicative practice within the dynamic exchange between (self-)staging and the viewer. (...) The series presupposes a canon of ‘German domestic animals’ that are being staged as holiday trophies. The photographic images thus become iconographic settings of reality and not references to reality (as the captions duly indicate – giving the impression that the images are of nineteenth-century provenance).”⁽²⁹⁾

In order to take these photographs, Reusse met with and entreated the local farmers and knackers until they finally told him where he might find a dead animal with which to realise his compositional idea (before the animal had been turned into soap). Reusse recalls that he was able to persuade them of the importance of his artistic action and, as a result, received unconditional support from them, for example, when they ferried the dead animals with their tractors to the location he had designated for his photographic *mise-en-scène*.

Another photographic work, arranged like a triptych behind a shiny, acrylic glass surface using the Diasec process, depicts Reusse enacting a series of staged

movements of a lepidopterist as he gaily leaps through the undergrowth with his butterfly net, comically suggesting a harmless sprightliness, in an attempt to keep up with the speed and delicate agility of the butterflies (*Safari Deutschland, man/butterflies*, 1984, photo on baryta paper/Diasec, 160 x 37 cm).(30)

The reactivation of the life-size photograph of a giraffe as “cinematographic photography” was staged in front of an audience in the auditorium of a cinema in Kassel on a 540 x 120 cm paper backdrop to the accompaniment of Ennio Morricone’s music from the film *Once Upon A Time in the West*. Large-format photographs of this type demand a commensurate space, both for their production and their presentation. When combined, the music and the reactivated paintings evoke images from films as well as personal experiences in the memories of the viewer, which draw him, via the fusion of Western and safari motifs, into a dynamic adventure endowed with the qualities of cinema. Roland Barthes observes: “The principle of adventure allows me to make PHOTOGRAPHY exist. Conversely, without adventure, no photography.”(31)

In the search for comparably large images of a giraffe, the viewer must embark upon both a geographical and temporal journey in which he will encounter evidence of ancient cultures from BC 5000 to BC 3000: in Nigeria, in the vicinity of Agadez, there are a number of etched drawings of giraffes in the cliffs of the Dabous region, measuring six metres in height and most probably originating from the Tuareg culture. Other examples of animal representations from this era include elephants, gazelles, zebras and crocodiles. Human figures appear as hunters and gatherers. The depictions are impressive on account of their “naturalism, perspective and attention to detail”(32). Reusse’s work and that of the unnamed artist, who lived five to seven thousand years ago, cannot be differentiated with regard to subject matter or format,

but only in terms of the photographic medium – its inherent themes and human behaviour patterns – and the concomitant treatment of images.

Reusse comments upon his humorous and critical idea behind these works as follows:

“Both *Glückliche Jäger*, *Safari Deutschland* refer to colonialism. The predominantly life-size representation corresponds to the attitude of the time. The arrogant pose of the victor is the necessary and exclusively-intended form of self-representation. The visible object and the reason behind the pose causes our “enlightened” mirth about the image to subside: it makes one reflective and, hopefully, it will unleash a number of intended associations which culminate in the self-questioning on the part of the viewer as well as the scrutiny of his own situation in our era; it raises the question as to the extent to which we have really distanced ourselves from such – only seemingly – past attitudes.”⁽³³⁾ In 1988, Egidio Alvaro wrote in English: “The following series becomes even more accurate and fascinating. He mixes irony with cruelty there. The *Safari Deutschland* trophies are quite strange; dead animals stretched out in German landscapes, elephants captured in the zoos, a Mexican iguana (...) a terrifying vision of a universe between corruption, apathy and inefficiency of the beautiful and, on the other hand wild nature in difficulties to survive (...).”⁽³⁴⁾ Alvaro, who ran the Galerie Diagonal in Porto and Paris during the 1980s – “une galerie portugaise à Paris” – represented a number of performance artists, such as Manuel Barbosa, Gerardo Burmester, Natascha Fiala, Marie Kawazu, Eilsabeth Morcellet and Stephan Reusse among others. They followed on from the pioneering period in the world of performance during the 1970s popularised by artists such as Jürgen Klauke, Joseph Beuys, Urs Lüthi, Maria Abramovic, Ulrike Rosenbach *et al.* In a retrospective essay from 1998, Alvaro writes: “Stephan Reusse, allemand, étalait sur le mur un énorme papier photo, blanc. Puis au rythme de la musique *Il était une fois dans l’ouest*, il

trempeait des brosses dans des bacs remplis d'un liquide spécial et commençait à peindre le papier. L'image apparaissait progressivement. A Diagonale c'était un éléphant dans un Zoo. A Porto, un gigantesque girafe.”(35)

Reusse also sees the confrontation with dead animals in relation to the overcoming of nausea, rejection, prejudice and other obstacles as part of a self-educational process. The cynically tinged but also humorous, laughing take on the themes and gestures of the trophy photographs – which Reusse researched in some detail – is juxtaposed with the forlorn aspect of the performance. Within the performance, the body and/or the attitude of the artist convey both existential and immaterial concerns. The dynamic relationship between the audience and artist is multi-layered: it encompasses both the rejection of the audience and the dependence upon its reactions; by turns the action is firmly in the hand of the artist, by turns it appears to direct itself against him, all the way to death itself. Looking back on the 1970s, Vito Acconci wrote in 1992: “Performance (irrespective of how dazzling its situation might have been) was necessarily both profound and dark: the performance itself was like a dark, disturbing night in the bright glare of daylight.”(36) As early as 1966 and in the context of his *Meat Pieces* in wax, Paul Thek had already spoken about a “cleansing of the antennas” in order to undermine a culturally-determined lack of focus in our perception and to open up an alternative path for the sensory capabilities of our species.(37)

Reusse repeatedly concerns himself with the depiction of animals in order to render visible a different sphere for perception through the act of observing them. In his group of works entitled *Wolves* (2001–2002), for which he observed wolves in their lairs in Canada and the Mongolian steppe, he abandons his cynical perspective and approaches an alien being, the wolf, to the point of self-endangerment, in order to

penetrate and then discover an alternate image for the negatively charged ideas that man has about this animal.

Reusse is familiar with the desire for a “precise image” which Roland Barthes also describes: “Yet my sadness yearned for another precise image, which could simultaneously embody justice and exactitude.”⁽³⁸⁾ Reusse confirms the notion of the “precise image” in its sensory unattainability and conveys this in the very alien quality of his representation, as if he were seeing everything for the very first time. The heterogeneity of his compositions and groups of works prevents the viewer from feeling all too comfortable in his art. His infrared photographs of wolves play a key role in the compositional concentration of an elective otherness. The images do not dwell upon the alien quality and posited menace of the animals, but instead they view the wolves with an enquiring and exploratory eye as a life form that happens to live somewhere out there. In a different way to the impression conveyed by *Sumpfbliuten/Pissflowers*, the wolves appear to be tender and vulnerable and not predatory or aggressive. Siegfried Zielinski situates the instant of this re-evaluation in the “tender affection”, which the wolf undergoes for human perception in the “extended artistic moment”: “Our ancestors saw the wolf as a ‘voracious, devouring shadow’. In the eyes of the peasants, the tracks the wolf left behind were bloody, its presence spelled menace and danger. The wolf was a despised creature that came from the cold and retreated thence. The wolf represented the alien, a sense of otherness, something to be shunned and ultimately destroyed. Reusse’s images, however, add a quality to the wolf that it never really had. In an extended artistic moment, the wolf enjoys tender affection. Only when the object has all but been eliminated from reality, can the beast’s fascination unfold and command respect and warmth from the onlooker: in its status as an image.”

Mark Rowlands, who lived for over eleven years with a wolf, goes even further when he suggests that we should “think of the wolf as the clearing in the forest”. He states furthermore: “We stand in the shadow of the wolf. Something can cast a shadow in two ways: by occluding light, or by being the source of light that other things occlude. (...) . By the shadow of the wolf, I mean not the shadow cast by the wolf itself, but the shadows we cast from the light of the wolf. And staring back at us from these shadows is precisely what we don’t want to know about ourselves.”(40) At times, the wolf was an “older brother” for Rowlands, from whom he learned much: “The person I became, I am utterly convinced, is better than the one I would otherwise have been.”(41)

Reusse’s photographs of wolves are “precise images” inasmuch as they guarantee the wolf an existence free from the prejudicial eye of an alien species. Images of this kind, which have been taken in the artist’s absence, by an unmanned, rolling camera show the wolf as a creature that stares out from the night with luminous eyes into the world of the viewer. The absence of the artist manifests itself as a consequence of the acknowledgement of the wolf’s otherness/alien nature, whereby its look seems to be answering the lens of the camera and not the artist, thereby perfecting the sense of otherness. However, it remains to be seen whether it is a case of an encounter with the absolute subjectivity of the photograph in a Barthesian sense or whether the photographs of the wolves are themselves trying to withdraw from this subjectivity.

Following his (communal) artist portrait with Joseph Beuys, Reusse decided to reappraise his artistic dialogue with the artist with regard to the encounter with wolves. In 1974, as part of his action *I Like America and America Likes Me*, Beuys, completely swathed in felt, was ferried by ambulance from the airport to Manhattan insulating himself completely from contact with the people and environment in New

York. He had decided not see anyone in New York apart from a coyote. He spent three days with the coyote in a room specially prepared as a lair (René Block Gallery), showed it the newspaper, fed it, slept alongside it and, protected by a felt blanket and a shepherd's crook, tolerated the animal's tentative approaches. After the three days were over and completely wrapped in felt, he arranged to be driven to the airport once more. Moving thematically in this tenebrous realm in order to observe the "devouring shadow", Reusse splices his "apparative realities" with the thinking of another artist in order to broach the defining parameters of his own artistic oeuvre. Joseph Beuys was chiefly concerned with "the warm character of thinking", as he called it, that is to say, an existential relation within thinking, which can start with the scrutiny of one's own projections/prejudices, which easily manifest themselves whenever one's opposite number speaks a different language or appears silent in a certain way.

Encounter – Collaboration – Staging

For Reusse, the question regarding the specific approach communicated by an artwork is integral to the artistic process itself. Moreover, this question is necessary both to prevent artworks from exhausting/losing themselves in continuous repetition as well as to foster new impulses deriving from change/transition. The questioning of artistic egotism – as demonstrated by Paul Thek, for example, in his collaborations with fellow artists from his "Artist's Co-op" during the 1970s in which he left his works unsigned and expected the same from members of the co-operative – also informs Reusse's collaborative encounters with other artists which have ultimately found their compositional form in his artist portraits. Apart from Joseph Beuys, whose personality and work were highly influential for Reusse, he also met, over the years, artists such

as John Baldessari, Daniel Buren, Michael Buthe, Walter Dahn, Jimmie Durham, Allan Kaprow, Jürgen Klauke, Shigeo Kubota and Nam June Paik, Mike Kelley, Tony Oursler, Jeff Koons, Bernhard Martin, Nancy Spero, Anna Oppermann, Heribert Ottersbach, Pedro Cabrita Reiss, Wolf Vostell, Peter Weibel, Lawrence Weiner, Hermann Nitsch, Rosemarie Trockel and Paul Thek, as well as many others. The open and communicative atmosphere of the art scene during the late 1960s and 1970s, characterised, as it was, by participation, joint exhibitions, the spirit of cooperation and mutual recommendations, effectively created new/different ways of thinking and working across the emergent spectrum of artistic attitudes. These methods and ideas were not guided primarily by thoughts of ownership or the emphasis upon individual artistic achievement – a situation which would prevail until the mid-1980s when a renewed atomisation of respective artistic worlds and careers began to set in. During the 1990s, artists actively re-invoked the openness of the art scene in the 1960s and 1970s and approached the idea of artistic collaboration with fresh enthusiasm. Rosemarie Trockel and Carsten Höller's joint work *Haus für Schweine und Menschen* (1997) is a prime example of this, owing much to the influence of artists such as Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat, who collaborated on paintings during the 1980s. When Reusse initiated his series of artist portraits with his staging of Harry Kramer in 1982, he wanted to find his artistic voice in photography. According to Reusse, "it is not the photographer (...) but the artist who provides the commentary which is itself based upon common artistic experience." The artist portraits initially came about as "by-products" (S. R.) while he was working on other projects. At first he wanted to follow particular lines of exchange and came up with the idea of himself being passed from one artist to another, but the chain broke down upon reaching Karl Heinz Stockhausen. Following this experiment, he actively sought out artists who were

prepared, crucially, “not to create an artwork as a product for the market” (S. R.). When Reusse recently came upon the idea of “animated images” for his laser pieces, he was actively drawing upon his diverse experience in the field of human encounter and exchange of artistic ideas/ways of thinking, which in turn enabled him to view the artistic ego from a safe distance. As an artist who thinks/works in a process-based and experimental way, he cannot remain in the protective shadow of his works, but must necessarily acknowledge that the openness of his oeuvre is linked to the development of his personality and attitudes. Accordingly, he chose to make portraits of those fellow-artists who were of immediate interest to him, both in terms of (questions of) artistic process or specific approaches, because the formal, thematic and contextual development of their art had taken place within the field of actions and performances. Noteworthy artists here include Allan Kaprow with his experience in the field of Happenings, Wolf Vostell and Nam June Paik as Fluxus artists, Jürgen Klauke as a performance artist or Hermann Nitsch and Peter Weibel as proponents of Viennese Actionism’s radical brand of experimental action art.

Reusse’s artist portraits created between 1982 and 1989 (*Collaborations I*) not only include Polaroid sketches for potential portraits, but also black and white photographs that explore the sculptural potential of the subjects’ physical appearance as well as presenting the faces of the individual artists frontally as they gaze openly into the camera. Reusse sometimes seeks out opportunities for encounters after long periods of detailed planning; alternatively, situations occasionally present themselves spontaneously, resulting in a photograph. Many of the artist portraits were collaborations in which the featured subjects processed/reactivated their own images, thereby determining the degree of recognisability (for example, Leon Golub, Nancy Spero, Jürgen Klauke, Daniel Spoerri, Rune Mields, Anna Oppermann, Fritz

Schwegler, Dorothea von Windheim, Bernhard Johannes Blume, Hermann Nitsch and Joseph Kosuth). Others undertook artistic modifications or made additions, such as John Baldessari (1987, photo on baryta paper, 180 x 245 cm), who cut his portrait up and covered it with yellow dots. According to Reusse, “this form of communication (...) finds its cohesion in a functional, process-based collaboration, and not in the creation of a prototypical, individual work”.

With their respective backgrounds in Happenings and Fluxus, the photographs of artists such as Allan Kaprow or Wolf Vostell, for example, were themselves taken as “templates for an action” (S. R.). Reusse observes in this context: “Wolf Vostell stretched out a large, pre-exposed photograph (photographic canvas) on the floor in a darkened room. A Cadillac with tyres covered in developer was then driven across the canvas. Fragments of Vostell’s image became visible wherever the tyres had left their tracks. Allan Kaprow used the developed photograph (photographic canvas) as a tablecloth for a dinner during which both artists used 60 cm-long chopsticks to eat their food.”(42)

From 1989 until 2001, Reusse changed his approach to the staging of portraits: “*Collaborations II* as a series is a continuation of *Collaborations I*. After the performance-based mode of communication had exhausted itself at the beginning of the 1990s, a kind of typological staging developed within *Collaborations II* in which respective artistic attitudes are captured more immediately.”(43) Reusse used medium-format and plate cameras for the *Collaborations II* portraits. Some of the artists whom Reusse had previously photographed within the framework of *Collaborations I* were also featured in *Collaborations II* (such as Rune Miels and Jürgen Klauke). This group of artist portraits juxtaposes clear, pre-arranged and distanced stagings and situations reflecting the respective existential predicaments of

the featured artists. Rosemarie Trockel played with the idea of mistaken identity for her artist portrait by suggesting that a second female should sit on the picnic blanket in the composition, thereby presenting the viewer with the question as to the true identity of the artist (Rosemarie Trockel, 1996, C-print, 145 x 198 cm). When Reusse met Paul Thek at his studio in Brooklyn in 1987, the latter spoke about his financial worries and acute health problems, as well as the difficulties he encountered whenever he tried to obtain his artworks and sections of exhibitions stored in various different places in Europe since the 1970s. He was a lost and desperate soul. Antonin Artaud's text on Vincent van Gogh, whom he describes as having been "suicided by society", postulates an extreme, existential concept, placing Paul Thek's predicament, as well as those of others like him, in a different light. Artaud writes: "That is why no one since van Gogh has understood how to shake the great cymbal, superhuman gong, perpetually superhuman, following the frustrated order from which real-life objects ring out, when one knows how to open one's ears to hear and understand the surging of their tidal flow. That is how the light of the candle rings forth, that the glow from the candlestick on the green straw-bottomed rings out like the breathing of a loving body near the body of a sleeping invalid."⁽⁴⁴⁾ (...) "One day the soul did not exist, nor the mind, as for consciousness, is no one had ever thought of it, and, besides, where was thought in a world made up entirely of warring elements recomposed as soon as they were destroyed, for thought is a luxury of peace."⁽⁴⁵⁾ (...) "That is why van Gogh suicided because it was the concerted awareness of society as a whole that could bear him no longer."⁽⁴⁶⁾ (...) "One day van Gogh's painting, armed with fever and good health, will return to toss the dust of a caged world into the air, a world that his heart could no longer bear."⁽⁴⁷⁾ Reusse staged Thek as an itinerant who had already set out on his way.

The collaboration with the Aborigine Nanjua from central Australia, who also has many other secret names, cannot be situated with the group of the artist portraits. It touches upon the distinct ways of thinking and seeing belonging to a different culture, which, according to Reusse, “views and utilises (images), not as art or in a symbolical way, but as communication, geographical orientation, indeed, as guides for their dreams”. Paul Thek, who was interested in the relationship between the unconscious, the artistic process *per se* and cultural experience, viewed Aborigine culture as a concentration of his interest in Carl Gustav Jung’s transpersonal psychology and Thek’s own “art is liturgy” ethos associated with it: “The Australian Aborigine devotes his ENTIRE life to his liturgy. The Liturgy is what you do for God.”(48)

Michael Buthe addressed the damage perpetrated upon Aborigine culture by colonialism in his contribution to the Biennial in Sydney in 1988, entitled *Europa in Luce*. In the sense of “undressing culture”, his artistic eye is trained upon the history of colonialism and the concomitant cultural oppression and appropriation of living space endured by the indigenous population. Presented in such a light, it is impossible not to see the dark side/shadow of Europe’s blatant cultural aggrandisement.(49)

Reusse, who had avidly read Bruce Chatwin’s novel *The Songlines* about the ancestral, imaginary paths and labyrinthine lines that stretch across the Australian continent, waited for a long time for an encounter with Nanjua, to whom he was finally introduced through a third party. In the subsequent exchange between Reusse and Nanjua, which lasted approximately ten days, the two men produced a painting together which Reusse had made into a carpet a short time afterwards. For Reusse, his collaboration with Nanjua served to concentrate the line of unconscious spiritual processes he had previously broached with his *Sumpflüten/Pissflowers*. He embarked upon an interpersonal experience by moving away from his own cultural origins in

order to experience the “Other” in the spiritual world of the Aborigine. Having concluded their collaboration, Reusse and Nanjua agreed to send one another their dreams at set intervals, which they actually managed to do to a degree.

Photography – Death – Brain – Smell – Movement

In 1994, Stephan Reusse created a special atmosphere in the conservatory of the Kunstverein Speyer(50) for the duration of the exhibition. He removed the paint from the floor tiles of the cluttered storerooms and opened their shuttered windows, barricaded behind display boards, so that a space, illuminated by changing daylight and with a view of the landscape gardens, awaited the exhibition-goer. The other rooms in the exhibition were artificially lit. Upon entering the building, visitors immediately caught sight of a showcase, illuminated in part by a halogen lamp from above, and placed at the far end of the corridor in one of the rear rooms. The route to this room was hung with a selection of Reusse’s artist portraits (Robert Barry, Joseph Beuys, Leon Golub, Ilya Kabakov, Robert Longo, Hermann Nitsch and Lawrence Weiner) in the form of black and white enamel compositions (1994, 10.5 x 7.5 cm) mounted on a light grey strip painted on the wall, measuring 15 cm and positioned 1.9 m above the floor. Reusse was inspired here by the aspect of photographic portraits in the form of porcelain or enamel plaques that are found on gravestones. In so doing, he was not only directly invoking the cultural history of sepulchral monuments, but also focusing centrally upon the idea of a photograph as an immediate connection between form and content in the way that it formulates a link between photography and death. In her essay “Melancholy Objects”, Susan Sontag challenges the interpretation of artworks by championing the dissolving of thematic and formal elements, particularly

with regard to photography. She views photography as an artistic form that directly embraces the ephemerality of human existence: “Photographs show people being so irrefutably *there* and at a specific age in their lives; group together people and things which a moment later have already disbanded, changed, continued along the course of their independent destinies (...) and this link between photography and death haunts all photographs of people.”⁽⁵¹⁾ Enamel portraits on gravestones actively remember the deceased person and simultaneously manifest the impossibility of recreating the point in their lives captured by photography. Human interest in the reconstitution of the living – also demonstrated by the practice of representing deceased individuals in the form of wax figures with the intention of countering the absolute nature of death with something, or to depict the (enduring) energy of a person – still remains prone to an ambivalent effect; for the means which aid the reconstitution of life are simultaneously eloquent statements about what they are trying to make “unhappen”. There can be no definitive outcome in this field. Iris Därmann compares a photographic portrait to a guillotine: “The guillotine is a portrait-machine, which creates those faces in the way the photographic apparatus records facial expressions for posterity. In 1839, photography took on this double function, guillotining and storing in one and the same moment.”⁽⁵²⁾ The “moorings” of photographic portraits in reality “come unstuck” in the passage of time because “it is only a fragment (...) that drifts away into a soft abstract pastness”.⁽⁵³⁾ Art history is perhaps one of these attendant, “abstract pasts”.

Roland Barthes views photographers as unwitting “agents of Death” who usher the viewer into what Barthes refers to as *flat Death* or “first death”, in which his own death is inscribed.⁽⁵⁴⁾ The perceptive content of photography states that “what I see has been here, in the place which extends between infinity and the subject (...); it has

been here, and yet immediately separated.”(55) And “(something I would not experience before a painting) (...) the melancholy of the Photograph itself”.(56) And: “In the Photograph, Time’s immobilization assumes only an excessive, monstrous mode: time is engorged.”(57) The paradigm of photography, the pair of opposites LIFE/DEATH, “is limited to a simple click, the one separating the initial pose from the final print”.(58)

Ever since the appearance of Jacques Derrida’s essay “The Deaths of Roland Barthes” (1981), both French thinkers have become closely linked with regard to the question of death and a critique of photography. Pre-empting the unfinished nature of his thesis here, the poststructuralist philosopher decided to think *of* and *about* that Roland Barthes (one of many) who had been thrown in the dungeon of an outmoded autonomy of the subject, yet not without recognition of the penetration, the exaggeration and exploitation of structural analysis in the latter’s seminal text on photography, *Camera Lucida* (1980). Derrida thinks/writes himself into the pair of opposites *punctum/studium*, which, in Barthes’s analysis, presents a decisive aspect of photography’s effect: the *punctum* of photography is not coded, whereas the *studium* is. The *punctum* is the “point of singularity” of a photograph that “pierces, strikes (...) wounds”(59) the viewer, that is to say, the point which simultaneously resists him whenever he tries to evaluate the image in order to return it to its coding. The *punctum* harbours a “desperate resistance to any reductive system”.(60)

Jean Baudrillard considers it entirely possible that the human point of disappearance in his own digitalised world should not only be lamented analytically, but also viewed as a game, as the art of disappearance: “(Disappearance) may be the desire to see what the world looks like in our absence (photography) or to see beyond the end, beyond the subject, beyond all meaning, beyond the horizon of disappearance if there is an

occurrence [*événement*] of the world, an unprogrammed appearance of this.”(61)

In the exhibition room entitled *Lemonroom* which smelled of lemons, Reusse presented a small-format Diasec version of his three-part photographic *man/butterflies* (24 x 18 cm) from the group of works *Safari Deutschland*, positioned to the right next to the door against a light grey background painted on the wall, resting on a waist-high, narrow shelf. It is a delicate reproduction of the triptych in sepia and has the appearance of a watercolour. A small-format piece of paper containing a tiny Rorschach figure painted in ink lay in the showcase (30 x 33 x 40 cm) occupying a central position within the exhibition. Hanging above the drawing, a flesh-coloured demonstration model of a latex brain had been suspended from the ceiling of the exhibition room by a single thread channelled into the showcase through a hole (approximately 2 cm in diameter). Reusse chose to fix the thread to the underside of the brain where the brain stem is located, thereby invoking the image of poultry or animal carcasses hanging in a butcher's shop window. He transformed the Rorschach shape into two large symmetrical figures carved in wood (multiplex) (approximately 150 x 70 cm) and presented them on different-sized, variously coloured, crudely cut and coarsely hemmed felt cloths. On the lower dark-green cloth (180 x 140 cm) were two smaller cloths, one pink and the other light green. Figuratively speaking, the Rorschach objects, prompting associations with the unconscious, were being protected from unexpected external shocks that might disturb or prematurely break off the process duly initiated. Reusse recalls that he imagined pond flowers when looking at this work.

Viewed organically, the brain is that part of the body which indicates whether a person is completely dead (brain dead). To a certain extent, the brain has an independent life of its own. The brain performs the tasks of orientation and

transformation. It abstracts and connects experiences; it is constantly engaged in a process of “ideation”. In so doing, we are really dealing with a mobile, self-regulating process in which the stream of experience running through the brain actually transforms its character. Reusse, focusing thematically on randomness and chance in his small Rorschach drawing, is interested in finding a point at which existing thought patterns are altered. The anthropologist Gregory Bateson understands thought to be a momentum akin to evolution. When a particular learning process has saturated every possibility for differentiation, then only an emptying can lead forward, itself anchored in a natural process of becoming and decay: “Learning leads to the overpacked mind. By return to the unlearned and mass-produced egg, the ongoing species again and again clears its memory banks to ready for the new.”⁽⁶²⁾ “Arriving at the final pristine page of the book”⁽⁶³⁾ is tantamount to the desire for emptying a brain crammed with knowledge. The brain, hanging there above the Rorschach drawing like a pendulum ready to swing and removed from its guiding role, wittily illustrates its own distance from itself. In so doing, it can also be viewed as tribute to the kinetic objects created by Reusse’s teacher, Harry Kramer. By situating these objects in an environment suffused with the aroma of lemon, Reusse is activating the powers of recall and memory in the mind of the exhibition-goer.

On the one hand, *Lemonroom* can be viewed as a complex metaphor for Reusse’s desire for “our minds to take a deep breath”; on the other, he alerts us to the limits of what can be experienced, limits that are transgressed in an open, communicative artistic system – very much in the sense of Jean Baudrillard’s expansive “vision” triggered by the physical aspect of desert that “stares out and finds nothing to reflect it”; ⁽⁶⁴⁾ an expansiveness moreover, which retroactively influences the perception and understanding of artistic context. Baudrillard writes about Death Valley in the

Californian Mojave Desert: “A fragment of another planet (at least predating any form of human life), where another, deeper temporality reigns, on whose surface you float as you would on salt-laden waters. (...) It is the only place where it is possible to relive, alongside the physical spectrum of colours, the spectrum of the inhuman metamorphoses that preceded us.”(65) The “emptiness” which can unfold when spending time in a desert not only enters the beholding eye, but also inhabits one’s entire body. “The desert is a natural extension of the inner silence of the body. If humanity’s language, technology, and buildings are an extension of its constructive faculties, the desert alone is an extension of its capacity for absence, the ideal schema of humanity’s disappearance. (...) When you emerge from the desert, your eyes go on trying to create emptiness all around; in every inhabited area, every landscape they see desert beneath, like a watermark. (...) But the desert is more than merely a space from which all substance has been removed. Just as silence is not what remains when all noise has been suppressed. There is no need to close your eyes to hear it.”(66) The capacity for absence, which Baudrillard’s text on the desert describes, is not only able to catalyse the perception of silence which resides in photography, but also articulates the concept of *punctum* traversing Reusse’s entire artistic oeuvre, concentrated in particular in the thermographs: “the silence of time” then as an intersection with these desert experiences which sends the viewer on his own journey through the wilderness. Emerging from the desert once more, the viewer will also see the haziness of the thermographs in a different way, for “your eye can no longer rest on objects that are near. It can no longer properly settle on things, and all the human or natural constructions that intercept your gaze seem irksome obstacles which merely corrupt the perfect reach of your vision.”(67)

Absence – Abstraction – Mark Rothko

In his ongoing, scientific preoccupation with other ways of seeing, Reusse links the questioning of the photographic process itself with thematic and conceptual qualities. Along with the reactivated paintings, chemical variations in the developing of photographs (urine) or the firing of ceramic tiles, Reusse has also been preoccupied, since 1982, by both the situation surrounding the actual taking of photographs and the actual moment the shutter is released. Rendering an invisible thermal shadow visible to the human eye is possible today with the kind of thermographic cameras used in medical research and by the military. Photography, which in any case embodies the past/death and the present/absent as paradox, is confronted with its own context and topicality in a fusion of form and content. Klaus Honnef observes in this regard: “Stephan Reusse carries this “noeme” (Roland Barthes) of photography to an extreme by allowing the photographic medium to represent circumstances which cannot be represented by the means of photography alone. The photographic image of an empty bed represents nothing but an empty bed, and only the crumpled sheets provide an indication of the fact that someone has been there before, while there is no means of delimiting the time span more closely – provided that the scene has not been arranged for the benefit of photography in any case. In the artist’s thermographs, however, the shape of the body that has been lying in the bed becomes visible, and the more quickly the image is made after the person has got up from the bed, the more incisive its traces.”(68) A thermal shadow remains. Beyond the Barthesian ideal of an “exact image”, Reusse’s thermographic images are permeated with an imprecise/schematic quality which, in turn, confirms the immutability of disappearance, even when it is being illuminated on a much deeper layer, whilst enabling an equivocal insight into a short space of time, in which its finality seems to have been delayed.

No sooner has the viewer entered into the expanse of the “three minutes after leaving”, than he promptly abandons the idea that there will be a postponement after all. Only the painterly impressions contained within the black and white thermographs point to a different route, because they revisit the very areas in which historical photographers also struggled for the recognition of photography as a form of art, such as Alfred Stieglitz, for example, who was working on an *authentic compositional language* beyond the realm of pictorial manipulation. The painterly potential in Reusse’s thermographs is not predicated upon a retrospective manipulation of the image, but resides in the temporality, which leaves behind/has left behind unclear traces duly rendered visible in the field of the invisible. Carl Aigner sees “the radicality of Reusse’s artistic discourse (...) less in the transformation of the visible and the invisible”, and more in the “accentuating of his conception of temporality as the essential aspect of the thermographic image”.⁽⁶⁹⁾ In answer to this, it is possible to see temporality and the rendering visible of the invisible, not in a hierarchical relationship, but in their coincidence, their joint temporality, as presented to us by Reusse. The crossover here comprises the so-called “3 – 4 minutes after” photographs, a tag Reusse adds to the titles of the thermographs to elucidate their temporality.⁽⁷⁰⁾ The thermographic images of crates are “imaginary sculptures” (S. R.) representing an intersection of painting and photography. Painting and photography are not in competition as the Pictorialists generally purported until the 1920s, instead, photography reveals itself as an image of abstract painting. The Impressionists attempted to resolve a problematic relationship that was developing between painting and photography as a burgeoning visual form, not by presenting coloured properties on the canvas but by allowing the painting to take place, as it were, as an effect in the eye of the beholder. The photograph of an Impressionist

painting, likewise, contains a potential paradox, as does the photographic image intensified by thermography. Whereas the Impressionists wanted to paint light and thereby materialise it, Reusse explores the realm of shadows with his thermographs in an area beyond visible light. Claude Monet's painting of the façade of Rouen Cathedral which he painted at different times of the day and during different seasons, not only unnerved the art-loving audience at the time because these paintings were immersed in an ocean of impressions, but they also challenged the image of the world embodied by the cathedral – the timeless validity of the Christian belief system. The dissolution of given form into an overall impression comprising individual brush strokes and a bright, ever-changing play of light, does indeed materialise light, but it also dematerialises both the world of objects and figurative aspects of painting, not to mention the claims of an institutionally established religious system – in the first instance towards abstraction, and in the latter, towards independent artistic spirituality. Reusse is aware of the point within abstraction at which painting and photography coincide and drift apart again, a moment William Turner prefigured in his painting even before the invention of photography and whom the Impressionists in turn re-evaluated and emulated accordingly. Reusse's thermographs draw energy from painterly reactions to photography, they embrace them in their compositional process as a photographic way of seeing and open them up at that point where they no longer seem to know where to go. Logically, the painterly scope of his photographs can only derive from abstract painting.

An orange-coloured thermograph which shows two images of a crate, one image on top of the other, provides the practical apotheosis of this insight, duly linking up with the non-figurative paintings by Mark Rothko. Rothko underwent a number of different stylistic phases, including Impressionism, before he finally arrived at

abstract painting towards the end of the 1940s. In contrast to the initial photographs of cold crates that show up as blue when translated into a visible spectrum of colour, for his piece entitled *Rothko* (2001, C-Print/Diasec, 250 x 120 cm), Reusse used the photograph of a crate emitting warmth, which becomes visible within the field of orange. Klaus Honnef observes that Reusse, recording empty rooms after chairs or crates had been removed, came across “strange coagulations” or “formal structures, as in the painting of Mark Rothko”.⁽⁷¹⁾ Perhaps Rothko’s path as a painter needs to be reconsidered. At any rate, Reusse’s observation opens up a hitherto unknown connection in the appreciation and perception of abstract painting and photography. *Rothko* repeats the orange, diffuse, rectangular image of a crate – still in its cuboid form, beginning to dissolve at the edges within an ill-defined space, above the surface of which a dark red, narrow zone of colour hovers. By comparison, Rothko’s colour-field aesthetic presents irregular, asymmetrical forms. In Reusse’s collection of comparable images, similar serried, block-like formations obtain, for example the work *Boxes* (1996, C-Print/Diasec, 300 x 300 cm) comprising nine blue panels. Reusse is economical when exhibiting his thermographs. At most, there will be one work per wall or a uniform presentation of images, hung either horizontally or vertically in strict, formal blocks, which effectively concentrates their compositional spatiality. Several works within one space require a degree of distance for viewing – some works are lying individually, as a pair or in a block on the floor. Far from becoming architectural in any way, they hover in front of the walls, unapproachable in their shiny flatness and rectangular clarity, as though material projections by an unknown/anonymous hand. With arrangements of this kind, Reusse is thinking about the exact geometrical forms and serial arrangements of Minimalism. He subjects their precision and coolness to artistic scrutiny by placing them in an imaginary encounter

with Rothko's abstract paintings. Using his own works, he scans preceding artworks for particular points through which his medium can emphasise key features – as if it were a seismograph recording the possibilities for the connection/switching of artistic modes of experience which seemed permanently separate due to the rupture of aesthetic norms and the passage of time. Similar methods of working and thinking can also be found in the work of Paul Thek and Rosemarie Trockel, the latter's arm sculptures from 2005 presented in their respective showcases clearly recalling Thek's work. During the 1960s, Thek equated his wax *Meat Pieces* to Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* and Larry Bell's glass cubes; he also complimented them with silver, glittering, slightly oscillating kinetic applications, not least to unmask “the coolness and refinement” of the New York art scene at the time as an insensitive, culturally vacuous attitude with regard to perception and experience, prompting him, in the 1970s, after a few digressions – which also led him via Josef Albers' tribute to the rectangle – to a viewer-based artistic spirituality. The intersection with another artwork or another artistic position can charge the logic of one's own work with communicative qualities. Had one of the Minimalists collaborated with Rothko, then perhaps a work such as Reusse's *Rothko* would have been the outcome. For Reusse, photography contains the potential for artistic crossover/connection which has the ability to return artistic demarcation and aesthetic norms to a communicative dialogue. The artist portraits group of works that Reusse has been working on since 1983, presents a constantly changing image of the energy involved in artistic collaboration and the concomitant artistic processes and strategies that enable an opening up of art. The encounter/interaction with the world of another artist is as least as important here as individual artistic contour/self-assurance.

Reusse has also recorded the thermal shadows left by the human body immediately after the subjects have left their chairs or the room. The way in which these thermographs lend dimension to the human body transcends the visually filtered warm/cold gradation of objects. Reusse, who has treated the sense of smell in humans and animals in a number of works, compares the traces of warmth left by the body with the trace of a smell: “Smell and warmth are subject to a different kind of temporality in our perception than a visual image. Both are simultaneously fleeting and sluggish. If we follow these waves, then this raises the question regarding the reliability of our perception. It is at least imaginable that hyper-sensitive individuals can feel body heat and reconstruct it in a similar way to dogs following a scent.”(72)

Smells are also associated with visual images/locations and then stored in the brain, whereby man and animals have developed different senses of smell, irrespective of individual sensibilities. The trace of warmth that a body leaves on a duvet, a pillow or a mattress, seems strange, vulnerable and dematerialised/abstract in its floating dissolution from the body. The sequence of images of a seated human body after a three to four minute absence (*Leaving Shadow/Human*, 1983, Polaroids and C-Print [80 x 58 cm]) reveals a metamorphic condition reminiscent of the diaphanousness of an insect, as though the proximity between man and insects, as the biologist Jean-Henri Fabre has described in his research,(73) has been actualised in a further observation, in order to confront the viewer with the question as to what the photographer is actually presenting.

Ghost (2009, B/W Print???, 120 x 160 cm) finally shifts absence as an inherent characteristic in photography into an intellectual game with the spectral/the uncanny, in which the formation of shadows manifests itself as a skull, as if Leonardo da Vinci were at work here, a formation however, which doesn't lay any claims to a thematic

cohesion in its very vagueness/faintness; indeed, doesn't challenge at all, but, like a mendicant, is dependent upon what the viewer can see and allow. *Ghost* reveals photography's individual relationship to death, it contextualizes and it depicts itself. As a result, everything is both open and closed at the same time. The photographic accuracy in relation to the object in question is redundant, "it unleashes a variety of different perspectives, with which to question and to reconfigure visibility *per se*", as Georg Christoph Tholen observes. Moreover, "the physical location of the body dissolves. Its supposed stability and permanence are lost nowadays in immaterial and virtual forms which, from time to time, seemed as spectral as those digitally combined images that can't or won't bear witness to any figurative immediacy." (74) *Ghost* also invokes that condition of limbo in which the images relate to time. The defamiliarised spectral physiognomies in the works *Himself in Joy* (2000, C-Print/Diasec, 180 x 280 cm) and *Himself in Joy II* (2000, C-Print/Diasec, 110 x 340 cm) are louder, and yet are likewise caught up in the fleetingness/transience, as are the skulls or the thermal shadows. In their skewed distortion and perpetual mutation within the field of abstraction, they can never be palpable, graspable. Photographs are not "slick images of a past moment, but rather a self-conflicting pre- and afterimage of a moment which retrospectively proves to be a significant intervention". (75)

Another sequence of works presents thermal images of farts as green clouds of mist measuring temperatures between 18° and 34° C and which are illuminated in extreme darkness/a vacuum, as if we are looking at distant lights in an infinite universe that have long since left the human body and its banal reality behind. The latent cynicism here comes to the fore at the point when the viewer discovers the bodily provenance of the cloud and the cosmic potential of the images begins to recede in his mind. Maybe he would have preferred to have remained ignorant/innocent. At the same

time, his reflection in the acrylic glass surface leads him into another fleeting shadow within the abstract composition.

The thermograph entitled *Hot Trace (Kriechspur)* (2004, C-Print/Diasec, 160 x 480 cm) depicts a mist-like trace of a path, which the artist has created by crawling across the room. Presented as work on the floor, it might easily develop its permeability just as well in different spatial systems of reference by releasing thematic content in its given context without forfeiting autonomy. In the context of an office building, in a park, a pedestrian precinct, a desert or in a church, the work proffers different statements about the structure of life and meaning and the inherent perceptions and interpretations, ultimately demanding a response on the part of the viewer.

Works such as *Sleeper* or *Sleeper/Victims* (1996–2008, C-Print/Diasec, 180 x 240 cm), belong to another group of thermographic images, which in turn are part of the *Leaving Shadows* group of works. Reusse has consciously readopted his early involvement with journalistic photography here and spent time with his thermographic camera taking photographs in streets, backyards or deserted buildings, in order to record the thermal shadows of physically and psychologically vulnerable, intoxicated or exhausted people, who a short time earlier had been lying, cowering or sleeping there. Using a journalistic approach, he records images of people who have lost their footing in society, who are living on the street or who are victims of isolation, social deprivation, loneliness, poverty, debility and despair. Without adopting a condemnatory stance, Reusse presents the images of bright, seemingly white residual traces of body warmth against a grey-black background. Whereas the individual faces of the people themselves appear in the highest degree of abstraction, the anonymity and formal lack of focus contributes to a contextualization, insofar as the lost figures seem to be liberating themselves as luminous apparitions from their

respective predicaments. This journalistic approach turns from the factual towards a thematic openness, just as the cynical view in the artist portraits of Harry Kramer and Rob Scholte becomes an attitude. The question regarding hope doesn't arise and the questions regarding salvation and redemption also remain unspoken and unanswered. Reusse has come across a possible process of transformation within invisibility/non-visibility itself. By making use of "apparative realities" (S. R.) and the withdrawal of his own individual viewpoint in the moment he takes the picture, he succeeds in recording/tracking down pictorial realities that demand an alien, contrary way of seeing, possibly even suspending the separation of the real and the *imaginary*, as Sartre describes it, thereby releasing the imaginary from its isolation. Sartre's "imaginary ego" disintegrates whenever it encounters reality: For him, entering the *imaginary* is inextricably linked with one's own irrealisation, for "the dream is the complete realization of a closed consciousness".⁽⁷⁶⁾ Reusse doesn't depict the temporal and spatial shadows of imaginary worlds, but records the thermal shadows of real bodies and objects that are enveloped by an imaginary potential in their lucent reality. Reusse's lost figures, which he found on the periphery of society somewhere in the everyday reality of urban space (for example, in Mühlheim, Marseille, Lisbon and Cologne), are dematerialised in the apparative processing by the thermal imaging camera. They enter into a different pictorial reality which – fusing the imaginary and the real into an indistinguishable amalgam – presents them as light forms immersed in an abstract, oneiric beauty, as "imaginary sculptures" (S. R.). With regard to the question as to what is actually real and what is a lost figure or light form, the viewer will at most reply with a laconic shrug of the shoulders. Ultimately, the thermal traces derive from the bodies of lost figures, they bear witness to their physical reality and, at the same time, unleashed from assessment criteria in the real world, they present

their imaginary form that permits the viewer to move freely within the imaginary realm. As dreaming sleepers, they demand respect; disturbing their sleep is tantamount to a crime. Confronted by the sight of the *Sleeper/Victims*, Guillaume Apollinaire would possibly have remarked to the viewer that they were “as beautiful as the chance encounter of an umbrella and a sewing machine on a dissecting table!” and then shrugged his shoulders – this from the poet who lived in an era before the advent of televisions, PCs and the Internet! By the time Apollinaire would have uttered his surreal observation, Reusse’s *Sleeper/Victims* would themselves have arrived in a dream world, where the unconscious holds sway, where images that no one will ever know appear and disappear, images that occur, internally, over which the dreamer himself has no command. Without the dreamer there can be no dream, without the dream, no dreamer. The only problem is: who is dreaming the sleeping dreamer? At any rate, the images stand up to the memories of meanings which might ultimately break the picture’s spell. Without making demands or reproaches, they are waiting for the “cleansing of the antennas” (Paul Thek) and for the viewer’s “mind to take a deep breath” (S. R.). Reusse wants to show these photographs of such victims in this thematically broadened reality (to which the viewer can gain access if he is so inclined) in the same way that he sharpens the focus of the fuzzy wolf images, when he reflects upon the wolf and the interpretations/prejudices of humankind which have gathered around it, until he arrives at the point where he encounters the *punctum* of the images, where it becomes clear to him that an interpretative approach cannot work, but only open perception. The realities confronting him are the realities he discovers, indeed, must discover for himself. Susan Sontag’s demand for a precise, incisive and affectionate description of artworks in lieu of interpretation(77) finds its artistic transference in the images of down at heel/lost souls in Reusse’s

Sleeper/Victims. Perhaps the viewer will also notice that Reusse is continuing his earlier interest in blindness. He has shifted it more towards an idea of social blindness, deriving from his engagement with the “intellectually rigorous methods of inquiry and reflection”(78) exhibited by the socially-critical California Institute of Arts (CalArts), thereby discovering images that do not condemn, but remain silent somewhere between pain and transfiguration. They permit a certain silence to become audible and function in a space beyond political correctness, as if they can, because they are photographic images, anticipate death/the end which these victims, photographed in such situations, repeatedly experience: “already dead in the future anterior and past anterior”.(79)

Whereas Derek Jarman’s film *Blue* (1993) uses a limited series of luminous blue, static images, sounds and voices, thereby taking place in the imagination of the viewer, viewers confronted with the sleeper thermographs, embracing the filmic potential of Reusse’s reactivated cinematographic images, might imagine, for example, the sounds of the street and backyards or, indeed, the echo of steps inside a deserted building. The silence of photography would then be led back to life itself, an imaginary film would be rewound, showing the lost history of the person in question before reaching the point where Reusse photographed him or her – as the first or last image of the film. Recognising the abstractness of the images, blinded by the light of the victim living on the periphery of society beyond fear, disgust, rejection, discrimination and recognising the abstract nature of the images as a void – perhaps the viewer would then arrive at an appreciation of his own vulnerable areas and weaknesses. Perhaps he would also be prompted, as were Harry Kramer, César or Rob Scholte in Reusse’s artist portraits, to show his own wound and enter into a dialogue with himself in order to ask questions about his own history, his attitudes and possibly

also his own behaviour/actions. The existential radiance of Reusse's thermographs, in particular the *Sleeper/Victims*, is peacefully ineluctable. The viewer might even feel inclined to co-opt these images temporarily for his own self-portrait.

The sequence *Drawing by Chairs* picks up on the photographs of empty chairs (*Leaving Shadow/2 Chairs*, 1994/1989, 3 minutes after leaving the place, C-Print/Diasec, 110 x 60 cm; *Leaving Shadow/Chair-Double*, 1994/1989, 3 minutes after leaving the place, C-Print/Diasec, 200 x 180 cm) which render visible the luminous, blue, residual presence of a person, at the same time, by virtue of the empty chair, anticipating what will have turned into his absence in a few minutes with the passage of time, duly becoming a fully-fledged symbol of absence, just as the future/imminence itself will soon be the past. The *Drawing By Chairs* images show the linear marks that come about when a chair or a number of chairs are dragged across the floor. Reusse reduced the temperature of the room and the chairs, and then dragged the chair legs in bold expansive movements across the heated floor, which produced 300 x 500 cm drawing of an elk, which neatly links up with the reactivated images of the elephant and the giraffe. There are thermographic images of this drawing on the floor, for example *Elch* (1987, 150 x 180). The *Drawing by Chairs* images are endowed with a juicy, green, lemon or orange palette and seem to have dispelled all thoughts about absence, introducing instead the playful notion that they might be able to move independently and produce drawings, dissolve themselves from their figuration by drawing lines, embrace artistic activity and use the photograph as evidence to prove that objects need not necessarily be viewed as *dead objects*, but are integral to human agency. Reusse is setting up a generously artistic, cryptically humorous loop here in order to polarise the stultifying closeness of death/transience

within the present and thereby relativise its onerous claim upon the absolute in the ease and lightness of the drawn line.

Moving Images – Light Sculptures – Authenticity – Temporality

Stephan Reusse's work is characterised by an artistic consistency and systematic approach which juxtaposes photography's tendency towards (absolute) subjectivity and its apparative and concomitant contextual realities. Reusse doesn't proceed from the reality of the image, instead he allows seeing, experiencing and thinking to coincide in the most unfiltered way possible within the artistic process itself. Media-reflexive questions are combined with the artist's experimental attitude and approach. Early works from the 1980s, such as reactivations of a photograph in a performance or the thermographic depictions of body temperature, create a temporal and spatial distance between the artistic image and the moment in which the photograph is taken. Reusse's laser projects broaden this systematic approach for further abstractions and intensities, but, above all, they open up the question regarding the authenticity of the image. Whereas up to now, light, as one of photography's salient parameters, has not featured significantly in Reusse's photographic viewpoint, the laser line now makes "imaginary light sculptures" (S. R.) possible. They derive from a process of vectorisation, whereby they trace a filmed, actual movement and are not generated out of a virtual world. They demand an inversion in the way we think about things, because it is not the hand of the artist that draws the line of the animated laser figure, but instead the line, comprising dots of light, has the potential within itself to "think" the movement of, say, a mouse, a monkey or a dancer – and ultimately to render this thinking visible in a series of complex routines. Reusse "sees and thinks (...) in lines" (S. R.) in his latest laser works. Drawing has been a seminal activity for Reusse for a

long time. His photographic performances, objects and installations reveal themselves entirely as a kind of graphic orbiting around and filtering of an idea, in which Reusse discovers its intellectual scope and the material and formal corollaries. His drawings underpin his work rather like a web or scaffold of thought. However, he actually goes against his own identity as an illustrator in his laser works. He doesn't think *with* the line, but his thinking actually slips/crawls *into it*, and, in so doing, discovers movement as though the line itself were imagining its own motion, as though the "moving image" (S. R.) were visualising itself and thereby liberating itself from his authorship through this very process. In contrast to the laser works *Mice* (2007) and *Monks* (2007–2008), *Dominique* (2009) accrues a fascinating intensity by virtue of this liberating process in the anthropomorphisation of the line as an outline and trajectory of a human body. Whereas *Mice* and *Monks* utilise green laser beams like those deployed in military or medical contexts, the line of light in *Dominique* seems to have been filtered through the movements of a human figure. It appears as a luminous white line made up of diamantine light dust and defies any figurative description as a result of its non-material effect. This non-material effect is confronted by an apparative and computerised reality that had to be specially developed for these works, for example, the white light for *Dominique* or the fixing of the actual physical space through which the mice would run. In the case of these light sculptures, Reusse is operating within a field in which artistic demands upon the "moving line" and its own permeability in the compositional process are linked with the capacity for abstraction and technological pioneering. Reusse regards the light sculptures as a turning point in his artistic oeuvre. Whereas photography had to assert itself both artistically and media-reflexively during the 1970s and for a long time after, since 1990, Reusse has methodically tried to "use media directly" in order to track down the

energy and power of the medium within his pictorial language and thereby to create artworks that do not explain themselves, but “are immediate” (S. R.). In so doing, he links the question regarding the *authentic image* to the question of the depiction of an *authentic movement*. Real movements seem so familiar, so self-evident, but even imitating the most rudimentary movement using one’s own body prompts a number of questions which are immediately suggested by the clumsiness of the imitator, without necessarily finding expression in language, let alone in one of its possible images.

The methods and processes that informed the preliminary work on the laser installations, such as *Mice* (2007), *Monks* (2007–2008) and *Dominique* (2009), are not born of the promise of success, but take place in an atmosphere of approximation, convergence and renewed experimentation. Whether they will succeed or not, hangs perpetually in the balance. The idea of *thinking along a line* calls for the readiness to remove oneself further and further away from a results-oriented way of thinking in favour of process-based imponderables. The material itself, the real sequence of movements, the line and the computerised possibilities correct the artist’s thinking, which can be a painful enterprise. The processes of thinking and working present him with the image as a slowly moving, resistant entity. Indeed, Reusse, as he points out, “experienced (these works) whilst doing them”. He doesn’t concentrate on comic-like movements, but prefers to capture the most fluid images of movement possible. This refining process provides him with the opportunity to do justice to his own demands of the image and not to those of the market resulting from the dominant position of media usage and image production. Reusse tries to keep his light sculptures as free as possible from manipulation of any kind, either by himself or a third party, and thereby simultaneously to isolate abstraction itself (as an entity) from the misunderstandings and prejudices embodied by their non-figuration, in order to create an authentic image

which doesn't derive from animation or cyberspace, but which, like the thermographs, is predicated upon a "genuine event" (S. R.).

The media-reflexive trace has again concentrated itself in the light sculptures in order to free itself from itself at the same time. A young man explains to his mother whilst they are both standing in front of Reusse's laser installation *Mice* (2007): "They are not there, they are only in your memory." However, this doesn't tell us what the young man is remembering when viewing Reusse's *Mice*.

On the basis of his experiences with images that don't depict transience and death thematically, reflecting instead the inherent death within photography, Reusse has spent a lot of time thinking about the kind of animal best suited to the development of his light sculptures. Ultimately, he considered the mouse, a flickering, nervous life form perpetually on the move, to be best equipped for the development of a moving composition based on a linear conception.

Whereas Reusse approached *Mice* as a conceptual piece, *Dominique* is based upon a performance by the dancer Dominique Merci, whose "exact" (S. R.) choreography Reusse discussed with the dancer and subsequently filmed during a performance, ultimately recreating it retrospectively by means of several drawings. In this instance, Reusse carefully researched performance as a medium by performing artistic moves himself, as well as investigating dance. Reusse considers the movements of Dominique Merci, who is a member of the Pina Bausch dance ensemble, to be particularly well suited for the facilitation of various processes of transference which, in turn, lead to an *authentic image* of a human figure engaged in a creative set of movements. They are filtered through his set of criteria governing an abstract composition or image, particularly when he is at pains to approach the subject matter as freely as possible. In his approach to photography, Eadweard Muybridge observed

in 1878 that a horse hovers for a moment whilst galloping, a phenomenon which, before the advent of his photographic sequences taken in quick succession, could not be seen by the naked eye. Artists during the early twentieth-century embraced the notion of hovering, that is to say, or the freedom from the laws of gravity and duly adopted it into their way of thinking. “The Spiritual in Art”, one of Wassily Kandinsky’s key artistic insights, is unthinkable without the transformational potential of hovering – that transient and thus indefinable release from space and time. Challenges to artistic abstraction arise from thinking about/the perception of hovering, which are not met by non-figuration alone.

The laser installations are intended both for interior spaces as well as for outdoor contextualisations – thus the mouse appears on the facade of the Spanish synagogue in Prague or on a wall in Paris covered with ivy; the monkey swings along the guttering of a house in Mannheim. According to Reusse, these images “are independent of any projection surfaces”.

Mice could also be seen in 2008 at the opening of the Nam June Paik Art Center in Yongin-Si (South Korea) and in 2009 within the framework of the exhibition *100 Stories about Love* in The Museum of the 21st Century in Kanazawa (Japan). The exhibition visitors reacted to the mouse running up the wall by jumping up behind it or by making attempts to catch it or to outrun it. Reusse then recorded this spontaneous, interactive behaviour in photographic sequences. The spontaneous interactions of the exhibition visitors assimilate the dialogic potential upon which his photographic works likewise thrive – be it their interconnection with existentialist forms of activity in performance art, or the collaborative concept inherent in his artist portraits. It would seem as though this potential has once again become palpable in heightened form in his light sculptures.

Reusse's artistic attitudes and experiences penetrate deep into the innermost layers of his oeuvre. When the line unfolds and moves, bulges and morphs to describe a particular form, sometimes non-figuratively and then again more figuratively, the viewer – apart from the memory of the animated mouse, monkey or dancer – gets the impression he can read the artist's mind. Indeed, he has an inkling that he can actually see the process of neural switching which the movement has undergone in the cognitive process of becoming an image, before it is visible in the very iconicity which it now presents. The quality of Reusse's laser installations resides in the fact that the resistance of the working process is not inherently visible, but that they are executed with such ease, as if they had always been there.

Reusse explores the artistic possibilities of the illuminated line experimentally by developing sketches using fluorescent or neon tubes, which, in a similar way to the laser works, do not need projection surfaces and are able to take their own mobile temporality into any given space. The viewer doesn't see a slick, arced fluorescent line, but an animated "slightly wobbly" trajectory of the line imitating the "ductus" (S. R.) of the hand. The most recent example is [title missing?????] (2010). A swinging noose is projected onto a wall. Three neon configurations, approximately two metres high switching on and off in staggered sequence, suggest its movement. Although it at first appears to be the same illuminated noose, it is actually different in all three configurations as it passes through its trajectory. At some point, a toxic turquoise and pink, luminous speech bubble appears in a different spot, drawn with a casual attention to line, and which seems to be commenting upon this difference: "Take three for one." The number three is arbitrary. It could be more. And then, as if a voice were wandering through space or different voices are calling out, one after the other, from different positions, a second voice crops up in another speech bubble

elsewhere, now unmistakable in its comic-like language: “Given it up without a chair.” Then a third speech bubble follows: “You’ll figure it out somehow.” In the meantime, the empty noose swings to and fro as a continuous image of critical denials, memories and possibilities, but also one of seduction.⁽⁸⁰⁾ Fear, menace, punishment, hostile destruction, inhumanity and humanity, which lie between the death penalty and suicide, guilt and innocence, also resound with each oscillation. The illuminated noose questions the viewer’s ideas and feelings about many things, for example, in response to the hanging of a young Islamic woman who had been accused of promiscuity, whilst the man who raped her was among the crowd of spectators. The work shines a disruptive beam of light into the unconscious mind, where deeply hidden attitudes concerning life, death and humanity reside/are buried. The questions can be asked in a variety of ways and have a lasting effect. They probably tend to be more direct than Jenny Holzer’s reflective statements that interpolate themselves variously into the attitudes of the viewers in the form of scrolling texts, such as “ABUSE OF POWER COMES AS NO SURPRISE”, “MURDER HAS ITS SEXUAL SIDE”, “TORTURE IS BARBARIC”, “YOUR OLDEST FEARS ARE YOUR WORST ONES”, etc. in *Truisms* (1977–1979), or in the *Venice Text* (1990): “I ALWAYS JUSTIFIED MY INACTIVITY AND CARELESSNESS IN THE FACE OF DANGER FOR I WAS SURE TO BE SOMEONE’S VICTIM.”⁽⁸¹⁾ Whereas Holzer works with language and anticipates the ability of the viewer to engage in discourse, anyone viewing Reusse’s neon drawings remains uncertain. The viewer, in Reusse’s case, perpetually has the equivocal openness of the image before his eyes, in all its merciless simplicity and multivalent danger; he may possibly translate this image into a series of questions, which in turn will engender an opinion at times or a tangled web of answers, or perhaps will even remain unanswered. The rhizomatic perspectivity and general character of works like

Holzer's *Truisms* underwent subsequent transformation to become more personal, subjective textual statements, such as her Venice text for the Venice Biennale (1982).⁽⁸²⁾ By comparison, Reusse's *[neon drawing – replace with title!]* oscillates between the general and the personal in the indissoluble ambivalence of an image which cannot be captured by language. Reusse has also maintained the Barthesian *punctum* of photography in this work. The speech bubbles remain silent, as indeed does the swinging noose. In view of the questions that might be circling in the mind of the viewer, Reusse's neon sketch manages to afford itself a cheeky grin, a degree of humour, not out of disrespect, but because it does not want to enter into a symbiotic relationship with the viewer – as if not merely the questions themselves were being challenged in “prodigious confusion”,⁽⁸³⁾ but as though the artwork itself were actually posing the question as to whether it is holding its own as an image. The serious aspect in the white neon noose sketch is relativised by the casual and comic-like graphic form of the colourful speech bubbles. Reusse did a great number of drawings during the preparatory phase of this work. These drawings include many illustrations and studies of knots. Other drawings focus on the shape of electric chairs. The drawing *plane digit 1* depicts an electric chair in which its manacled victim is recumbent. Whilst working on the drawings, Reusse also compiled information about people who had been sentenced to death and were either awaiting execution or had already been executed. Artistically speaking, adopting Andy Warhol's screen prints of electric chairs would have been tantamount to heteronomy. Following on from his animated laser works, Reusse is not searching for an image of an object, rather, for the image of a movement or motion which can open up the human dimension or angle for the viewer. In so doing, he is not concerned with the rapid effects on the increasingly sharp cutting edge of media art, which have a tendency to exhaust themselves all too

quickly, but with the pursuit of an inconsumable image. Reusse's neon sketch is not condemnatory; it doesn't distort, nor is it insistent, rather, it poses questions in an open, serious yet humorous vein. The viewer can save his neck at any time. Viewed as a decelerated pendulum of a clock, the swinging noose seems to arrest time itself, to de-objectify the time-devouring object-clock, to disengage time from its ownership,⁽⁸⁴⁾ to provide a temporal dimension, to slow down accelerating time, to render visible the passage of time, and to inhabit in the infinite silence of time.

1 All the following uncredited statements made by Stephan Reusse derive from recorded conversations with the author.

2 Stephan Reusse, *Exposed Process. Künstler-Portraits* exh. cat. (Kassel, 1986). The catalogue design resembles a roll of film.

3 Harry Kramer in Stephan Reusse, *Exposed Process. Künstler-Portraits*, n. pag.

4 Cf.. Joseph Needham, "Lu Gwei Djen, Sexualhormone im Mittelalter," in *Endeavor* (1968), pp. 130–132. Cf. Wilhelm Sandermann, *Das erste Eisen fiel vom Himmel. Die großen Erfindungen der frühen Kulturen* (Munich, 1978), p. 162 f.

5 Armin Weiss, "Ein Geheimnis des chinesischen Porzellans," in *Angewandte Chemie* 75 (1963), p. 755.

6 Jacques Brosse, *Magie der Pflanzen* (Düsseldorf, 2002), p. 81.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 232.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 81.

10 art & film, curated by *_vienna* 2010, may 6–june 5 (flyer).

11 An Interview with Matthias Müller and Christoph Girardet by Elena Oroz, published 10.02.2010, <http://www.expcinema.com/site/>

12 Peter Sloterdijk, *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt a. M. 1983), p. 208.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 209.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 296 f.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 297.

16 *Loc. cit.*

17 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* (New York, 1981), p. 30. The difference between the amateur and the professional is not important for Barthes's observation of photographs/photography. Cf. the parenthetical comment on p. 98: "Usually the amateur is defined as an immature state of the artist: someone who cannot – or will not – achieve the mastery of a profession. But in the field of photographic practice, it is the amateur, on the contrary, who is the assumption of the professional: for it is he who stands closer to the *noeme* of Photography."

18 Sloterdijk (see note 12), p. 269.

19 Cf. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea* (London, 1965), p. 18. This passage describes a small woman in sky-blue, waving a handkerchief, laughing and running backwards, colliding with an African wearing cream-coloured raincoat, who is turning the corner: "we would have laughed at the stupefaction which appeared on those two childish faces."

20 Ibid., p. 21.

21 Ibid., p. 57.

22 Ibid., p. 60.

23 Ibid., p. 53.

24 Ibid., p. 58.

25 Sloterdijk (see note 12), p. 269.

26 Harry Kramer, "Sterben ist im Leben wenig neu, jedoch auch Leben, freilich, ist nicht neuer ... (Jessenin)," in Michael Willhardt, *Der Alleinunterhalter: Harry Kramer* (Ostfildern, 1995), p. 144.

27 Cf. *Stephan Reusse. Safari Deutschland*, exh. cat. Galeria Roma E Pavia (Porto 1989).

28 Susan Sontag, "Foreword," in Peter Hujar, *Portraits in Life and Death* (New York, 1976), p. 10.

29 Carl Aigner, "Im Bilde des Lichts. Kommunikative Eigenschaften und Sichtbarkeit im Werk von Stephan Reusse," in *Stephan Reusse. Works 2003–1982* exh. cat. (Vienna, 2003), pp. 20–25, here p. 21.

30 Cf. *Stephan Reusse. Safari Deutschland* (see note 27).

31 Barthes (see note 17), p. 19.

32 Larry Ball et al., *30.000 Jahre Kunst: Das künstlerische Schaffen der Menschheit durch Raum und Zeit* (Berlin, 2008).

33 Stephan Reusse, "Collaborations I, 1982–1986. Fotoarbeiten und Installationsobjekte," in *Stephan Reusse. Sumpfbüthen & Collaborations* (Cologne,

1996).

34 Cf. *Stephan Reusse. Safari Deutschland* (see note 27).

35 Egidio Alvaro, “Diagonale/espace critique, un combat culturel,” in *Lattitudes*, 4 décembre (1998), pp. 25–29, here p. 28.

36 Vito Acconci, “Performance after the Fact,” in Nicolas Bourriaud, *Documents sur l’Art Contemporain* (Paris 1992).

37 Gene R. Swenson, “Beneath the Skin. Interview with Paul Thek,” in *Art News* (April 1966), p. 33 f.

38 Barthes (see note 17), p. 70.

39 Siegfried Zielinski, “Wolfsbilder,” in *Stephan Reusse. Leaving Shadows* exh. cat. Galerie Feichtner & Mizrahi (Vienna, 2002), p. 7; reprinted in *Stephan Reusse. Works 2003–1982* (see note 9), p. 37 f.

40 Mark Rowlands, *The Philosopher and the Wolf. Lessons from the Wild on Love, Death, and Happiness* (London, 2009), p. 3 f.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

42 Stephan Reusse, “Collaborations I, 1982–1986, Fotoarbeiten und Installationsobjekte,” in *Stephan Reusse. Sumpfbüten und Collaborations* (see note 33).

43 *Stephan Reusse. Works 2003–1982* (see note 29), p. 108.

44 Antonin Artaud, “Van Gogh. The Man Suicided by Society,” *Artaud Anthology* (San Francisco, 1965), pp. 135–163, here p. 143.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 156.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 157.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 159.

48 Paul Thek, untitled, in *Paul Thek. The Personal Effects of the Pied Piper* exh. cat. Galerie Alexandre Iolas (Paris, 1976).

49 Cf. Marietta Franke, *Der absurde Blick. Entwicklungsfähigkeit, Spiritualität und Abstraktion bei Michael Buthe* (Frankfurt a. M. et al., 2010) p. 48 ff.

50 The Kunstverein Speyer exhibited works by Stephan Reusse and Hubert Faath as part of an exhibition entitled “artist & artist”. The artists are otherwise unconnected.

51 Susan Sontag, “Melancholy Objects”, *On Photography* (London, 1979), pp. 51–82, here p. 70.

52 Iris Därmann, “Noch einmal: 3/4 Sekunde, aber schnell,” in Georg Christoph Tholen, Michael Scholl, Martin Heller, eds., *Zeitreise. Bilder/Maschinen/Strategien/Rätsel* exh. cat. Museum für Gestaltung Zürich (Zurich, 1993), pp. 189–206, p. 192.

53 Sontag, “Melancholy Objects” (see note 51), p. 71.

54 Barthes (see note 17), p. 92.

55 Ibid., p. 77.

56 Ibid., p. 79.

57 Ibid., p. 91.

58 Ibid., p. 92.

59 Jacques Derrida, “The Deaths of Roland Barthes”, *The Work of Mourning* (Chicago, 2001), p. 39.

60 Ibid., p. 54

61 Jean Baudrillard, “On disappearance,” in David B. Clarke et al., eds., *Fatal Theories* (New York, 2009), p. 26.

62 Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature. A Necessary Unity* (New York, 1979), p. 48.

Cf. also p. 19, where Bateson explains: “Notably, I shall assume that thought resembles evolution in being a stochastic (...) process.” Cf. also p. 230 (Glossary): “If a sequence of events combines a random component with a selective process so that only certain outcomes of the random are allowed to endure, that sequence is said to be stochastic.”

63 Thomas Bernhard, quoted from Peter Gendolla, “Verdichtungen. Das Gehirn der Literatur als Zeitmaschine,” in *Zeitreise. Bilder/Maschinen/Strategien/Rätsel*, pp. 379 f.

64 Baudrillard, *America* (London and New York, 2010) (1988), p. 6.

65 Ibid., p. 72

66 Ibid., pp. 72 f.

67 Ibid., p. 72.

68 Klaus Honnef, “Stephan Reusse,” in *Stephan Reusse. Works 2003–1982* (see note 29), p. 7.

- 69 Aigner (see note 29), p. 24.
- 70 Cf. *Stephan Reusse. Works 2003–1982* (see note 29), pp. 74–91.
- 71 Honnef (see note 68), p. 15.
- 72 *Stephan Reusse. Works 2003–1982* (see note 29), p. 48.
- 73 Cf. Jean-Henri Fabre, *The Life of the Fly: With Which Are Interspersed Some Chapters of Autobiography* (Gloucester, 2007). Fabre was not interested in theories and systems, but in the observation of details (field research).
- 74 Georg Christoph Tholen, “Momentane Gestalten. Von der Inkonsistenz der Zeit,” in *Stephan Reusse. Leaving Shadows* (see note 39), p. 35.
- 75 Loc. cit.
- 76 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary. A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination* (London and New York, 1980) (1940), p. 165.
- 77 Susan Sontag, “Against Interpretation,” in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London, 2009) (1961), pp. 3–13, here pp. 11 ff.
- 78 [www://calarts.edu](http://www.calarts.edu)
- 79 Derrida (see note 59), p. 30.
- 80 Cf. Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction* (Montreal, 2001).
- 81 *Jenny Holzer. The Venice Installation* exh. cat. United States Pavilion, The 44th Venice Biennale 1990.
- 82 Michael Auping, “Reading Holzer or Speaking in Tongues,” in *Jenny Holzer. The Venice Installation* (see note 81), pp. 25–37, here p. 28 and p. 32.
- 83 Baudrillard (see note 64), p. 71.
- 84 Cf. Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* (London and New York, 1996), p. 119.