

‘supersampling - antialiasing’

| | | |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | Title supersampling - antialiasing |
| | exhibition catalogue, 2007 | Location dreizehnzwei |
| Artists Andreas Heller, James Ireland | | |

Andreas Heller

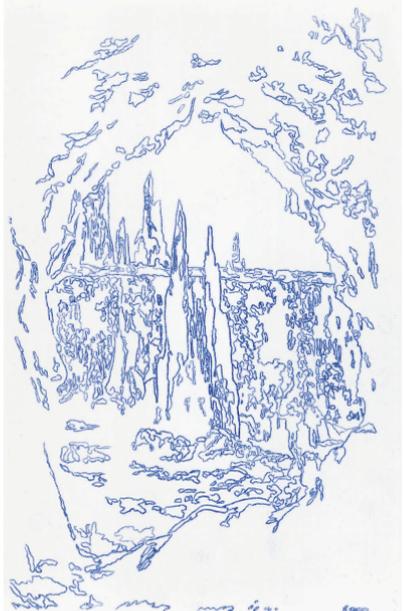
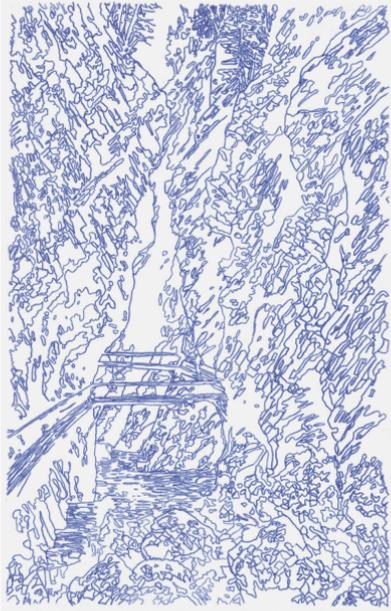
'1961', '2001', 2006

C-Print, 14 cm x 14 cm, Passepartout, frame

Andreas Heller

'blueprints for a blackout', 2005/2006

Series, blueprint, paper, 39,2 x 30 cm



‘supersampling - antialiasing’

Artists: **Andreas Heller** (A), **James Ireland** (GB)

Exhibition design: Louise Hutchinson, David Komary

“SSAA” or “**supersampling-antialiasing**” refers to a graphics filter which uses diffusing and anti-aliasing techniques in order to present pixel-based images in a raster display (on a screen, for example) in a more “natural” fashion. In short: images are rendered in high resolution and then either diffused or anti-aliased through a bi-linear filter. In the context of this exhibition, “supersampling” could be read as a synonym for the way in which images are accessed and used, and “anti-aliasing” as a more general questioning of the way images currently exist.

Following on from the exhibitions “accept all cookies” (2005) and “on exit frame go loop” (2006), the current exhibition portrays naturalness as a cultural conception of nature. Bringing together the artists James Ireland and Andreas Heller, it reveals the landscape image to be the shared iconic figure of aesthetic reflection. Understood as a culturally constructed leitmotif, the landscape image becomes a visual descriptive formula for nature. It forms a tableau of media transmissions, a pattern of interference from earlier images and image modes. This aspect of self-referential visualisation, however, is – particularly in the context of perceiving nature and the landscape image – not new. On the contrary, Renaissance landscape painting plays a key role in shaping the contemplative perception of landscape that takes root amongst the rising bourgeoisie of the 18th century. The later romantic trope of tranquillity and wide open spaces, as well as the topos of an unmediated, authentic experience of nature, thereby lend themselves to being read as image practices that are historically conditioned by ideology and mentality. The landscape image appears to symbolise a collective imaginary text, it becomes an inter-media construction incorporating visual, linguistic and spatial representation.

Andreas Heller and James Ireland work – and here is a significant point of comparison – explicitly with pictorial reduction and visual emptying; these moments of reduction are variously dramatised as deliberately lacking projected content or evoking the cultural repertoire of nature images. In their drawing and sculpture, Heller and

Ireland certainly underpin their artistic questioning with an understanding of semiotics, revealing the culturally coded and media-determined symbols of the natural to be a collectively constructed text. On the other hand, both positions contrast this structuralist moment with a model of phenomenological reception and reflection which directly addresses the unfolding sensory perception of each individual viewer. In phenomenological terms, the “concrete ordering of the visible is not a ready-made provision that, in real terms, exists in things or, in ideal terms, in the spirit, or that merely derives from subjective experiences. The ordering of the visible comes into being at the time of seeing and with the things that are seen in the course of one experience that is played out between the seen, the seer and the fellow seer.”¹

The focus here is shifted to a central category and leitmotif of romanticism: the subject. Here too lies the relevance of the current recourse to romantic idioms in contemporary artistic production. This renders all the more important the question of how to conceive of the affective dimension of perception and of aesthetic feeling with respect to subjectification, without ending on the one hand in clichéd deconstructivisms and declarations of the death of the subject, or in transfigurations, escapism and affirmations (of the market) on the other. In the search to understand the relationship between reflection and affectivity, the landscape image becomes in these terms an aesthetic figure against which the question of immediacy and authenticity can be read inversely. Ireland and Heller are in this sense dramatising moments of immediacy always as unknown variables, as something indeterminate and as constitutive gaps, in order to allow them to be read in relation to the matrix of cultural presentational strategies constituted by affectivity, emotionality and subjectification.

In the series “1961”, “1967” and “2001” **Andreas Heller** groups and brings into confrontation with one another cut-outs from three maps of the Antarctic. What they share: the cartographic image-fragments show the southern “inaccessible pole”, the name given to the southern point of the earth most distant from all coastlines. The name describes a “place” – in reality a purely geographical construction – subject to the most extreme and hostile climatic conditions, and where, given that the continent is entirely covered in ice and snow storms, almost nothing can be seen. It is a place that is (prohibitively) difficult to reach and even to imagine. More specifically, this “inaccessible pole” marks on the one hand a topographical and on the other hand a semiotic gap. However, precisely in its indeterminacy this blank calls to mind the (romantic) figure of a white spot on the map, an area still to be discovered. In line with romantic discourse, the fictive voyager invariably imagines himself to be alone, to be a self-reflecting authorial subject in the wilderness, constructing himself as both searcher and discoverer.

The concept of a “most distant” place on earth evokes in this context an imaginary expedition into the impossible, a journey into nothingness. In anti-civilization, technophobic rhetoric, the “inaccessible pole” could be understood to mark the last untouched place on earth, a residuum of the “natural”.

A second, semiotic reading of Heller’s series of images reveals the paradox inherent in actively directing the image, the moment when the dispositif, that is the map, reproduces itself *ad absurdum*. At the same time, in precisely this referential uncertainty, the map opens itself up to being read as an ideological text, an ordering of space: “the inaccessible pole” which, as described above, defies perception and conception in all imaginable ways, becomes, or rather became, in spite of its inconsequence (in perceptive terms), an important symbol subject to political power-claims (territorial regulation and drawing borders), namely in 1958, by the USSR. In the procedures of demarcating, naming and regulating territory the map reveals itself to be an act of delimitation; it becomes a symbol of inclusion and exclusion in social, political and economic terms. The romantic overtones in Heller’s confrontational and comparative map-trilogy, the contemplative valorisation of potent nothingness, is here subject to an abrupt interruption and at this point renders visible the potentiality and political relevance of the map’s dispositif in question.

In this reading the symbolic blank merges into a “heterotopia”, an “oppositional placing, as enemy camp, as a place outside of all places.”² The imaginary construct of the “inaccessible pole” would then imply – all escapist ideas of experiencing a state of limbo and transcending barriers aside – a place from where modulations in spatial tectonics and interferences in the topography of place can be imagined.

In “Blueprints for a Blackout” Andreas Heller subjects 19th century copper engravings of Styrian landscapes to an abstracting process of iconic emptying: on the blueprint copies of the engravings Heller dissolves the landscape iconography into schematic linear sketching of aesthetic indifference. The landscape’s “originality” (its “natural beauty”), already mimetically translated into “artistic beauty” in the engraving, is in this third-hand mimesis deprived of all pictorial reference. The landscape appears dissolved in a heterogeneous web of lines, and all pictorial depth is correspondingly flattened. The copy appears fleeting, linked by the fading of the blueprint in sunlight to a process of image destruction. Heller dramatises pictorial emptying right down to the zero point of visibility, the failure of visibility: a blueprint for a blackout.

The complex structures of linear sketching reveal the image translated via the blueprint to be “a spectrum in which all frequencies are equally probable”.³ Speaking in terms of information theory, Heller opposes theories

of wholes and parts, derived from Gestalt theory; in this decoding process, the heterogeneous linear structures are turned into foils for “unmediated” landscape images. Heller’s blueprints reveal these to be inherently layered in the mental apparatus: as a “play of conventions that are already known to the sender and receiver from the start.”⁴ The artist uncovers in this reading the deeply sedimented and culturally reproduced mechanisms of subjective experience. Heller is revealing how the most personal aesthetic sensitivity, here coded and repeated in the romantic projection of imaginary landscapes, is the result of heteronomous constructions. “If subjectivity is merely the traces of codes that pass through the I they have just created”, then “the modern subject cannot be followed back to an origin, but rather [is situated] in the constellation”.⁵

Directing how the landscape image is seen provides – as already mentioned – our explicit point of comparison for the two artists. However, while Heller examines the inscriptions of the imaginary, the phantasma of the map’s objectivity and the semiotic readings of the imaginary landscape text, **James Ireland’s** sculptures reflect on the mediated construction of seeing at its most fundamental level. Ireland shows vision to be always prefigured and preformatted by media dispositifs – the human faculty of sight, the camera obscura, the camera etc. “It is no longer the representation of a subject (nature, divine will, reality) lying outside of the medium, but rather the current difference to the possibilities opened up by the medium [...] that is observed as information and realised as sense.”⁶ In this sense, the artist turns the act of seeing back on him/herself.

In James Ireland’s sculptural and dispositif-style arrangements, “natural” (found) and culturally-produced forms and objects are always intertwined, they give rise to oppositional, and yet at the same time intertwined symbols of supposedly differing ontologies. A geometrically structured steel frame, into which a piece of “nature”, a branch, has been fitted, takes on the form of a monochrome surface in a gentle blue wash. An imagined sky? The branch as the natural and the steel as the industrially processed – a contradiction?

The artist develops a syntax of the most elementary symbols of the natural which activates internalised images and projections from our cultural store of images. In evoking hypothetical landscapes, however, the landscape image does not just show itself to be a corpus of images, but also an epistemological concept central to accession into space and language. For Ireland, this “simulation” of the landscape image and of the natural goes hand in hand with the moment when the construct is revealed and the viewer dis-abused. In this sense the sculptures call upon the viewer’s active sensory-reflective perception to differentiate between aesthetic and ontological requirements: “So it appears that we are fulfilling today the Cartesian programme of perceiving nature through

her manner of production. We no longer understand nature in any sense as a given. Nature is what can in principle be produced".⁷ Nature's boundary can be seen much more readily in the need to differentiate between the act of observing and the conditions that accompany this act, historical, political, social and medial. "As the means [of manipulation] are now incontestably present, everyone must decide for himself where he wants to place nature's boundary. Even what he decides to 'leave' as nature, i.e. does not manipulate, is no longer something that is simply given."⁸

In "Knowledge Economy" Ireland dramatises the "natural" scene with the help of two elliptical steel frames. The frames have been put together in such a manner as to point to a more abstract conception of the dispositif, while their ability to turn on their own axis means that they can be seen in any number of modified and altered configurations, precluding any one fixed ideal. There is not "one" standpoint, just as there cannot be "one" relationship to nature. These perspectival shifts open up a field of opportunity for aesthetic perception, the kinaesthetic modalities and perceptive couplings of which make any conception of this act as (in a phenomenological sense) closed equally misplaced. In this sense, Ireland's works are visual arrangements, in a sculptural form, which can be construed as differential dispositifs in terms of the possibilities afforded by their creation of perspectives. In this, Ireland shows the implicit blind spot in every form of observation to be the "resistance of the real", where the observed always rebuffs the definitive fixation of meaning in active observational or conceptual-epistemic terms. Limits are not "unmissable, pre-existing or evident facts. Limits are creations of perspective in this act of description."⁹

Here we can see how ideas of the dispositif and the affective with regard to aesthetic perception converge: the "actual" – the so-called natural, true, real, the immediacy of the affective etc. – appears as that which does not allow itself to be perceived or represented, or, put even more strongly, it (paradoxically) appears precisely in this refusal. Just as it is impossible to understand aesthetic perception as something direct, in the sense of an "emanation" that comes from an object and only needs to meet with an innocent eye, the attempt to describe the affective potential of aesthetic perception as something "most personal" is in vain. Put another way: just as no ideal standpoint can be determined from which to view the object, what is "most personal" is always articulated only in relation and with recourse to, or in "negotiation" with, lines of subjectification and concepts of subjectivity. These, for their part, are intersubjective and heteronomously conditioned. Immediacy then appears beyond any

essentialist thoughts of originality as a confirmatory value inherent in the aesthetic experience enacted in intersubjectivity.

In conclusion, it is much less the landscape image itself that is revealed than a desire for immediacy that opens up as a blank. This blank was repeatedly able to dissolve and thematise landscape in its various representations and figurations, and it has consequently allowed landscape to appear relevant for contemporary art. The current recourse to the topos of landscape once more questions both the potential of sensory knowledge and landscape's potential to subjectify, that is to say it questions the subjectification of the observer in and as a result of the process of aesthetic perception. Resistant as this latter is to the "cognitio sensitiva" ("sensory knowledge", as Baumgarten called it),¹⁰ – and herein lies the open-endedness of the project – this process will always rebuff any final, exact allocation of meaning.

David Komary

- ¹ See Bernhard Waldenfels, 'Das Rätsel der Sichtbarkeit. Kunstphänomenologische Betrachtungen im Hinblick auf den Status der modernen Malerei', in Waldenfels, *Der Stachel des Fremden* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1991), p.209.
- ² Michel Foucault, 'Andere Räume', in *Aisthesis. Wahrnehmung heute*, ed. by Karlheinz Barck, Peter Gente, Heidi Paris & co. (Leipzig: Reclam, 1990), p.39.
- ³ Abraham A. Moles, *Informationstheorie und ästhetische Wahrnehmung* (Köln: DuMont, 1971), p.172.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p.259.
- ⁵ Peter Bürger, *Das Verschwinden des Subjekts* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1998), p.210, p.228.
- ⁶ Jörg Brauns, 'Dispositive. Überlegungen zur Ausdifferenzierung von Mediensystemen im 19. Jahrhundert'. <http://www.uni-weimar.de/~brauns/dispositive-vortrag.pdf>, see also Jörg Brauns, *Schauplätze* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2007), S. 137-193.
- ⁷ Gernot Böhme, *Die Natur im Zeitalter ihrer technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, *Kunstforum*, vol.114., see also Gernot Böhme, *Natürlich Natur: Über Natur im Zeitalter ihrer technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1992).
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ Hans Ulrich Reck, 'Flügel Schlag der Sehnsucht. Ein Versuch über das Ephemere und das Denken', in *Heute ist Morgen: Über die Zukunft von Erfahrung und Konstruktion* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2000), p.191.
- ¹⁰ See A.G. Baumgarten, *Texte zur Grundlegung der Ästhetik*, trans. and ed. by H.R. Schweizer (Hamburg: Meiner, 1983).

James Ireland

‘Waiting For The Moon To Rise’, 2005

Steel, glass, vinyl-print, nuts,
screws, washers, tree branch, 120 x 120 x 30 cm

‘Knowledge Economy’, 2006

Steel, tree branch, steel cable, 120 x 40 x 60 cm



Andreas Heller

1978 Born in Graz, Austria, lives and works in Graz and Vienna
2001-03 Art History and Architecture, Graz
since 03 Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna,
with Heimo Zobernig and Manfred Pernice

Exhibitions (Selection):

2007 'Dusk to Dusk', adapted space, Glockengasse, Vienna
'Rundgang 07', Aula, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna
2006 'Ausstellung zum Förderungspreis des Landes Steiermark für
zeitgenössische bildende Kunst', Neue Galerie, Graz
'waking doubting rolling shining and musing improvisation of a faun,
or on precarious life', curated by Adam Budak, Atelierhaus,
Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna
'Trans', Haus der Kunst, Budweis, Czech Republic
2005 'Gasometercity - Strom', Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna
'S/W', Forum Stadtpark, Graz
2004 'Fotografie als Kunst / Kunst als Fotografie / Kunstfotografie',
curated by Eva-Maria Stadler, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna
'UFOsichtungen', Quartier 21, MQ Wien, Vienna (SE*)
2003 'K.o.Z.', Auto, Vienna
'Projekt Gerald Neumann', Soundperformance
and Video-Installation, Cube, Institut für elektronische
Musik, Graz 2003
2002 'Kollektive', Kunstverein <rotor>, Graz

James Ireland

1977 Born in Derby, England
1999 Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, University of Oxford
2002 Residency, Triangle France, Marseille
2003 Residency, Spike Island, Bristol

Exhibitions (Selection):

2007 The International Triennial of Small Sculpture, Slovenia
'You Mistake My Horror For Love', Economist Plaza, London, (SE*)
'To The Left Of The Rising Sun', Castlefield Gallery, Manchester
2006 'Zoo Art Projects', Zoo Art Fair, London, (SE*)
'Uncanny Nature', ACCA, Melbourne
'Fantasy Island', Metropole Galleries, Folkestone
2005 'Fabrique du Sublime', La Galerie Centre d'Art
Contemporain, Noisy-le-Sec
'Straight Lines Are Curves From Very Large Circles',
fa projects, London, (SE*)
'This Is A Test', Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham, (SE*)
'Scape', CAC, Vilnius
2004 'Into My World: Recent British Sculpture', Aldrich
Contemporary Art Museum, Connecticut
'Collage', Bloomberg Space, London
2003 'Out Of Place', Harewood House, Leeds / Hatton Gallery, Newcastle
'All Of The Known Universe', Spike Island, Bristol, (SE*)
2002 'From A Distance', Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool
'James Ireland', fa projects, London, (SE*)
'Everything To Lose', Galerie La Friche, Marseille
'Viewfinder', Arnolfini, Bristol
'Unscene', Gasworks Gallery, London
2000 'A Square Of Ground', Jerwood Gallery, London
'New Contemporaries 2000', Milton Keynes Gallery/
Manchester Cornerhouse/ Inverleith House, Edinburgh

* SE = solo exhibition

supported by:

bm:uk



© 2007, dreizehnzwei, Vienna
<http://www.dreizehnzwei.net>

