

Artist: Olga Pedan  
Venue: Neuer Essener Kunstverein  
Exhibition Title: Managing Emotions  
Curated by: Moritz Scheper  
Date: September 12, 2020 - November 15, 2020  
Text:

The work of Swedish artist Olga Pedan is informed by a strong interest in communicative processes, understanding and its blind spots. In recent times, she has been moving towards a new form of abstraction, which deals with communication through the combination of schemes, diagrams and icons, thus bringing into focus the increasing abstraction of everyday reality. Most recently, Pedan has expanded the depth of her picture planes using a video game-like spatiality that is occasionally reminiscent of Orphic Cubism. However, the very individual visual language of her painting deals more with signs of our turbo-modernist social experience than with references inherent to painting. Perhaps one could even go so far as to say that her pictures problematise the medium of the picture as a whole, in that various other forms of communication such as writing, pictograms, icons and emojis are combined in them to form diffuse chains of information. The sheer mass of signs confronting us brings the management of such never-ending streams of information into focus, which often lead to exhaustion. A particular focus of Pedan's exhibition "Managing Emotions" is her interest in aspects of pedagogical communication, which are often one-sided and involve the application of subtle disciplinary measures. Pixelated silhouettes of cows, by means of which computer vision programs learn to recognise the outlines of objects that fit into the category 'cow' are combined with 'token boards' used in teaching that contain silhouettes of token objects to be collected in order to obtain a desired reward. The token boards are used as pedagogical tools representing a stand-in economy by which the learning progress and behaviour of a student is negotiated. Such visual-linguistic instruments of pedagogy - the picture card system *PECS* (*Picture Exchange Communication System*), which is mainly used in connection with autism, should also be mentioned here - integrate the inventory of their hidden objects into a larger examination of the pitfalls, power asymmetries and ambiguities of communicative processes. Information is never merely passed on, but rather constitutes, opens up and closes spheres of communication in the course of the process.