

Nina Könnemann

*Old Dogs*

Ausstellung 15.12.2021 - 29.01.2022

It's tempting to seek out fables where dogs are concerned, conditioned as we are to locate them out in our fellow animals ... Dogs, like humans, experience transitional rites in the cyclic phases of life. Old age is such a category (a passing through with de-stabilised relations). As the dog transitions through this new designation, #olddog, their new status renders some around them overweeningly helpful, others socially hesitant, repulsed sometimes even. They experience the polarising charge of ritual uncleanness—ambling around in a matrix of ambivalence—where love, pity, fawning praise and aggression co-mingle, overlapping on some water and biscuit bowl Venn diagram.

Pacing around the perimeter of a fence ... Is the dog acting out the exclusion of a human? A change in the dog's status is reflected by a spatial reality. It finds itself outside the delimited area for play, leisure and fun. The dog cannot pass the threshold of this fence, put up by humans, which is also a metaphorical one, a gap in dog-human communication. There is a gate too, but it's closed.

Some of Könnemann's dialogue appears to have migrated from the high speed realm of the video app "Piff-Paff" where Pavlovian users seek praise vicariously through their pets. Setting tasks, owners note the animals reactions, whether endearing, cute, strange, off, joyous, or mean. These formulas, tasks and reactions set the frame for endless variations of ritual play, complete with build ups, punchlines, and musical sampling.

The owner babbles, "babababaaa," appreciating their dog's presence as a portal through which to escape the bondage of human language. Dog owners invented concrete poetry long before it was called that.

A lot of owners would have you believe they love their dogs ... and surely they do. This is evident in the many dog portraits that lean heavily towards idealisation. The kind of image that Könnemann seems to coax out is of the underbelly of this kind of Love, the ambivalence of a carer, perhaps, walking a kind of Chinvat Bridge, with love on one side and stored up meanness on the other. Or of a detached observer, "saying it like it is," a pointing child, a muttering adult with an underdeveloped sense of empathy, compromised by phobia, a sentimentalist showing their fangs.

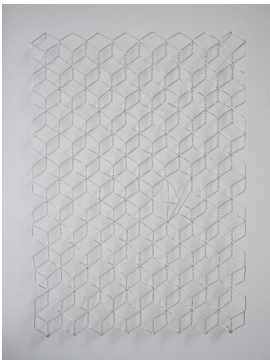
Ryan Siegan Smith

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Film, 4K, color/sound, 9 min, 2021

With Bahd, Tofu, Aennie, Paul, Ryan Siegan Smith, Lisa Jo, Jay Chung, Eva Könnemann, Nova Könnemann, Kamilla Bischof, and Inka Meißner.

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*Chicken Wire, Prototype (mistake), 0,8 mm, 2020*

350 x 247 x 10 mm

copper wire, silver coated, 0,8 mm