

A Fallen Type

Laura Schawelka: November 20 – December 29, 2021



In his 1887 book “A History of the Old English Letter Foundries” Talbot Baines Reed described a wondrous discovery in an incunabula from 1476: an “accidental impression of a type, pulled up from its place in the course of printing by the ink-ball, and laid at length upon the face of the forme, thus leaving its exact profile indented upon the page.” If a printer didn’t pay attention such a fallen type was printed and created a blind spot in the final book. However, while parts of the text are obscured, they provide a rare insight into the circumstances of the book’s production.

A fallen type marks the starting point of Laura Schawelka’s exhibition of the same name. Her new body of work searches for various forms of transmission errors and imaginary authenticity in different forms of reproductions, which unmask the mode of production and interrupt the digestion of a medium’s message. For instance, several works in the exhibition show unintentional or overlooked reflections of photographers or their studios in commercial images. Contrary to the statement of a painter in an intended reflection in a baroque still life these inadvertencies allow a glimpse into the creation of images in our capitalist system.

In another work Schawelka shows the first copy of the famous bust of Nefertiti, made in 1913 by Tina Haim-Wentscher, a young expressionist sculptor in Berlin. Since the surface of the bust is far too delicate to allow a cast from the original, Haim was commissioned to make a no-contact copy solely based on visual clues by James Simon - the bust’s original owner – before it was presented to the public. It is unclear why and by whom it was decided to reconstruct the lost parts and complete Nefertiti’s face, erasing the flaws of the ancient bust: Haim’s version of the queen has both eyes and both ears and offers an almost uncanny interpretation of the original that many unauthorized copies followed and follow until today. Here, the replica outstripped and superseded the original.

The invention of letterpress printing in the 15th century cultivated a new idea: The notion of the categorical difference between original and copy. The widespread availability of knowledge in printed form also gave rise to woodblock printed illustrations – often copies of paintings – and hence to the concept that both the written word and other forms of artistic expression are actually reproducible. This also came on the heels of a commercial change: the creation of a mass market of knowledge. Like many other similar technological shifts after it, its birth brought both democratization and monetization of information. In Schawelka's work glitches and flaws destabilize this dynamic and question the relationship between duplication, interpretation and reproduction and their consumption.

Laura Schawelka lives and works in Berlin. After studying at Städelschule, Frankfurt she received an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts, Valencia in 2015. She was an artist-in-residence at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris from 2017-18 and in 2019 she received the Q21 viennacontemporary Prize. This year she was awarded a research and travel grant by the Senate Department for Culture and Europe, Berlin. Recent solo exhibitions of her work have been held at Eikon, Vienna; FILIALE, Frankfurt; fiebach, minninger, Cologne and at the Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Ludwigshafen.

This exhibition was made possible with support by



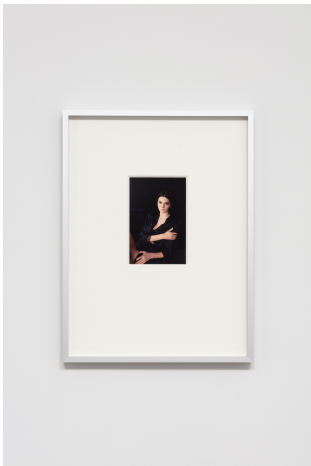


Fallen Type in De Sacramento Eucharistiae by Albertus Magnus, 1474

2021

Archival inkjet print

5.75 x 3.5 inches



Kendall Jenner at Madame Tussauds Berlin, 2021

2021

Archival inkjet print

5.75 x 3.5 inches



Colossus of Constantine, Marie Tussaud

2021

Metal, postcard, book page, 0-Euro notes, magnets

23.5 x 16.5 inches



Untitled (JD Sports)

2021

C-Print

33 x 23.5 inches



Untitled (Ole Lynggaard Copenhagen)

2021

C-Print

33 x 23.5 inches



Nefertiti by Tina Haim-Wentscher, 1913

2021

Archival inkjet print

5.75 x 3.5 inches



Mirror Video I

2021

HD-Video, no sound

2:27 min



Untitled (Webb's Auctions)

2021

PVC

110 x 47 inches