

Leslie Thornton – GROUND

February 27 – July 26 2020

With *GROUND* the Kunstverein Nürnberg – Albrecht Dürer Gesellschaft is proud to present the first European institutional solo exhibition of Leslie Thornton. Thornton has worked as an artist and filmmaker for more than four decades and has become known for her body of work that moves between film, photography, and installation. In her film *Ground* (2020), Thornton outlines the coming into form of a reality in which the ground or base—like the ground of a painting or the physical ground that human existence has always been pulled toward by gravity—becomes undefined.

The material in the film was produced by the artist during residencies at CERN and Caltech, and stays in Los Angeles and Oslo. The lower half of *Ground's* main motif sets the sprawl of Los Angeles, a place defined by the pace of its traffic, by the hustle and bustle of human activity, against a skyscape filmed at CERN, in which a scientist ambles along, describing his work and feelings. Through the use of effects, his corporeal body has been reduced to frequencies, lines, and grids. His voice resonates with humanity, "My life has been dedicated to...", before Thornton completes the sentence off camera, "...the decay." While he is referring to specific scientific processes, the film seems to imply another process of decay: the decay or loosening of indexical relationships through which reality has historically been consolidated. The lines that suggest his form shudder and thicken as he moves, creating an image space that oscillates elastically between depth and surface at any given time.

Later, the unedited, clearly visible hand of another scientist touches a glass front that looks onto an automated server room. No humans are allowed here, the scientist explains: skin produces dust, which could interfere with the system. The machine operates on a Cartesian plane, she elaborates. The complex and unfathomable digital infrastructure of CERN is organized along the simple spatial coordinates of x, y, and z—the same space that defines a Renaissance painting.

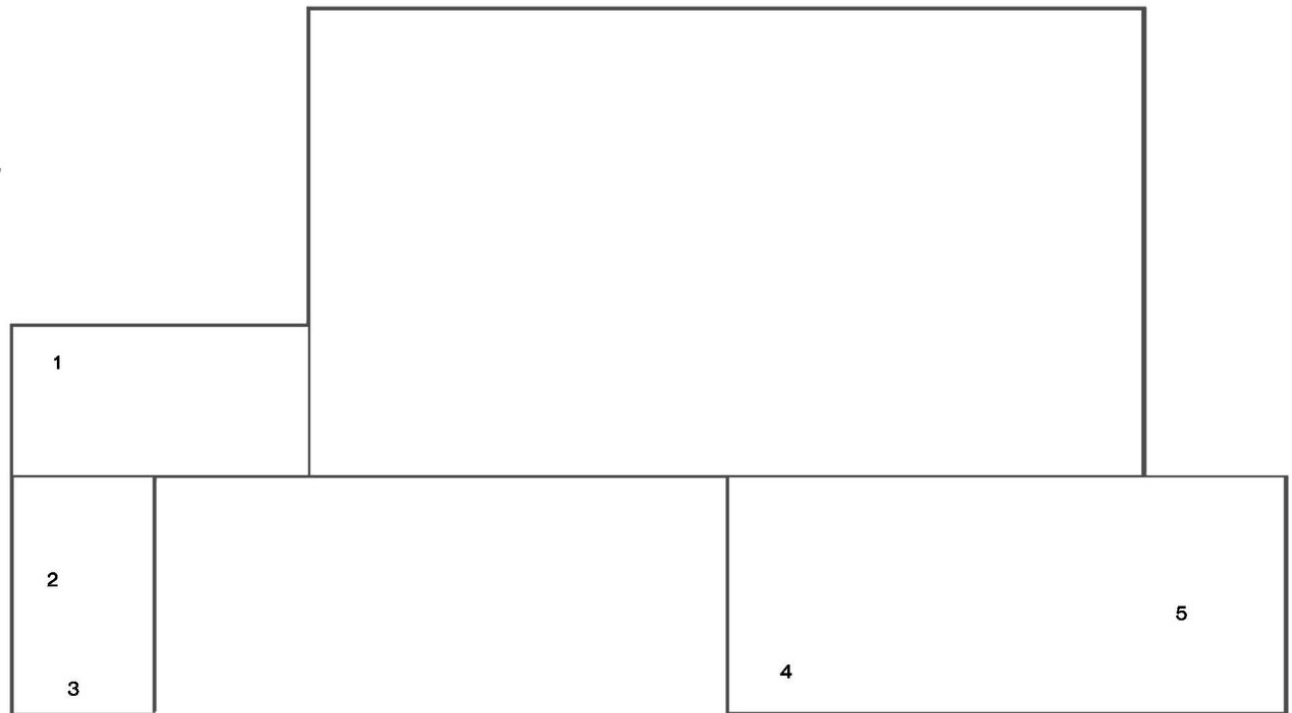
*Ground* is overwhelmingly spatial—a type of mechanical poetry that maps the anxious effects of an ambient and pulsing epistemological shift emanating from the increasing presence of machines in the organization of human perception and thought. This accelerating condition can be felt but remains largely invisible, taking the abstract and simultaneously concrete form of automated server stations, floating network frequencies, and dense, subterranean cables. *Ground* is brutal. It traces the endless and undefined complexity of the ongoing project of human knowledge production, while tethering its inert, latent, or abeyant effects—at times beautiful and at other times disorienting—to human existence itself.

The exhibition will contain a number of other works by Thornton from the past four decades, among them *Cut from Liquid to Snake* (2018), *The Last Time I Saw Ron* (1994) and *Jennifer, Where Are You?* (1981), as well as her singular 30-year project *Peggy and Fred in Hell* (1983-2016).

Recent solo exhibitions by Leslie Thornton include *Leslie Thornton: Cut from Liquid to Snake* at Rodeo, London, and *SO MUCH MUCH* at Unit 17 in Vancouver, both in 2018, a retrospective at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2017, and *OF NECESSITY I BECOME AN INSTRUMENT* at South First Gallery in 2016. Recent group exhibitions include *New Order: Art and Technology in the Twenty-First Century* at MoMA, New York, in 2019 and *The Inoperative Community* at Raven Row (2015).

James Richards and Leslie Thornton have collaborated on a number of works, exhibitions and screenings. Their most recent exhibition *SPEED* was presented at Malmö Konsthall (2019) and at the Künstlerhaus Stuttgart (2018). They have also exhibited at the Secession, Vienna (2018), at the Julia Stoschek Collection, Berlin (2017) and the Kestnergesellschaft, Hannover (2016). Their work has been shown at Tate Modern (2020), the Biennale de l'Image en Mouvement in Geneva (2018), the Whitney Biennale (2017), and at the Walker Art Center (2015). The material for Thornton's new work *Ground* was filmed during artist residencies at Caltech and CERN in 2019 and a residency with James Richards at CERN in 2018.

Leslie Thornton was born 1951 in Knoxville, Tennessee, USA. She lives and works in New York.



1) *Peggy and Fred in Hell*, 1983–2016, 92 min, b&w and sepia, sound, 16 mm film on video

2) *Strange Space*, 1993, 4 min, color, sound, video / *The Last Time I Saw Ron*, 1994, 12 min, color and b&w, sound, 16 mm film on video

3) *Jennifer, Where Are You?*, 1981, 11 min, color, sound, 16 mm film being displayed on video

4) *Cut From Liquid to Snake*, 2018, 27 min, color and b&w, sound, HD-video

5) *Ground*, 2020, 13 min, color, sound, HD-video

Courtesy the artist and Rodeo, London / Piraeus.

*Ground* (2020) was commissioned by the Kunstverein Nürnberg – Albrecht Dürer Gesellschaft e.V. with Arts at CERN with generous support of U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Geneva. The production of the film was supported by the Centre d'Art Contemporain Geneva, the Biennale d'Image en Mouvement 2018 and the Caltech-Huntigton Program in Visual Culture. The exhibition at the Kunstverein Nürnberg was made possible by the Zumikon Kulturstiftung.

## Events

Exhibition Tour with Leslie Thornton and Milan Ther (Director), Thursday, 27.02., 18:00

Artist Talk and Screening with Leslie Thornton and Dan Kidner (Senior Lecturer, Kingston University, London), Thursday, 27.02., 19:00

Screening with Rosa Barba (Artist and Filmmaker), Tuesday, 24.03, 19:00

Exhibition Tour with Ann-Kathrin Eickhoff (Curator), Thursday, 16.04., 18:00

The Kunstverein Nürnberg – Albrecht Dürer Gesellschaft e.V. funded by:



Kulturreferat



**GRUNDIG**

The exhibition was made possible by:

**] zumikon [**  
kulturstiftung

With kind support by:

**NEUTEX**  
HOME DECORATION  
Member of **HOFTEX GROUP**

**HORNBERGER**  
raumausstattung

**träume**  
Ideen Raum geben

**THE BLOCK**

Rodeo, London / Piraeus

Sponsoring:

**zerbock**  
**medienwerk**

## Opening Hours

Tue–Fr 14:00–18:00, Sa–Su 13:00–18:00

## Entry

2,50 Euro; reduced 1,50 Euro; Free entry: Members Kunstverein Nürnberg and ADKV Members