

**Paul Kolling: Break of Gauge**

27 June – 19 July 2020

Installationsansicht: Stephan Baumann, [www.bild-raum.com](http://www.bild-raum.com)

At the Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, a 35 mm film is currently cutting through the room, dividing the exhibition space in two: visitors can either take the ramp and stand on the right, or take the stairs and stand on the left. A total of 320 meters of film is on display, with projectors at five points along the line enlarging what is on the film. 600 kilometers lie between the first and the last of these five screens.

The film strip shows the freight train connection from China to Hamburg, the so-called New Silk Road, an integral part of the infrastructure of the Chinese export and European import economy. Paul Kolling has combined satellite and aerial photographs from various databases to create a continuous and straightened railway line. It is a GPS-based survey of the route which is largely unknown in geographical terms apart from the most significant logistical hubs, transport times, and border crossings.

This connection between two points is an abstract and fictitious map projection. Like the factual sobriety of the movement of goods, the supposed logic and objectivity are much more complex on closer inspection. At the pictorial level, this is evident in the breaks in progression, differences in quality and color, and the distortions that have emerged during straightening—ultimately a problem that has always affected representations of the world: every representation makes decisions about what it depicts, how it is presented and in what position, and what it chooses as its center. Cardinal directions and coordinates are used for orientation, but in *Break of Gauge* they have all been abolished and subjected to a simple linearity, a straight trajectory that knows neither north nor south, nor any other grid concept of the world.

Through the close connection between fascination and technicity, the 35 mm film interrogates the relationship between surveying techniques and geopolitical development on the one hand, and concrete landscapes on the other. What is seen remains strangely abstract and, with regard to spatial and geodata-based orientation, hardly any conclusions can be drawn about the actual conditions in between or about the actual locations of the photographs because of the editing techniques used.

What remains are questions about the promises of economic prosperity and geopolitical expansion as well as the political, economic, and social power relations that go hand in hand with the globalization of commodity relations and infrastructure.

Parallel to the film strip—as one can imagine—is an actual train traveling from China to Hamburg. It will take about sixteen days for it to arrive. It will also take sixteen exhibition days until the projections show the port of Hamburg and the container in which Kolling has placed a GPS transmitter passes the Harburger Bahnhof. *Break of Gauge* contains more than just this analogy: railways and film are both manifestations of modernity and massively altered perceptions of space and time. The juxtaposition of new digital processes and old technologies in the exhibition space expands these historical contexts, historical contexts in which the Kunstverein space itself is also integrated. The old first and second class waiting room at the Harburger Bahnhof tells of a colonial world and trade order with Europe at its center. Today, this center is shifting to China. The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, which involves building up intercontinental trade networks and sales markets, and which Kolling has been working on for the last two years, is part of this new order, one that is once again taking place at the expense of many others.

Paul Kolling (born 1993) deals with infrastructural and economic processes and their geopolitical, ecological, and social implications. A collaborative research project with artist and filmmaker Jack Wolf provided the impetus for his latest project *Break of Gauge* (2019/20), which is dedicated to the complexity of the Eurasian freight networks between Zhengzhou and Hamburg.

With „Break of Gauge“ Kolling graduates from Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Hamburg where he studied with Simon Denny. Together with Paul Seidler and Max Hampshire, Kolling initiated the “terra0” project, which uses Ethereum Blockchain technology to organize the self-management of a forest. Kolling's work and projects have been presented at the transmediale, Ars Electronica, Biennale de Lyon, Furtherfield Gallery, Drugo More, re: publica, Schinkel Pavillon and the Vienna Biennale.

Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof  
Im Bahnhof über Gleis 3&4, Hannoversche Str. 85, 21079 Hamburg  
[www.kvhbf.de](http://www.kvhbf.de)  
T. +49 (0)40- 76753896, [info@kvhbf.de](mailto:info@kvhbf.de)

Opening hours: Wednesday - Sunday, 2 – 6 pm , Admission free

The production of „Break of Gauge“ was supported by Hamburgische Kulturstiftung and Freundeskreis der HFBK Hamburg e.V.

The program of the Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof is made possible by Behörde für Kultur und Medien der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg and Liebelt-Stiftung, Hamburg.