

Ceal Floyer's intervention in the main exhibition hall of the Kölner Kunstverein seems rather far reaching, even though the means she has employed appear more or less minimal. Countless stickers in the form of the black silhouettes of birds – like those familiar from the facades of public buildings – have been installed on the pavilion's large windows. They feature the shadow-like contours of buzzards and are intended to protect real birds by scaring them off, thus preventing them from flying into panes of clear glass. In contrast to the manner in which they are normally installed, with the stickers placed only sporadically, the 'buzzards' in Ceal Floyer's 2002 work *Warning Birds* – the central work of the exhibition – are placed directly next to one another. The view through the panes of glass is thus restricted to such a degree that the windows are hardly able to fulfil their actual function. The specific arrangement of the birds causes them to display an almost ornamental character, which occasionally draws attention away from the fact that they forcefully recall memories of the well-known attack scenes from Alfred Hitchcock's classic *The Birds*. By altering familiar parameters Floyer achieves a fundamental semantic shift insofar as the work permits a wide range of associations, despite the fact that it displays nothing but *Warning Birds* – as the title implies.

The understated humour that can be recognised in the apparently absurd intensification of the task of the *Warning Birds* in this piece links it to a great number of works by Floyer, so that this aspect can almost be seen as a defining characteristic of her artistic practice. This distinctive form of wit has also shaped the 1999 work *Bucket*, which Floyer has very deliberately integrated into the context of the installation of the *Warning Birds*. The work consists of an ordinary, black bucket that seems rather surprising and perhaps even somewhat out of place in the midst of the exhibition. Uncertainty thus emerges as to whether the container might not have been left behind accidentally. If one moves closer to the object it becomes clear that the bucket in question is an artwork. At regular intervals a sound recalling the steady dripping of a leak becomes audible. Viewers' gazes are irresistibly drawn to the ceiling of the hall, where it would be reasonable to suppose that the leak could be. However, no indications of water damage can be made out in this area. The explanation for the unusual sound is finally to be found in the interior of the bucket. A CD player as well as a speaker have been placed inside of it, and these are the source of the puzzling noise. Neither of the devices is concealed, and the conditions leading to the illusion are thus immediately apparent. Although Floyer's work makes reference to a tradition of deception long anchored in the history of art, it seems to run counter to this tradition in a certain sense. Her work creates an illusion only to expose its basis and to dispel it a moment later.

In contrast, the 2013 work *Rock-Paper-Scissors* – which complements *Bucket* within the context of the *Warning Birds* installation, which may be said to function as a framework encompassing the

other pieces – gets by without any tricks of deception. The work consists of three square panels, each of which shows a rock, a piece of paper and a pair of scissors, thus making reference to the game of the same name, in which players imitate the different signs with their hands. Images that were not produced by Floyer, but simply adopted in the sense of found material serve as the basis of the work. On the one hand, the three motifs that make up the work illustrate the title of the piece; on the other hand, they also point to the semiotic and semantic system linked to the real objects – a system that is connected with rules and acts within the world of the game. At the same time the simultaneous visibility of all three objects runs counter to the conditions of the game, and it thus calls into question the connection between the real object and the semiotic system that it refers back to. Accordingly it also becomes possible to read the work as a still life. In this sense Floyer's *Rock-Paper-Scissors* circles around the issue of the relationship between language, signs and images and the presentation in the central hall of the building is thus provided with an additional dimension.

However, Ceal Floyer's exhibition in the Kölner Kunstverein begins before the pavilion of the Riphahn building. Immediately upon entering through the large, brightly sunlit doors of the building's entrance, visitors are greeted by a quiet but thoroughly expressive music that draws them towards the double doors of the cinema. In the darkened auditorium they are then confronted with Floyer's 2013 film *Untitled Credit Roll*, which – in a certain sense – instils viewers with the impression that they have arrived too late to the presentation of a film. White, abstract and – in some cases – cloud-like forms and patterns slowly progress from the lower to the upper edge of the screen and, in combination with the music, make reference to films' traditional closing credits. The reproduced lettering, names and occupations are blurred and no longer legible, in a way that suggests the film projector's lens has become displaced. However, it is only a short while until it becomes clear that the unusual appearance of the closing credits is certainly not the result of a projectionist's error. After a few minutes the credits end and, instead of a new film, the closing credits begin once more. In the context of this work the often overlooked conclusion of a film's presentation, during which many viewers already leave the auditorium of the cinema, is placed in the foreground and elevated to the status of the actual attraction.

Floyer inverts the significance of things and diverts attention from the essential to the incidental. The subtlety and ingenuity which she reveals in the process demonstrate that the artist is a master of her trade, and they provide the fundament of the characteristic quality of her diverse practice.

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