

Empty Gallery is pleased to introduce The Room of Spirit and Time. Situated in an independent chamber to the left of the gallery's entrance foyer, TRST is an occasional platform for the extended contemplation of single works from a variety of periods and contexts. This new initiative functions as a space apart from the determinative logics and pressures of our formal exhibition program. Traversing both vast distances and infinitesimal niches, each presentation will be accompanied by a commissioned text approaching the work as a dynamic palimpsest in conversation with the unique social and historical circumstances of our city.

Playfully referencing Toriyama Akira's hyperbolic time chamber—a fictive dimension for self-cultivation in which the laws of space-time are transformed—TRST proposes a speculative epistemology grounded in non-Western philosophical resources as one potential method for productively wandering the treacherous crags and precipices of globalized culture.

The Room of Spirit and Time was a collaborative project which took place at the Queens Museum between 2018 and 2021. Its name and concept have been leased to Empty Gallery for an indefinite period of time in a convivial spirit.

For our inaugural presentation, TRST will present a single work by Cologne-based artist Matthias Groebel. Between 1989 and 2006, Groebel laboured over a series of machine-assisted paintings which transmuted the electronic signals of early satellite television into enigmatic rectangular canvases. Sweeping the more obscure quadrants of televisual airspace, he let a mixture of intuition and chance guide his choice of imagery—combining analog screen captures and fragmentary texts misappropriated from closed captioning devices into paintings of almost hallucinatory surface density which function as something akin to figurative ciphers or visual gong'an.¹ Both alien and familiar, Groebel's broadcast paintings charted a radical transformation in social, affective, and cartographic space which had only become recently palpable in the realm of everyday experience—articulating a blunted landscape of displaced desire and ambient dread.

Groebel's painting itself arrives in Hong Kong as an encoded transmission from a far-flung locale, waiting to be unscrambled and interpreted. *American Beauty #9* (2001) depicts an anonymous male figure squinting and waving his hands in front of the camera, as if to indicate distaste with the filming process or a desire for privacy—simultaneously, an appropriated caption in Traditional Chinese invites the viewer to *come have a look*.

¹ Gong'an is the term for a type of narrative device—often concerning logical paradoxes—used in Chan buddhist practice and popularised in the West (via Japanese Zen Buddhism) as the kōan.

Matthias Groebel (b. 1958, Aachen, DE) works and lives in Cologne. His selected solo exhibitions include *A Change in Weather (Broadcast Material 1989-2001)*, Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf (2022); *The Rhythms of Reception*, Schiefe Zähne, Berlin (2022); *Satellites Cast No Shadow*, curated by Andreas Selg, Drei, Cologne (2022); *Tele-Gen*, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz (2016); *Soul Stripper*, Project Midi, Brussels (2008); *Vital Signs*, Maya Stendhal Gallery, New York (2005); *self-ish*, Scicult, London (2004); *Robot Paintings & Sound Installations*, In Situ, Aalst (1997); *...wie gemalt*, Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen (1995). A monograph of Broadcast Material series was published in 2022 by Edition Patrick Frey.