

Ryan Foerster Stefan Reiterer Meina Schellander Fugue For Three Artists

December 6, 2024 till January 18, 2025

Opening December 5, 2024, 6 - 9 pm

We are delighted to present the exhibition *Fugue For Three Artists* by Ryan Foerster, Stefan Reiterer and Meina Schellander at our gallery in Vienna. It was curated by Mélanie Scheiner and relates the works of three artists who belong to different generations, but who illuminate similar aspects of our technoid reality of life from their own individual perspectives.

Fugue – from the Latin *fuga*: to take flight; *fugare*: to flee – is a word with myriad meanings. In English, it may refer to a state of physical and/or psychological absence; a temporary abandonment of reason and the self, a hazy hiatus from a known place. In German, it can also mean a joint, as well as the interstitial gap between two things. Drawing on these various connotations, *Fugue For Three Artists* explores the ways that three disparate artists – whose outputs span generations, geographical contexts, and a broad range of media – engage with and subvert the body's relationship to physical, mental, and social space.

The exhibition takes as its starting point Meina Schellander's major installation *Einheitenfuge 1: Teil/Rest 1-18 mit Gegenstellwerk 1-19* (1982–89), exhibited here in its entirety for the first time in 35 years. Schellander's oeuvre is marked by a rigorous attention to the arrangement of forms in space that is equally inspired by the built environment and the natural landscape of her native Carinthia. Yet her architectonic sculptures, with their harsh angles and often mechanical appearance, are typically made from organic and lightweight materials such as wood, plexiglass, egg tempera, and paper collage. Their imposing presence belies a certain vulnerability, like the bluffing behavior of animals who make themselves appear larger when threatened. In Schellander's sculptures, the tension between a structure's formal autonomy and the influence of the

spatial contexts that surround it become analogous to the struggle between an individual's interiority and the external forces that shape our lives.

In Stefan Reiterer's work, these external forces take the form of technological hegemony and surveillance, that, while virtual and immaterial, nevertheless define the structural and cognitive reality within which we must contend as embodied beings. Through a dizzyingly cyclical process of renderings, the artist collects and composes satellite and aerial imagery of maps and landscapes which he paints, distorts and re-renders in 3D software, and then paints again on accordingly volumized surfaces. For *Fugue For Three Artists*, Reiterer has created a suite of such sculpture-paintings that respond directly to two public commissions Schellander realized in 1982 and 1997, whose real-world existence today, whether due to neglect or authorial disavowal, are in question.

Where Reiterer's practice troubles the legible distinctions between virtual, physical, and imaginary renderings of space, the New York-based artist Ryan Foerster's output is decidedly familiar and concrete. Overtime, the artist who began his career as a photographer seems to have become a camera himself. With his lens opened to the widest aperture, Foerster captures and metabolizes anything and everything at his disposal – detritus found on the streets, surplus construction material, thrifted clothing, free clip-art, screenshots of pop-up ads on news articles, and so on. Likening his approach to composting, the artist's materials undergo a process of transformation, yielding a haphazard and sensitive output of assemblages that are at once records of a lived reality and discrete forms charged with an internal logic of their own.

In perhaps its most common usage, a fugue is a polyphonic compositional technique in which multiple melodies, responding to a central subject, are incrementally introduced, counterposed, overlaid, and modulated. *Fugue For Three Artists* unfolds accordingly, transposing this musical structure into the physical space of the gallery. As Glenn Gould offers, "the fugue is a process which is about process." Likewise, the exhibition imagines Foerster, Reiterer, and Schellander's practices as distinct melodies, their artworks as individual notes. Arranged according to conceptual and formal harmonies and dissonances, a new collective work emerges, and with it the potential for new meanings. What music will it make?

Text by Mélanie Scheiner