

Paul Levack, Gaylen Gerber, Tomomi Yamakawa,
25 August – 25 September, 2021
Erde Cologne
Linienstraße 28
40227 Düsseldorf, Germany

The exhibitions staged at Erde Cologne were organized by students of the Christopher Williams and Trisha Donnelly Klasse at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in the summer of 2021.

Paul Levack was invited to open the space with an inaugural show. For this he designed an exhibition structure that evolved over time, using a single picture frame to foreground the architectural and conceptual frameworks of exhibitions more generally. The first two instances of these single-work shows happened only inside of the picture frame, between the glass and its wooden bounds. It began with a photomontage by Levack entitled “Benzodiazepines and Behavioural Dyscontrol”, 2021. The montaged images are of a child lost in creative abandon, colouring on his face with a marker, and a still-life of a computer hard-drive, upon which rests a common anti-anxiety medication. The artist then inserted pubic hairs into the space between the paper-print and the glass in order to draw attention to the normally surgically clean, shallow volume separating the viewer from the work. This aberration intervenes within the viewer’s optical and corporeal experience of the work.

The pictured frame was then repurposed for the second exhibition, in which a smaller photomontage was framed inside it. This image is much more lighthearted; it proposes a saintly vision in a medieval German church of a Pomeranian, grinning and graceful. Gerber then painted a monochromatic Backdrop directly over Paul Levack’s “A Holy and Fleeting Vision in the Stiftskirche St. Peter, Bad Wimpfen,” 2021, and its situation, creating a new cooperative artwork that uses Levack’s inaugural exhibitions as its ground. This inversion of the traditional relationship between figure/ground allows Gerber to make visible the conceptual frameworks and spatial constituents at play in the creation of our experience of meaning in an art work. These neglected elements also become expressive elements themselves. In other words, Gerber positions his work so that it is perceived in between things, i.e. between exhibitions, between artists, and allows him to frame a normative ground as an expression, drawing attention to the permeability between the elements and intentions it’s made of. Thus, Levack’s work becomes the background for Gerber’s painting, which in turn becomes a ground for the following exhibition by Tomomi Yamakawa. This suggests that Yamakawa’s exhibition must also be understood as the ground against which other expressions will be perceived, as both part of a dialogue and as expressions in and for themselves.