

*Mechanically Yours* is the first extensive exhibition in the German-speaking countries by the Italian artist and filmmaker Anna Franceschini. Curated by Stephanie von Gelmini for the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf, the show brings together filmic pieces by the artist dating from 2009 to 2015.

The exhibition space is turned into a stage for moving images. Just as actors have their roles in a play, the individual works here also have their entrances and exists. Presented in differing projection situations, the films, short and long loops as well as filmic triptychs that are linked cyclically stand in a spatial and temporal relationship to each other. The sequence of the pieces is consequently structured in an infinite filmic loop and accordingly functions as a connective stylistic means. The arrangement of the individual works follows a complex score that is targeted at their atmospheric interaction on the one hand as well as to enable the viewer to focus on each of them individually on the other. In the process, motion and immobility, sound and silence, the mysterious and the banal in Franceschini's pictorial world are interwoven.

Everyday items, objects and apparatuses, but also spaces and processes, play the leading role in the individual films, often only brief scenes by the artist. Her subjects, devoid of any and all conventional narrative structures, are isolated from their context and staged fragmented in camera close-ups. Objects or courses of action generate an energy of their own, become inexplicable, obstructing an unambiguous interpretation.

The camera's eye following the ornaments of wallpaper patterns does not clarify the spatial situation or even the architectural circumstances under which the images were filmed; the procedures in a commercial laundry vanish behind an outwardly grotesque apparatus that blows hot air on the items of clothing, seemingly breathing life into them; the framing of the image of a flag waving in the wind causes an allusion to the place behind it, but the view is then covered up again a moment later. The fragment offers an incentive to imagine the "bigger picture" and to interpret the phenomenon in this sense.

It is a curious independent existence of things that allows for an association with the iconographic tradition of New Objectivity photography. The artist herself sees her work in the technical-media tradition of experimental films from the 1950s and 1960s in which the filmic apparatus and the material and object quality of the filmed are mutually dependent that consequently produces significance – despite the lack of any narrative.

Even when Franceschini focuses on the properties of things, on the structure and form of processes,

it is the anything but neutrally mechanical means of observation that she turns into a personal search for traces through the human condition. The medium of film is reflected in the artist's works as a technical instrument and as a now historical aesthetic language. By alluding to the origins of this medium, for example in a homage to Josef Plateau, one of the first to take advantage of stroboscopic effects to achieve the illusion of motion sequences, or the reference to a cinema of attractions, she reveals these internal mechanisms that regulate filmic fiction and directly influence the viewer's perception. In the process, Franceschini deliberately draws on 16mm as well as Super 8 film techniques that are now no longer employed in the production of cinematic images, although the analogue film material is converted to the immateriality of digital visual media over the course of her work process. As it is, her work veers thematically as well as in formal terms between the poles of materiality and the immaterial, joining the objective with the imagination.

The spectacular images from her piece *Kunstschnee (Artificial Snow)*, which was produced especially for the exhibition, were filmed at the Jever Fun indoor ski centre at Neuss near Düsseldorf. The resulting filmic triptych is ambiguous about how 'real' the depicted scenes actually are. Supposed forces of nature and the threatening monumentality of technical apparatuses, the filmic representation that goes into detail and the simulation-based original location come into conflict with each other, almost hiding the fact that the hall is actually used as a leisure facility dedicated to winter sports. In their scenic arrangement her works achieve a striking poetic quality.

Born in Pavia in 1979, Anna Franceschini completed her master's degree in media studies and was then awarded a research grant in the history and criticism of Italian cinema at IULM University in Milan, where she is presently living and working again after numerous stays abroad.

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