

Low Affinity  
Johanna Strobel

GiG Munich

14.10-14.11.2021

The word 'plane' conjures up an image of a brightly lit field, on which everything and anything may stand. The field in this image is squarish, with a mathematical axis, 'x' cutting one way, 'y' the other, and 'z' upwards and downwards, together mapping out a grid with each thing in its own little box. To make connections between things we draw (mostly) straight lines, from one point to another.

Deleuze and Guattari would argue that we have this image of the plane because of the link between 'plane' and 'plan'. When we think of a plane this way, it acts as a hidden principle. We may not see the grid itself, but the grid is what makes things visible to us. It causes the given to be given by giving things their structure, organizing them, charting their development and growth. It is a plan(e) of organization and development, a genetic plan(e) of evolution. Because we do not see the principles by which it organizes things, only the result of its labors, the plane is transcendent to us and things, and likened to an idea in the mind of God.

For us the viewers, marked as we are by the 'confirmation and selection bias' and victim to the 'clustering illusion' we look for these hidden principles finding patterns where there are none, making connections between things that are not in any way related. One such idea is central to the work Johanna Strobel shows at GiG Munich, the idea of aether, the fifth element of a classical world of four, in which everything can be divided into fire, earth, air and water. It was used to explain how stars stayed up in the sky, and moved across the heavens.

But there is another idea of a plane, in and on which there is no form or structure, only activity and its lack. This plane is populated by sub-atomic particles always in the process of transformation, but with no specific aim in mind. Depending on their activity, their speed and slowness, they compose assemblages, as Deleuze and Guattari write, 'compositions of speed'. But they do not develop, organize according to a principle. They connect, disconnect, transform, reform. What happens, happens, in endless proliferation. Instead of development there is constant dissolution.

Johanna Strobel's work conjures up both plan(e) there is a longing for principle, apparent in her systematic approach, plug going into socket, light being red or blue, going on or off. We can map this world quite easily on a grid. It is clean, white, metallic. There is also the understanding of a far more dissolute world in which entropy rules, of information lost through USB cables and mnemonic devices of knot-making failing. This world is unstable, reckless, and somehow also inexplicably present.

Magdalena Wisniowska

Low Affinity, 2021, USB cables, USB splitters, plugs, paraffin, LEDs, micro controller boards, zip ties, size variable

False Friends, 2021, acrylic mirror, aluminium, clockworks (clockwise and counterclockwise), LEDs, USB extension cords, timer each 10 x 10 x 2 inch (ca. 20 x 20 x 5 cm)

