

Shifter(s): Simon Lässig Robert Müller

Simon Lässig's shows came up in a recent chat with a friend. My friend noted as an aside that whenever one tries to engage Lässig on the ideas behind his work, within two sentences he'll find a way to "shift the focus back onto you." Any personal anecdote of this nature should be taken with a grain of salt. Yet this one is quite useful for its parallels with some mechanisms of Lässig's practice, given how projection, mimetic emulation, and communication are so important to it—or so it might seem.

In his latest solo show at FELIX GAUDLITZ, Vienna (2019), the idea of condensation quickly came to mind. Or a stew cooked for hours. But unlike those humble and failing analogies, anything remotely resembling an essence-through-reduction was missing. The installation was striking in its precision. Consisting of only three parts—two metal-framed A2 prints and one A4-size piece of text—the show still took hold of every room of the gallery, spreading out in every direction, despite keeping the visual keys on a short representative leash. Those slightly dark-grayish, soft-lavender-toned, printed fields, constituted as works through the sharp boundaries of their metal framing, posed as "images" (*Bilder*) even though they obviously did not "depict" (*abbilden*) anything. Some pixelated, structured, noise-like artifacts on a too-often-copied—or, again, condensed—video still gave a glimpse of something vaguely figurative but by no means "abstract" or "sublime." Rather, very much concrete, distinct, hardly a placeholder or a prop.

Within their strictly defined boundaries, the framed pieces literally and figuratively reflected back onto the viewer their dry and surprisingly fragile, but nevertheless imposing, finite quality. What might have seemed a paucity of information opened up surprisingly to a much sharper constitution as works, representing "themselves" via their own defined self-limitations. Interestingly, the limited and focused properties of these objects were sustainable without pretention. The accompanying text piece, which even within the reduced context of the show managed to be neither a comment nor a conclusion, consisted of two sentences and shifted the focus to mimetic operations and the construction of the subject(ive).

Vera Lutz and Simon Lässig, who occasionally collaborate, together with Zacharias Wackwitz organized the exhibition series *diwelt2017* in Berlin (another line of Lässig's artistic practice), and originally had proposed a video work for their show at NOUSMOULES, a space I run in Vienna (2019). Upon their arrival in Vienna, however, the video, which was supposed to be the only constituting element of the show, was instantly canceled. They regrouped and (ironically still) called their show *projections*, and thus at first I was anticipating an intentional pun on my expectations, but the presentation was instead of a variety of objects, namely torn and reassembled A4 printer paper sheets with drawings depicting special configurations seeming to illustrate prototypical settings for projections. The installation itself could be read as a dissection of a "screening" into seemingly discrete channels of information—text, image, sound—different carriers of information. A set of small, partially spray-painted, active loudspeakers (speakers not requiring amplifiers) charged the space with altered, in-situ-recorded, indistinguishable

sounds, suddenly sounding and then going quiet, seemingly at random but actually programmed in a larger pattern, covering the timespan of a hypothetical full day on display. The two individuals' ostensible individual authorship in that collaboration was not the only thing somewhat blurred. Lutz's focus on closed-circuit systems and Lässig's interest in structural, self-representational models merged and left a lingering scent reminiscent of the fragile constitution of language and narration.

In his current presentation at MAVRA, Berlin, Lässig again shifts back toward the model of (this time, literal) projection. *Darcy Lange: Work Studies in Schools* presents a series of films by Darcy Lange (*Study of Three Birmingham Schools* [1976]), a project on education, but it's not only the sociological aspect that piques Lässig's interest. He focuses as well on how the systemic language of education as a practice seeps into any mediated view on the topic. He presents a selection of two and a half hours out of the roughly twelve-hour-long study, well aware that this exceeds by far the likely duration of any one person's visit to the show. Exposing oneself to the immersive, literally projected series of studies by Lange means *to make oneself similar in this sense*. Experiencing a wandering viewpoint, drifting into blurry zones and details of the educational environments depicted by Lange, structures (aesthetic, political, social, formal) reveal themselves as we project ourselves back onto/into them.

We slowly merge into B, take on B's appearance, comply with B's rules, merge into what was once our counterpart and then we disappear.
So if you say we and you actually speak of yourself, what kind of we is that?

