

Arbeiten zu
» Barrage «
von Christian Eisenberg
und Jan Kunkel

14 September -
12 October 2024

Opening Friday, 13 September, 18-21
Finissage Sunday, 13 October, 15-18

di volta in volta
18 Rue Volta, 75003 Paris
code : 56a03, interphone : #2, atelier sur cours
info@divoltainvolta.com

Fr-Sa 11-18
& by appointment

Arbeiten zu » Barrage « includes a collaborative video by Christian Eisenberg and Jan Kunkel, produced in the context of the Paris Olympics and in response to an invitation for this exhibition. It also includes individual works by the two artists, who have already worked together in the past.

While Christian Eisenberg critically reflects on the conditions of work and artistic production in connection with cultural institutions and, more broadly, the processes of social reproduction, Jan Kunkel is interested in psychoanalysis, particularly Lacanian, to shed light on certain sensitive relationships between politics, the psyche, and the social. They share a common interest in the material basis of social forms of interconnectedness and possible scenarios of infrastructural critique.

Together they joined to produce images in the streets of Paris, while the Olympic Games were taking place, and a particularly acute political, institutional, and social crisis was being pushed into the background. The result is a film of 8 minutes, showing Jan running through a fenced and secured city, populated by tourists and spectators from all over the world.

The title, *Arbeiten zu » Barrage «*, plays on the ambiguity of the term across different societal fields. Whether it refers to the security barrage deployed by law enforcement or the so-called « republican barrage » maintained as *trompe l'oeil* during the last snap elections in France. From one barrage to another, one may discern a reflection on the capacity of image production to act as a barrage itself — especially in urban spaces saturated with digital imagery, converted into a site of global broadcasting.

One can indeed question the status of images, especially photographic ones, in the virtually infinite and uninterrupted flow of their digital exchange in public spaces transformed into surveillance zones, where new algorithmic technologies are being tested. What if the moment of pause, the portion of time frozen in a chemical based photograph and historically fetishized as a sort of timeless cut, no longer offered « a passage to another space of metaphysical experience » but merely a « pause in an expanded circuit of reproduction »?

Ironically, British philosopher Peter Osborne recognizes the Benjaminian concept of historical reception or « afterlife » in this digital social space, where each communication serves as a vehicle for the production of a new commodity, in the form of data constantly aggregated and processed in massive metadata repositories, which in turn fuel potentially infinite circuits of distribution and self-reproduction managed by algorithms. In this context, the so-called « distributed » digital image (that is, multiplied through the open field of its produc-

tion/visualization instances) and the «pause» it represents become themselves a condition for the production of new images, objects, and practices.

But then, how can images act as a «barrage,» interrupting the abstract temporality of the production of the new, the continuous flow of images and circulating goods? According to Peter Osborne, the technical conditions of digital image production may no longer allow for the Benjaminian binary between continuity and rupture, duration, and ephemeral eternity of the «now-time.» He refers specifically to the ontological reversal of the image relative to data in the construction of a film, where the primacy of still images is replaced by the flow of binary code, capable of materializing on any medium. Which has consequences for how we approach the «real,» where the visible and empirical experience seem increasingly irrelevant.

Christian Eisenberg and Jan Kunkel's film and installation project took shape in a particularly troubling context of democratic crisis, where the result of the polls was denied by the one who called them, before the appointment of a prime minister was turned into a barrage against the victorious coalition. It was developed in Paris after the dissolution of the National Assembly and the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, a vast media event where the image of a regenerated river in the heart of a city hosting the largest security operation since World War II appears as the global naturalization of contemporary capitalism's temporality.

A temporality marked by subjection to the structural and objective processes of value production, in the form of an uninterrupted flow of images and data exchanged in a vast space as surveilled and gridded as it is de-realized.

The exhibition *Arbeiten zu » Barrage «* makes these processes more or less intelligible, alternating between transparency and opacity and producing the illusion of a body's movement through the city. It seeks to interrupt its normative temporality and introduce a multiplicity of determinations, while referring to the underlying notion of work, indicating other ways to handle images and produce subjectivities, not unilaterally determined by the economic constraint combined with technological innovation.

However, this work remains not so much unfinished as unresolved. Neither Christian Eisenberg's nor Jan Kunkel's works offer solutions, as much as they pose a series of contradictions. In the ambiguous relationship, for instance, between the apparently obvious character of Eisenberg's installations, composed of «daily observations», and their opaqueness, all the more present in the space that they are transparent, paradoxically reflecting a sense of absence and emptiness. Likewise, Jan Kunkel's assemblages, which also reclaim some of the most visible elements and signs of the city, such as bank signage, reveal new possibilities as well as their dead ends in a structure organized by debt and credit.

Jean Bourgois

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Christian Eisenberg is an artist working with various materials and institutional structures. He is currently a resident at Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris. Selected recent exhibitions include *Austin Space*, Munich (2024); *Rinde am Rhein*, Düsseldorf (2024); *Milchstraße 4*, Munich (2023).

Jan Kunkel works with language, objects, and their dissimulation. Jan has co-initiated the art space *PlusX (+X)* in Berlin since 2018. They are part of the Institute for Scene Experiments. Selected recent exhibitions and performances include *Studiengalerie 1.357*, Frankfurt (2023); *Kunstverein München*, Munich (2023).t