

“Clearly art seeks a different, abnormal, unsettling relationship between perception and communication, and that is all that it is being communicated.”

Niklas Luhmann, *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft* (1995)

Have a Look!

Artistic perception begins with curious looking and observation. It is only then that the process of intellectual questioning, contemplation, comparison, or categorization can actually begin. In modernity, artists worked in many ways to bring this sequence of viewing and interpretation into a productive tension with one another by way of forms of abstraction that no longer offer the eye a bridge to the world of things. Or, in a contrary and yet related sense, by creating artworks that can no longer be distinguished from everyday objects.

Francis Zeischegg has worked for many years now with the subject of vision, or better put, with forms of directing and controlling the gaze. Central here is the question of how the gaze of the human being is constituted, how it can be controlled, limited in its freedom, or manipulated. The eye is not just an organ subject to deception, it also can be used for surveillance, discipline, or murder: hunters, guards, and soldiers focus on their unsuspecting victims with the help of vision devices and structures to keep them from being seen. The motif of the target stands for this form of authoritarian vision. The large wall work *Target—Structures*, drawings with foil appliqués combined with printed panes of acrylic glass, directs the observing eye at virtual targets and at the same time plays with the confusing interpenetration of space and surface, with two dimensionality and three dimensionality, with precise lines and a diffuse shadows.

Grids and patterns fascinate Francis Zeischegg in their reserved simplicity and their (supposedly) ordering structure. Her complex works on paper consisting of overlapping layers of semitransparent paint carry out computer generated, and yet manipulated dot patterns. The manual act of drawing and painting here only apparently subjects itself to an electronically generated vocabulary of forms. Minimal deviations, a slight tremble of the pencil, a lack of focus in the application of paint remain recognizable as imprecision in precision. Only close examination reveals the individual character of the mechanical patterns as a hidden indication both of human presence and compositional design.

In recent years, Francis Zeischegg has noticed an increasing abstraction in her own work: if she worked years ago in an object-bound model-like sense with forms of visual control and the possibilities of unobserved observation, say in the form of structures that enable surveillance like raised blinds for hunting or watchtowers, she is now interested in the constitution of vision itself. Against the backdrop of digitization that has revolutionized our world perception in both a physical and a political sense, this is a logical next step in her development of the subject. It is hardly possible today to believe in the immediacy of vision. "View control" is omnipresent and demands a resistant perspective.

This also impressed a group of art history students who, as part of a seminar in art criticism, had the opportunity to visit the exhibition at the Galerie Judith Andreae one hot summer day and to speak with Francis Zeischegg. The following texts emerged in the aftermath of this event.

Martina Padberg

The View in the Crosshairs

What happens to us when we are constantly under observation? Can we protect ourselves?

What is changing in our visual behavior due to the revolution of the digital media?

Surveillance as a subject was already present in the artist's early works. Lived experience in divided Berlin served here as a point of departure. Today, Francis Zeischegg compares the Internet with a raised hunting blind that offers a view of the general landscape, while the observer remains entirely invisible. Vision devices, like the telescopic sight of a weapon or cameras on satellites in outer space, operate in a similar fashion.

But limited surveillance in the analog world has now given way to total virtual espionage.

Everything is focused on the eye and the gaze. And in the age of social media the question crystallizes: what are the differences between observation, espionage, and voyeurism?

Laura Dresch

Observation, Directing the Gaze, and Points of View

Francis Zeischegg explores in her drawings and models how gazes are controlled and how digital media influence our way of thinking and seeing.

The title of the work *View Control* refers to several aspects. On the one hand, it can be understood as the act of controlling vision, while at the same time it is the name of a tool that ensures that displays are only visible from a certain perspective. This technique, used for ATMs, for example, operates with the help of a raster on the visual

surface, so that the points only overlap from a certain position. Francis Zeischegg's drawings refer directly to this in the overlapping of dot patterns and targets.

Another subject of Zeischegg's work is hunting. On view, for example, is a model of a pile of wood, the actual function of which is the secret monitoring of the area in question to prevent poaching. Views and targets also surface as a motif in other works where Francis Zeischegg draws the attention of her viewers to strategies of an often unconscious direction of the gaze.

Aletta Haniel

Joystick of the Eye

In recent years, vision has been conditioned by the existence of the digital in a special way. The point, the granular, has become a dominant component of perceiving reality. In a masterful way, Francis Zeischegg demonstrates this in her adaptation of works by the Berlin photographer Karl Blossfeld. In Zeischegg's work, Blossfeld's photographs from the 1920s, early examples of macrophotography, become hyper-pointillistic depictions of dot patterns on top of which digital polygons are placed. Here, unlike other pointillistic works, it is scarcely possible to achieve enough distance to make the plants consisting of points and grids recognizable. Also worthy of attention are the painted dot pattern negative images made when the artist was still a student. Looking at them from particular angles generates the feeling that a third dimension opens in the actually two-dimensional image. The perspective proves to be the actual creator of the space. The gaze takes control of reality.

Andreas Gerold

Field of Vision

Francis Zeischegg shows the visual filters on our reality and enables insights on the act of observation. In so doing she is interested in modern aids to vision and planning, like the viewfinder of a camera, the telescopic sight on a weapon, or the pattern that often serves as the foundation or "surface" for the works.

"Observation" and being observed is also part of the artist's sculptural and filmic work. Be it the construction of a raised blind for hunting or the reconstruction of a GDR watchtower, the field of vision and human perception is always at the center of her artistic engagement. The raised blind, in Zeischegg already one without walls, exposes the observer and, at least in this example, subjects him to the gazes of others. The

hunter becomes the hunted. The watchtower, in contrast, provides observers with protection and security, while at the same time denying both to the observed.

In conversation with the artist, it becomes clear that “view control” refers not only to an optical improvement of perception, but to our increased perceptual capacity due to digital media and technical developments. The structuring of vision by way of camera finders or planning patterns creates an everyday filter that in the meantime has become everyday. In her works, Francis Zeischegg tries to mark them as such and to show them as a powerful layer in our vision.

This creates a good foundation to question our own perception, and yet provides no solutions to problems or ways out. A forthright stance: for in so doing Zeischegg adds another aspect to the existing filters, that of her own stance.

Julius Osman

Everything in View

Targeting symbols are things we know from cameras or measuring devices. Here, they are painted in black directly on the wall or placed individually onto glass. In the process, Francis Zeischegg does great work not only on the level of meaning, but also takes surprising paths in terms of design. For contrary to the general digital development in the emergence of images, her works are usually made by hand.

Looking at Zeischegg’s constellations, the frightening dimensions of digital media soon become evident, media that not only define our everyday life, but also other forms of surveillance and control, like the police and the military. Targeted bombing today can be had with the mere pressing of a button.

View Control suggests functions of hiding and concealment. One can escape reality in digital space but at the same time follow the activities of other users unnoticed. The question of how much surveillance we allow or tolerate is now the subject of much controversy. The increasing spread of video cameras in public places suggests how the subject might develop in future. Francis Zeischegg draws our attention to this.

Sophia Weißenfels