

## Delia Jürgens Sprengel Prize

Laudation and Exhibition 11/16/2018

[german version](#)

Dear Delia,

Dear Sirs and Madams,

while we are coming together for this award ceremony, there are several works by Delia Jürgens that you could see. On the one hand the work created for our insight hall with the title *The Future is but a Second Away*, secondly, in distant California a work in the desert near the Joshua Tree National Park with the title *in response to [Draußen. Outside. Dozens of my Fingerprints washed away]*, which has been permanently installed there since 2017. Finally, a video showing a flag that Delia Jürgens, together with Tarik Kentouche, has positioned in various landscapes and whose picture can be seen online in the virtual exhibition space *DIS-PLAY*.

The simultaneity of different presences is a characteristic of Delia Jürgens works, in the real distant space, in the nearby and in the virtual. At the same time, it is a characteristic of our time, which was accelerated by the virtual levels that came into our world with the world wide web. Just as I opened several windows on my computer desktop while writing these speech notes, Jürgens' works always open different depth spaces and time levels in parallel. If you look at the work in the desert, not only because of the location of the California desert you quickly think of the land art artists like Michael Heizer or Robert Smithson, who worked in the vastness of the landscape. In example Robert Smithson's *Mirror Displacements* (1969) in mexican yucatan. Jürgens' work certainly draws inspiration from this landscape and from this heritage. Nature can recapture the work in which it was used. The fingerprints addressed in the title "Dozens of my Fingerprints washed away", the artist's individual trace, disappear and remain as a memory. And yet there are details of how the 99 cent store stickers on the mirrors show Jürgens' different and typical approach. Her interest in the contexts and origins of the materials; the studio in Chinatown L.A. plays into it, the cheap products that can be found there. For her, each material has its own context, which she brings to the speech in different dimensions.

Already with her Master thesis *XO - Image Carrier. Filling the Gap* 2014 at Braunschweig University of Arts, the opening into different levels, the own way of creating image units by layering and laying various materials, as well as thinking from one's own body to a wide network is legible. In a mixture of printouts, cheap products such as LED glasses or self-adhesive silicone bras, self-portraits that come as paper cartridges for energy drinks, but also read literature and her own sketchbooks, Jürgens passes through several levels of the pictorial. One detail exemplifies Jürgens way of thinking and working: colorfully printed leggings are found on removable frames laid out on the floor; the pattern on them was created from photographs of a soundprint of a body in the bathtub; these were pulled up until the pixels become visible and applied to the leggings using an image film. This replaces the absent physicality with a digital image, which shows the negative shape of the body itself and is added to the leg cover. Here the artist works on the representation of the physical,

works through what has been lost in haptics and leads it to a different, new tangibility on the visual level.

Jürgens works so early on look into a world that can be felt as a reality of life shaped by digital media, its new possibilities of perception and mobility. The artist also calls her dynamic works materializations, as temporary solidifications in a dynamic environment. As with the leggings described, digital images materialize in them, often by printing on acrylic glass surfaces and sleeping bags and carpets, creating a tension between the technoid images and soft and yielding surfaces. In the case of materially present surfaces such as the large paraffin surfaces in the work here, mirrors and glasses are used to dematerialize them. Different densities from ceramic tiles and concrete to fabric and acrylic glass to the water-storing decorative beads, which have something evolutionary about them with their association of fish spawning and absorb and release water, show the full range of materials in her works. Due to the various presences and their processing, they also have different degrees of reality, from the directly deformed paraffin to the digitally processed image part.

In this way, Jürgen's work can be understood as a constant questioning of the reality of things without the analog and digital being seen in a hierarchy or genealogy. On the one hand there are the contexts from which they come - the hardware store as the basis of our surroundings, the Internet as a goods handling center, the cheap shops that offer kitsch and wellbeing things. The artist makes use of all three and lets these contexts resonate in her works and stand side by side as simultaneous realities. She uses some of these diverse materials in their raw state, such as styrofoam from the hardware store, which still bears the barcode as the code for the global market economy, or in a more refined state, such as the sleeping bags printed with film. They are layered and laid and brought into dynamic constellations that leave their loose shape obvious. How they are merged is then different in new contexts. Delia Jürgens works with a kind of nomadic form of work. For example *Cloud Storage*, a work that has existed in various materializations since 2016. In the former University's dining room in Braunschweig, in a gallery in Vienna, in the Ihme-Zentrum Hanover and most recently here in the group exhibition *1938 - Geburtstagsfest mit Gästen* in dialogue with works by Daido Moriyama. Central of this piece is the acrylic banner, on which the image of a water flow is printed and which runs through the respective rooms like a transparent waterfall. Like the water, the cloud in the title is the hallmark of this work. The cloud as ephemeral phenomena of condensed liquid, at the same time the cloud also as the storage of data and images, as we call them today, and by which many of us are surrounded.

Nomadism is also expressed in the virtual exhibition room entitled *DIS-PLAY*, which Jürgens runs together with Tarik Kentouche. In it, images and videos of various artists are continuously shown online in parallel. The simultaneous worlds fluctuate between black and white cell phone videos from the airplane window and colored recordings of a performance, tours through exhibitions and short texts. Images streamed partly live, partly archived, also show the movements and various stays of this nomadic artist, whose work is temporarily solidified in projects and then set out again. In this way, Juergens' work not only expands through the numerous references and origins of her materials, but also through collaborations and the provision of opportunities for other artists. It is not surprising that, in

the classic sense, she is a networker who takes up the multiple relationships of things and people as an infinite potential in her work.

*The Future is but a Second away*, as the title of the newly created work, refers to the future and at the same time to the moment of pausing before something happens. Suddenly there is a gap between the now and the soon. This is the gap in the work of Jürgens, which could also be read as the crystallization of a process or as sedimentation. A situation briefly solidifies in a room and is updated by the viewer. In the insight hall of the museum, this is particularly accentuated by the large glass panes and the perceptible change in light, especially in the course of the afternoon. The artist responds to this with a variety of reflective glass and mirror surfaces that incorporate the surroundings into the parts of the work.

The constellations, such as here or working in the desert, show that her career began with studying scenography parallel to studying painting at the Braunschweig University of Arts with Frances Scholz. Most of the time, Jürgens sees herself as a painter. Her new work contains images of all kinds. A key element are the often used digital images of rocks and water surfaces. They show a fundamentally media-related approach to landscape. If Jürgens uses predefined photographs from image databases available online, the detachment from a certain landscape is predefined. The excerpt is not location- or time-specific. The pre-produced images are stored on the Internet in memories from which they can be called up at any time. The artist forms the found images and partially zooms them insofar that the eye is lost in pixels and the digital depth space opens up like an infinite one. The dimensions implode so that micro- and macrocosms tip into each other. Just as surfing through Google Earth offers a new approach to unknown landscapes, into which you can zoom in and out and which you can enter digitally, this process is anchored in the details of Jürgens' pictorial thinking. As with these sections of the landscape, the artist deals with the media images and painterly aspects in a variety of ways. Digital images are printed on sleeping bags or satin banners and inserted into a larger installation, which in itself is pictorial. The picture carriers themselves are ephemeral or refer to temporary statics, be it with the sleeping bag as an image of nomadism, with advertising banners or with the imprints in paraffin. Black polymer beads that store water and are filled into aquarium-like glass cubes release moisture that is deposited on the glass surfaces - a process image that changes with the climate of the room. The respective pictures are shown in states of consolidation and dissolution. If the digital image of a pixelated, in the words of Jürgens "deconstructed" stone is applied to an acrylic banner and suspended freely in the room, the result opens up a wide scale between extreme transparency and the highest material density. The use of the paraffin liquefied in the image creation process in *The Future is but a Second away* results in dense surfaces made up of several colored layers, which in some places are covered by reflective glass surfaces. At the same time, their physical appearance, which shows the frozen flow, again approaches the enlarged landscape sections on the fabric surfaces. The installation thus contains tensions of warm and haptic as well as colder and reflective materials, which seems to encompass a kind of natural law. In her text *COSMIC SKELETON a higher plane of reflection appearing as particles of time in facts* (2016) the artist tries to break down reality into levels of compression and physical content - the body, the mass as the weight, the projection, the gap as the most distant plane from the material. In her new work, she treads

these levels from the printed sleeping bag, which as the body shell is closest to the haptic origin, through the cast paraffin surfaces, which change with the climate and warmth of the room and follow gravity to the fleeting reflections that can be described as the zero point of the picture the surroundings in the numerous mirror and glass surfaces. If you go into this room, you are not only guided into its depth by means of various densifications, but there are also recesses and nestings of different materials of various origins at each position. A long piece of paraffin on styrofoam lies rather to the side of the window. It has itself been cast on film so that it has a whitish layer like hoarfrost and shows the flow of its creation as a trace. A glass frame is placed on top of it, which frames a section like a picture, which it also frames in a greenish, transparent manner. In turn, a rolled piece of carpet is placed in it, which bears a digital image of stone as a pattern. In this way, a picture reality nestles into the other, lies on top of one another, interferes with it visually. Jürgens merges the image layers and lets them question each other. At the same time, they result in a materiality in space that also reflects and absorbs it. In the mirrors of different colors, there is a blackish dark mirror that is like deep water, the direct environment is brought into the work by the mirror images of the trees. In this way, we are guided into a dynamic structure that shows itself through references as not finite and as a fragment of a larger landscape. *Fragmented Landscapes* is also the name of the work group to which the work belongs. You can move around and Delia Jürgens manages this landscape as a fragment of one to show the current living environment shaped by analog and digital realities.

„A bleached and fractured world surrounds the artist. To organize this mess of corrosion into patterns, grids, and subdivisions is an esthetic process that has scarcely been touched.“  
Robert Smithson, *A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects* (1968)

If Delia Jürgens is an artist who can briefly grasp the fragmented reality of life for us as a potential of new experiences and I would like to allow her that, then it is an artistic achievement that deserves to be honored with this award.

Thank you very much.