

Simone Subal Gallery

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Florian Meisenberg

Want Internet-inspired art? In a gallery show? One artist has found a way of doing it that captures the spirit of digital within the confines of ‘real’ space and time

by Mark Rappolt

'TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN'. That was the slogan drawn onto a large canvas when I first encountered a large group of New York-based German Florian Meisenberg's work last summer in Berlin, in a solo exhibition mysteriously titled *Somewhere sideways, down, at an angle, but very close*, at Wentrup gallery.

The work on show took diverse forms. There were paintings, most of which contained references to digital culture in the form of iPad icons, emoticons and references to the 'PDF' acronym (the works hung against a wallpaper based on Photoshop's transparency grid), as well as more formal nods to Hilma Franklinthal, Joan Miró and Wassily Kandinsky, and the odd greasy-hand- or footprint. There were videos, shown on flatscreens attached to floor-to-ceiling poles in the middle of the gallery so that the videos looked at once like paintings, framed by the screen edge; sculptures, defined by the screens as objects floating in midair; and pole-dancing performers. And there was a jumble of A4 paper printouts on the floor, faceup and facedown, many bearing footprints and other such evidence of viewers' attention or lack of. The effect of the whole was like witnessing the detritus of an office party, one at which someone had run up a large photocopying bill. In fact, here, was all the flippantness that goes with the office-party stereotype – achieved, not least, by the engagement with and manipulation of various media and their traditional strategies.

One thing in particular was striking: that if a solo exhibition is typically a format for showcasing individual genius and soliciting admiration (presumably also financial) for it, Meisenberg had here both celebrated and undermined that function. He had asserted the performative aspect of 'the exhibition' as an artworld ritual or structure, and also denied it. The sheets of paper on the floor fluttered down from printers mounted just below the gallery ceiling, like weirdly sporadic confetti or the output of an exploded office block. Their somewhat random contents were the offerings of friends, artists, authors and curators invited to transmit tweets and posts into the show, providing it with context and community – beyond the internal art-historical references of any one work – that it might not otherwise have had. In a real way, the network was present, the lone genius denied.

"The Internet is responsible for a democratisation of aesthetics," Meisenberg explains. "Not only in art, but in all cultural and social fields. In other words we no longer see individual artistic approaches within a naturally grown environment of a language simultaneously self-developing, but widespread aesthetic phenomena or movements. Credited to the incredible pace and half-life of the Internet, these movements are generally more defined

and categorised by their aesthetic appearance than by a mutual concept or meaning.”

Meissenberg's short videos demonstrate this further. In *Wembley*, farewell my *Concubine* (2013) a cat, behind a shop window, responds to the artist's hand as it reaches through to shot, as to caress it from the other side of the glass. The cat reacts as if the caresses were real. Meanwhile, in *Life during wartime* (2012, the title lifted from a 1979 Talking Heads song) Meissenberg films himself drawing, in increasingly frenzied fashion, row after row of alternating smiley and sad-faced emoticons on a fogged-up bathroom mirror, the fog preventing us from seeing his face as he walks back and forth.

What makes Meisenberg's work special is the way he connects his combination of simple, elegant, humorous, yet serious attempts to investigate how art and the structures that surround it do and can behave in a world suspended between analogue and digital realities, and his consciousness of the way in which those investigations resonate in a 'real' world increasingly mediated by the screen.

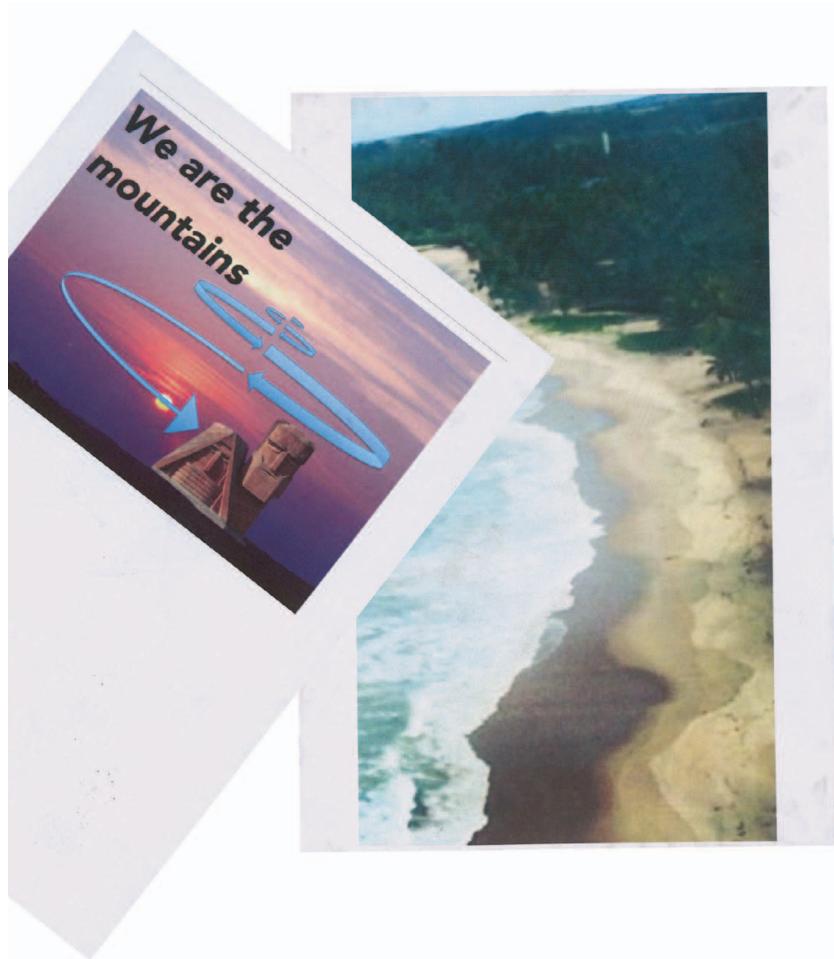
"I see in the Internet endless capacities for collaboration," Meisenberg continues, "to reveal hidden existing or create new choreographies or architectures of collaboration within or via the Internet. It is basically the *ultimate collaborative utopian machine*, which for me is not yet fully understood or basically ignored, as we still mainly use the Internet as single users or, so to say, individuals and more generally as the Internet is mainly colonised or misused in capitalistic means."

And whom does that concern? Everyone.

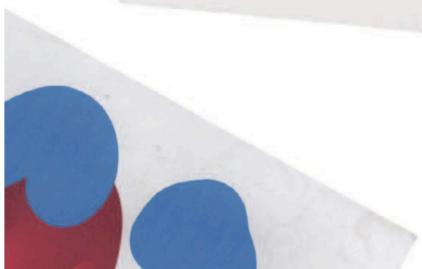
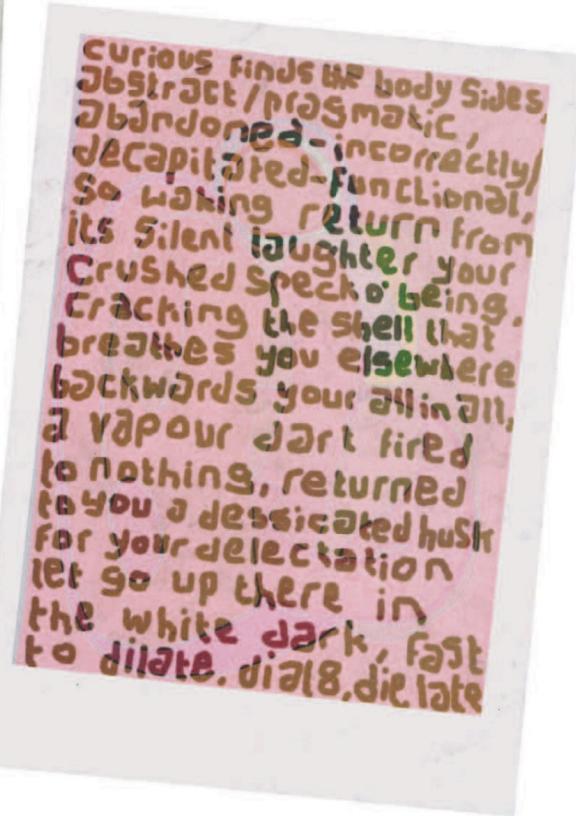
New work by Florian Meisenberg, featuring a two-channel interactive live-feed fluid-simulation "as well as the most recent series of paintings, will be on view at Simone Subal Gallery, New York, through 5 April. Images on the pages that follow are selected from those inputted to Somewhere sideways down, at an angle, but very close by: Elené Abashidze, Alí Alíz, Joel Baumann, Fritz Bornstück, Carson Chan, Cultural Avenue - Johanna Stemmerl, Fritzrich Graffing, Alexander Dumbudz, Gia Edgarian, Carolin Eidner, Christian Falsnaes, Jeremy Hoevenraad, Gregor Janzen, Gianni Jezzer, Anna K.E., Tamara K.E., Nathan Da Koestlin, Catherine Lampert, Dan Levenson, Veit Loers, Florian Meisenberg, Anna-Lena Meisenberg, Neshu Nikolic, Ninja Tag Team - Joachim Baldauf & Uta Grosenick, Aled Res, David Renggli, Hayley Avra Silberman, The Simple Society - T.S. Wendelein & Miki Kadokura, Avery K. Singer, Noemi Smilth, Oliver Teper, Lopold Thuit, Keith J. Varadi, Hanza Waller, Sasha Welcherling, Philip Witschagen, Charles Wintham, Pedro Wirz and Jan Zabel. Courtesy the artist and Wentrup Berlin.



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A body's movement can be a contagious event

