

Grates

CHRIS REINECKE

25.02—16.04, 2023

I'm more interested in dealing with holes in my own way. [1]

My family arrived in Dusseldorf in 1951. [...] Vast numbers of refugees had arrived and we all needed somewhere to live, but the city was shot to pieces. [2]

In 1994, Chris Reinecke began making works with photographs, inks, crayons, paints and writings on pieces of stiff cardboard that she would then perforate, cut and precariously assemble by hand. These pieces were a pronounced departure from the more conceptual leaning and action-based practice that had made her reputation in the 1960s and 70s, as well as from the large-scale, narrative/mythic paintings she had been making during the 1980s. At the time she began this new mode of working, she was living in the small, West-German city of Duisburg, where she would write long lists of observations and take photographs of the tunnel systems under the city. When we have spent time with Chris in her apartment by the Dusseldorf main station, she speaks often about the comings and goings and cars and people and the mushroom-lake transformations in city life that are visible from her window. An important motif in her work is *Die Beobachterin verlässt ihren stätionaren Posten*—the observer that leaves her stationary post.

This is a way of working that has come to CR out of time spent in tunnels. They are works about surfaces, but their surfaces are pitted with holes, apertures, cavities and escape routes. These holes, as well as the shadows they cast, are as much the stuff of the work as the paper is. (Half present + half absent = spectral). At the time CR was growing up in Dusseldorf and studying at the Academy, West Germany had been thoroughly bombed-out by the allies and was being hurriedly reconstructed from new building materials and new wealth. In her words, the city was becoming “more American.” It is very difficult now to get a sense of the massive scale of this transformation. By all accounts, Dusseldorf in the postwar years was in a cloud of change and was programmatically non-nostalgic; disruption being, as always, a sibling of new possibilities for living.

The formal techniques of hole-making and precarious assemblage in CR's current works behave like a mimesis of her urban environment. This mimesis is not material—ie. not made from glass, concrete or steel—but it shares the city's compulsions toward movement, impermanence and frenzied assemblage. This insistent push/pull motion between processes like rupture and repair, expansion and consolidation is also the political stake of the works. These pieces are felt out and worked though rather more they are premeditated.

CR works in her apartment, between the floor and the wall of her living room. This production dynamic of floor-to-wall-to-floor-to-wall is crucial to the piece's affect. Through it, she combines the overhead, aerial view of the cartographer with the face to face confrontation of the painter. The largest of the pieces in this exhibition significantly exceeds CR's height. In the small living room where it was made, it is massive.

In more recent years, CR's work has become more formal and abstract, less sociological, in its orientation. Since she no longer goes out into the street to make photographs, the large window of her first-floor apartment has become an important interface between her and the city. Consequently, the work has developed an intense involvement with the interplay of different qualities and systems of surfaces. In these pieces, the complex nest of overlaid and interwoven grids (cut, painted, drawn, woven) produces the electric, vista-like virtual spaces of the work.

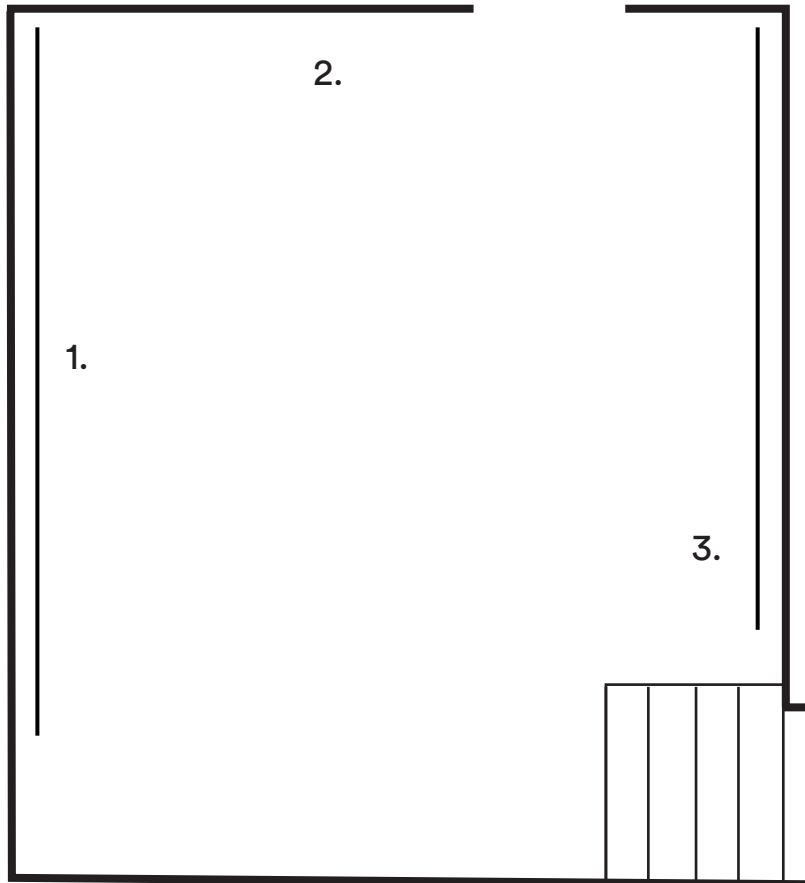
Where these new works do connect to CR's iconoclastic first phase in the 1960s and 70s, is in the oblique ways that they point toward digitality. CR held an early student job where she worked at a computer. At around the same time, she made a number of actions drawing textile-like patterns from sets of zeroes and ones for the duration of an eight-hour work day. This visionary conflation of digital code, textiles and women's labour (already in the 1960s) massively precedes the later theorisation of writers like Sadie Plant and N. Katherine Hayles. Though CR's new works are manifestly analogue (she does not own a computer) they share in one of the base truths of computing: that a series of small, binary decisions—yes/no, on/off, over/under etc.—can together produce effects of dynamic and spectral complexity.

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Winona.

[1] Chris Reinecke, *Zeit und Arbeit. Momente. Werke von 1965 bis 2016*. (Dusseldorf: Beck&Eggeling Kunstverlag, 2016)

[2] Chris Reinecke interviewed by Hans-Jürgen Hafner, “Building Time.” *Frieze Magazine* no 186, April 2017.



1. *Deklination der Fläche*, 2022 *
Ink, water-colour, and felt-tip pen on cardboard.

2. *Ähnliches. Differentes. Gleiches*, 1984/2008 **
Photograph, ink, water-colour, and felt-tip pen on cardboard.

3. *Deklination der Fläche*, 2022 *
Ink, water-colour, and felt-tip pen on cardboard.

* Declination of Surface
** Similar. Different. Same.

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