

## THE PARTICLES FELL SILENT

Kai Franz

Opening: January 28, 2016 7 – 10 pm

Duration: January 29 – March 05, 2016

ROCKELMANN& is proud to present 'THE PARTICLES FELL SILENT', an introduction to the practice of U.S.-based artist Kai Franz. It is the artist's first solo presentation in Berlin. Conceptually, Franz's work questions notions of authorship and subjectivity. In the making of his work, the artist sets up systems and builds machines that translate digital drawings and information into the nexus of matter and materiality. As a result of these processes, the work manifests as sculptures, paintings, drawings and etchings, which tie together the artist's interests in phenomenology with notions of objectivity and subjectivity in digital making processes. The exhibition features a variety of the artist's work from the past 5 years.

"THE PARTICLES FELL SILENT" comprises a series of aesthetic experiments, and establishes an economy of *real* and *representation*. The physical presence of Franz's work is always complicated by an implied coexistence of the works' virtual, diagrammatic states in the form of digital drawings, codes and systems. "History of One Organism (25 x 33)", 2011 is an algorithmic painting. The act of painting here is dumbed down: deprived of human agency in the execution of this work, Franz drops spoonfuls of paint onto a wooden board, following the instructions of the computer simulation of Conway's 1970 Game of Life. *To paint* via this process means *to manage paint*. The question is no longer 'what', or 'how to paint', but *how to cope with paint*. Ultimately, the work becomes a model of an economy itself, one that hints at/reveals the history of the computational organism or algorithm that was used to create it, and one that gives voice to the materiality of paint.

*Dual Axis Precision Deposition System (Plopper)*, a machine that Franz built from a reworked plotter, produced the digitally fabricated low-relief sculptures in the exhibition. With these works Franz directly critiques contemporary fabrication technologies, such as 3D printing, for their overly simplified relationships of the digital to physical, of the 'diagram' to the nexus of matter, and of the 'virtual/represented' subject to the 'real' one. Art historically, the works continue a painterly discourse towards anti-composition: the origins of these works are digital information-based CAD drawings, which the machine translates into physical sculptures made from sand and polyurethane. In this process, the works translate geometric information by activating the will of matter and materiality. In doing so, one sees how the material properties take over and determine the final form, to create what the artist calls an *informed formless*. In conversation with the rest of the exhibition, the indexical marks in these works do not reference human

expression, but rather combine the life of material with computational demarcation. The initial diagram that created these works is both present and absent in their material manifestations. Visually the objects appear to have logic. They look like wobbly grids, ancient burial mounds, or eroded forms. We might identify these digital artifacts as alien spit and/or as remnants of some deceased civilization.

For an artist interested in digital processes, Franz's work is inescapably material. "History of One Organism (25 x 33)" is made from simple house paint and a plain plywood board; Franz's choice of material here alludes to the everyday, to the common and banal. This datum of a mundane, almost elementary material language extends throughout the exhibition; Franz' low-relief sculptures are made in sand bound by polyurethane. This choice of materials and the conceptual grounding in Franz's work evokes the ambitions of the late 1960s art movement *Arte Povera*. However, Franz' work constantly addresses an anxiety in contemporary making processes between 'digital perfection' and wayward, tactile matter, bringing the concerns of *Arte Povera* into the twenty first century.

Through its physicality and its digital artifact, each piece has both an implicit presence and absence. 'THE PARTICLES FELL SILENT' therefore represents a precarious momentum of before and after, with each work allowing the viewer to speculate about the work's past, and about how it came to be.

Kai Franz was born in Cologne, Germany. He lives and works in Providence Rhode Island, USA. Franz holds undergraduate degrees in architecture from RWTH Aachen and ETH Zurich. As a Fulbright Fellow he studied fine arts at the Rhode Island School of Design (MFA). In 2012, he graduated from the Masters in Architecture program at Princeton University. In 2013-14 he was an artist-in-residence at the Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart. Today, Kai Franz is a Professor in the Division of Experimental and Foundation Studies at the Rhode Island School of Design.

We welcome you to join us for the opening of 'THE PARTICLES FELL SILENT' on Thursday, January 28, from 7 to 10 pm. For more information and or press images please [contact](mailto:geo@rockelmann-and.com) Geo at: [geo@rockelmann-and.com](mailto:geo@rockelmann-and.com).