

Clages

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Anne Pöhlmann | Comforters

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A photograph is not only an image (as a painting is an image), an interpretation of the real; it is also a trace, something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask.

Susan Sontag

The discourse on the attachment of the trace which is always inherent in photography is as old as photography itself. And yet, in Anne Pöhlmann's sixth solo exhibition at Clages, it is as current and evident as never before. Just as Barthes postulated the inscription of a visual trace, he posited a connection between photography and motherhood in the same vein. The indexical bond between the photographed and the recipient resembles "a kind of umbilical cord" that almost symbiotically connects the depicted object with the gaze of the viewer. With *Comforters*, Pöhlmann not only explores her photographic-artistic practice, but also her role as a new mother and reveals - often in a painterly abstract way - personal traces of the past years of her life.

Propagated as impossible by many professional colleagues, the compatibility of being an artist and a mother continues to be a socio-economic challenge well into the 21st century. From disregard to outright rejection, a systemic and precarious belief system resulting in an outright negation of motherhood propagated by Abramović a.o, is ubiquitous. In *Comforters*, Pöhlmann links this "softly" connotated problem (due to its link to femininity) with the "hardness" of the technical possibilities offered by digital photography.

Although in analog photography a physical cast (of a light) is indeed "imprinted" as a physical reaction of the luminance of an object onto the chemical surface of the image carrier, this corporeality becomes anything but obsolete in Pöhlmann's digital practice. In her conceptual exploration of the technical innovations and possibilities of photography, she examines its mechanistic principles of representation, which are constantly being renegotiated, as well as its relationship to a materiality of all kinds. In *Comforters*, Pöhlmann goes beyond two-dimensional reproduction and once again takes on the digital high-tech world of image processing by using ultra-modern knitting machines as

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"developers" of her works. In doing so, the generating of digital pixels occurs via the targeted breakdown of patterns and codes into grids - a theme the artist has been exploring for more than ten years. Through the four-step (re)processing of personal moments, mostly captured with a cell phone, the digital information is translated into a machine-compatible grid. The knitting machine, which - similar to the technique of weaving - represents in its patterns the first forms of modern computing finally takes over the (re)translation into human-readable images. The viewer encounters scenes of family happiness, but also seemingly abstract accumulations of grid points, held in orange-yellow neon tones.

The exhibited photographs and their pictorially manifested moments of a past reality may have left traces beyond their visible image carrier. Whether the title of the exhibition or the physical manifestation of the images in thick knitted blankets remind us of physical "comforters" in the sense of warming bedsheets or in their direct translation of baby pacifiers or other comfort and consolation giving things, *Comforters* opens up a range of associations and laid out trails. And traces are meant to be read.

Lena Albers