

KÖNIG GALERIE

MANUEL ROSSNER

SURPRISINGLY THIS RATHER WORKS

OPENING: 7 APRIL 2020

KÖNIG GALERIE | KÖNIG DIGITAL

With *SURPRISINGLY THIS RATHER WORKS*, curated by Anika Meier and Johann König, KÖNIG GALERIE presents an exhibition of digital art by Manuel Rossner that is both a spatial intervention in and a virtual expansion of the physical gallery. It is Rossner's first solo exhibition in this space. The digital visitor enters the virtual gallery through an app.

SURPRISINGLY THIS RATHER WORKS shows a series of digital objects that form a parcours, which the visitor can explore by means of an avatar. Rossner transforms the brutalist church St. Agnes into a gaming environment inspired by the 1990s game show "American Gladiators" and by so-called gyms that are used for cutting-edge research in artificial intelligence by companies such as OpenAI in San Francisco.

Things that are impossible in physical space become possible in the digital environment. In the latter, a treadmill breaks through the floor and the back wall of the nave of St. Agnes. A huge yellow sculpture sprawls like a plant through the stairwell all the way up to the church tower. An amorphous object made up of blue and pink bubbles spreads out beneath the ceiling of the church. Smooth algorithmic material takes over the austere brutalist structure.

Rules that normally apply in exhibition spaces have been suspended in this digital environment. Whereas visitors are typically warned not to touch the artwork, they are now asked to "please interact." Using the navigation on their smartphone displays, visitors steer the avatar through the gallery with the commands "Walk," "Jump," and "Look." Accordingly, the avatar runs and jumps over large boulders that lead up to the ceiling of the nave, where two more objects need to be traversed before it enters the amorphous sculpture. Another jump—and the avatar runs on, into the blue bubbles, up an enormous yellow sculpture, turning round and round, ascending ever higher until it reaches the very top. After yet another leap, the avatar returns to the floor of the nave, where the digital visitor can explore paintings and sculptures by Rossner. The invitation to interact with these works of art also means that the visitor is allowed to knock them over.

In the digital realm, the boundaries between painting and sculpture begin to blur. Rossner explains his work process as follows: "A controller that passes the position of my hand in 3D space on to the computer converts my movements into lines, which in turn become transformed into volumes." Rossner thus creates objects that are, at one and the same time, paintings and sculptures.

SURPRISINGLY THIS RATHER WORKS is the first exhibition to take place in the virtual space KÖNIG DIGITAL. Further exhibitions are currently being planned as part of the series THE ARTIST IS ONLINE.

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KÖNIG GALERIE

Manuel Rossner studied art at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach, the École des Arts-Décoratifs Paris, and the Tongji College for Design and Innovation in Shanghai. In 2012 Rossner founded the virtual Float Gallery, an Internet platform for digital art. In 2017 he designed a digital extension for the NRW-Forum Düsseldorf and curated together with Alain Bieber the VR exhibition "Unreal," which included works by Tabita Rezaire, Banz & Bowinkel, and Theo Triantafyllidis, among others. In 2019 he designed the virtual gallery building "CUBE" for Roehrs & Boetsch in Zurich. In this space, he showed his piece "Malibu" as part of the exhibition "Virtual Natives - Sculpture," which also included works by Martina Menegon and Chiara Passa. In October 2019, his solo exhibition "There's no feeling where there's no pain" could be seen in the Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig.

Works of art by Rossner were exhibited in "Perception is Reality" in the Frankfurt Kunstverein (2017), in "Artificial Paradise?" in KM-Künstlerhaus Graz (2018), and in the 1822-Forum Frankfurt (2017).

Rossner is a member of Kollektiv Internet TBD, which investigates the effects of the Internet on society. In 2018, he co-organized the conference "The Post-Binary" on artificial intelligence in art and design at the Museum Angewandte Kunst Frankfurt/M.

Text: Anika Meier