



## PRESS RELEASE

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### ***Clouds in the Cave***

Florian Auer (D, 1984)  
Neïl Beloufa (F-Alg, 1985)  
Alan Bogana (CH, 1979) & Marta Riniker-Radich (CH, 1982)  
Carmen Gheorghe (Rou, 1976)  
Aurélien Mole (F, 1975) & Syndicat  
Artie Vierkant (US, 1986)  
Phillip Zach (D, 1984)

Exhibition curator: Sylvain Menétrey

Since the emergence and development of mass communication technologies in the 1950s, the media have become the main conduit for the public's reception of art. Reliance on this mode of transmission is even more pronounced today due to the highly networked world of new media, which allows users to simultaneously adopt the role of recipient, producer and disseminator of information. In short, anyone can now become a media operator.

Taking this observation to its logical extreme, *Clouds in the Cave* re-assesses the situation by positing, somewhat provocatively, that exhibitions are simply a pretext for producing images. A position which differs from the rationale of the industrial age, to which museums continue to adhere through the "sanctification" of objects.

The first floor of Fri Art has been re-designed to resemble a photographic studio. Painted entirely in white, the angles and edges of the room melt away, giving the illusion of a void in which objects appear to float. The *white cube* becomes the *white box*, a transformation that accentuates the camera-ready quality of the exhibition. Visitors eyes focus in and track the works in much the same way as a photographer trains the camera lens on his subject. They see a succession of distinct images which gradually coalesce as they walk round the space.

The circulation of exhibitions and artworks by way of image reproductions can have a great influence on their conception. In his essay *My Work for Magazine Pages*, Dan Graham observed: 'Through the actual experience of running a gallery, I learned that if a work of art wasn't written about and reproduced in a magazine it would have difficulty attaining the status of "art". It seemed that in order to be defined as having value – that is, as "art" – a work had only to be distributed in a gallery and then to be written about and reproduced as a photograph in an art magazine.'<sup>1</sup> The value of a piece of art, both artistically and economically speaking, is determined not only by its context but also by the media coverage it receives. In this networked age, exhibitions and art works have to "deliver" in order to be

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<sup>1</sup> In Gary Dufour, *Dan Graham* (exhibition catalogue), Perth, Art Gallery of Western Australia, 1985.



visible on first-rate media platforms and garner sufficient clicks and “likes”. To put it simply, art needs to be photogenic to succeed.

*Clouds in the Cave* presents a series of works which, were they photographic subjects, would be fully aware that they are being photographed. Nonetheless, the works do not conform wholesale to photographic conventions; some “play” with the lens to create a misleading self-image. For example, the collaborative work by Marta Riniker-Radich and Alan Bogana reproduces with virtual means the reflection of a fictive space on the supporting pillars of the exhibition space, the last remaining architectural elements in a space that has been wiped of all three-dimensional points of reference. A person viewing only the photographic reproduction of this work would imagine the scene as actually taking place outside the field of view.

The collaborative piece by Florian Auer and Carmen Gheorghe is an examination of sculpture and its relationship to photography. Auer presents a series of sports jerseys which appear to be floating in space like holograms or augmented reality souvenirs from a football match. The shirts, similar to a shroud or a 3D photogram, bear the imprint of an invisible body. On the floor, Carmen Gheorghe traces a geometric shape using shimmering sand. Depending from which angle the visitor looks at the work, the drawing on the floor and the imitation hologram above combine to produce what looks like a photograph of a Brancusi-like sculpture on its pedestal. It is rather fitting that the work should recall that of the Romanian sculptor, as he extensively photographed and filmed his own sculptures, fastidiously arranging them in his Paris studio in order to bring them to life, magnify their surfaces, and ultimately to arouse emotions.

The images created by Aurélien Mole and the graphic design collective Syndicat result from the overlapping of posters printed using the same source file, but by different printers. Highlighted by image processing software, these print variations form a ghostly landscape, a network of topographic curves, traces of a digital materiality.

Phillip Zach takes the premise of the exhibition to its logical extreme by distancing himself completely from the physical space and focusing exclusively on distorting the photographic documentation of the exhibition. This documentation will be immediately visible on the Fri Art website, allowing visitors to experiment with and navigate their way through the traps that their perception lays for them, as they flit back and forth between the physical and virtual exhibition space.

When taken as a whole, the exhibition can be seen as a sort of shadow play or Plato’s cave. To paraphrase Jean Baudrillard, the simulacrum is never what hides the truth; it is the simulacrum alone which is real.

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