

Zurich, 31 October 2019

Press Release

«Gravitational Assertions. Yves Netzhammer / Gramazio Kohler Research»

4 December 2019 – 15 March 2020

Opening: Tuesday, 3 December 2019.

Doors open 6 p.m., introduction 6.30 p.m.

Art from a machine? Drawings at the press of a button? Are these already faits accomplis? Time and again, the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich has launched exhibition projects that straddle the boundaries between the institute's different disciplines. It is against this backdrop that we find the collaboration between the renowned Swiss artist Yves Netzhammer (*1970) and the internationally respected Chair of Architecture and Digital Fabrication, Gramazio Kohler Research. Through their transdisciplinary cooperation, the idea for an ephemeral installation was born, based on the fundamental element of the line. Visitors can experience a live performance in which, throughout the course of the exhibition, they observe the meeting of artistic inspiration and physical forces – and how robots mutate from tools into a (co-)creative machine.

Artificial intelligence is encroaching ever further into all possible areas of our lives. Many of the questions in this regard are about the human aspects of robots. What happens when we allow the machine to anticipate and perpetuate what the human mind has initiated? This is a topic that is also relevant to art. How can robots be integrated into artistic production? Who or what determines the form? How do we deal with the resulting uncertainty about individual authorship? Although mechanical applications have long been part of the artistic process, their share in this has always been questioned.

The works of Yves Netzhammer (born 1970), who lives and works in Zurich, explore the relationship between these areas. They have their origins in the digital space that the artist, for his part, regards as being closely related to the space of his imagination. The drawings and animated films by this internationally acclaimed Swiss artist examine the boundaries, overlaps and crossovers between subject and world, between the real and the virtual. His figures and scenes, drawn at the computer or generated by 3D computer animation programmes, revolve around disparate hybrids and fusions. They seem to have sprung from some surreally enigmatic yet intuitively relatable matrix that also bears within it the continuity of ever-changing figures and contexts - their „transformative permutation“ also reflects on the model of our own existence in the here and now.

In the course of the initiated exchange, it quickly became clear that the thread plays a central role in the joint project. On the one hand, this material repeatedly occurs in the visual world of the artist, while, on the other hand, architects Fabio Gramazio and Matthias Kohler also resort, in

their research, to meshes of string, yarn and fibre. This is where things quite literally tie up, with the digitally drawn network of lines being expanded into a third dimension. The result is a large-scale installation involving robots developed at the ETH for digital fabrication in the field of architecture. The equipment has been enhanced to perform new functions and adapted to meet additional requirements – with the indispensable input of doctoral candidate Petrus Aejmelaesus-Lindström. While one of them continually sets out lines according to drawings by Netzhammer, the other simultaneously constructs an equilibrium-determined mesh-like structure of suspended threads within the space. In a constantly recurring process of built-up, collapsing and newly created structures, the machine-calculated forms are paired with human-inspired creations – thereby addressing the fragile relationship between man and machine.

The thread in three-dimensional space, however, also has its equivalent in the form of lines on paper and so, in addition, we gain an insight into the fruits of the artist's approach to the printing process: together with printer Arno Hassler (Atelier de gravure, Moutier) Yves Netzhammer has, for the very first time in his artistic career, explored the possibilities of intaglio. The result of these experimentations is an edition of prints, presented in this exhibition along with a number of trial proofs.

Practical Information

Curator	Alexandra Barcal, Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich
Events	During the exhibition, there will be a number of guided tours as well as three evening events, including a panel discussion with Dr. Jörg Scheller (lecturer at ZHdK) and Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Ullrich (art historian, scholar and writer). For details, visit https://gs.ethz.ch/agenda/
Opening hours	Daily 10 a.m. – 4.45 p.m. Closed all day on 13 December 2019 (in-house event) and during the public holidays from 23 December 2019 to 05 January.2020.
Eintritt	frei
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