

DAVID BÖHM - JIŘÍ FRANTA

I SEE YOU

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In Collaboration with
NEVAN CONTEMPO, Prague, CZ

Since 2006, when they began their creative collaboration, Jiří Franta (b. 1978) and David Böhm (b. 1982) have exhibited their work many times in the Czech Republic and abroad. These events are often characterised by an attempt to search for new contexts and contiguities in the medium of drawing and an investigation of its physical possibilities and limits. Through this classical discipline the artists reflect on contemporary and urgent topics, though their collaboration also takes in objects, video, spatial installations, interventions in public space and murals. Recently their exhibitions have been dominated by an environmental factor. They encourage the viewer to enter their work and become part thereof, something that is true of the exhibition entitled I SEE YOU.

The intensified I/you polarity and the mutual interaction contained in the very title of the exhibition is a kind of logical and natural attribute of the work of the two artists and emerges earlier and more urgently than in the case of artists working in solitude. The result is that communication, be this with each other or with their public, often becomes the very subject matter of their work. The knowledge that I am seen at the same time as I observe my surroundings is expressed in an site-specific conceived installation that refers, amongst other things, to our existence in a virtual world and the contemporary forms and structure of our mutual communication.

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The entire visual jumble of artefacts is in fact a reflection of and upon the role of the image in our media saturated world and its transformations under the weight of phenomena such as social media, the culture of web surfing, the loss of attention thus engendered, and fake news. Just as the way we communicate is changing, so is its form, content and individual strategies. The image as one of the building blocks of communication is evolving alongside these developments, as is the role it now plays. Franta and Böhm examine the cultural shifts in which technology plays only a subsidiary role (indeed their methods include mainly classical and traditional artistic media). The chaotic structure, the complex, overwhelming network in which the individual image has only a limited value and validity and in which what is important is its links to other parts, is materialised by the artists in the form of a spatial installation that encloses the viewer. Franta and Böhm skilfully manipulate the aesthetic qualities of phenomena taken from the virtual environment but handle them with a characteristic playfulness, spontaneity and practicality. In turn they provoke creativity and imagination in their viewers, who are drawn into the game and captivated by the artists' freewheeling, participative approach, an approach that is open to the accumulation of free associations.

Text: Pavel Švec

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