

Sascha Herrmann | Glimmer

Opening: May 22, 2 - 8 pm

Exhibition: May 23 - July 3

One must call Sascha Hermann a scientific artist. He works on what we readily refer to as “natural processes”. He weighs epistemic and methodological assumptions, selects a suitable approach from the broad spectrum of photographic procedures and presents results in the aim to make the “thing in itself” understandable. But if one looks more closely, one notices that it’s actually about something else, about something one would like to call the “thing for us” and which, like a shimmer in the dark, is as melancholic as it is encouraging.

The theoretical basis of his artistic approach consists in a kind of rapid history test of the Great Project of Science: by establishing a direct link between the cancellation of subjectivity in the scientific claim to truth, on the one hand, and the recovery of subjectivity in the will to aesthetic truthfulness, on the other. While aiming at a formally and technically faithful representation, he radically flips the factual into the sublime. Here, at this pivot, the subject that had previously been methodologically deleted reappears, yet in a new consciousness: just as alien to the thing as it is to itself. Now we see that determining the thing amounts to determining the subject. This two-sided movement corresponds to the reciprocal dependence of science and art in the collaborative work on the idea as something natural. Though their inner kinship has always been a commonplace, the task of working out and adequately representing their fine differences has remained a field for the specialist.

At the centre of the exhibition Glimmer is a series of spectral-analytic photographs of illuminated stones. A combination of microscopy techniques, photographic contact prints and short- and long-wave UV light makes visible the rocks’ refractive properties, for instance, their opalescence and fluorescence. Some of these properties are named after the rocks on which these properties were observed, and, conversely, some rocks are named after the particular light properties that these rocks exhibit. – Oh, rocks . . . one would like to invoke whole libraries of scientific-technical and magical-poetic knowledge. Here, when they hover before us as light, we attribute the glimmer of our subjectivity to the thing itself, making our glimmer into the glimmer of the rocks.

The accompanying installations relate to processes that appear both in the formation of the rocks and also in our scientific analysis of them. The magnesium burning under water displays the physical and chemical transformation of minerals through a combination of heat, humidity and pressure. The deep, constant tone and its suspension at a defined point offers a sense of how rocks behave in a spectral analysis and how, through phase cancellation, they exhibit particular light properties with particular wave lengths. What we perceive as a coloured lucency is the particular reaction to how we observe things.

From 2008 to 2015, Sascha Herrmann studied at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig, the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, and the LUCA School of Arts Brussels. His artistic work over the years has often arisen in cooperation with research and educational institutions, including the Caspar-David-Friedrich-Institut of the University of Greifswald, the Institute for Mathematics at the Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, the Leibniz Institute for Tropospheric Research in Leipzig, the Technische Sammlungen Dresden and the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin. In his exhibitions and publications, he collaborates with archivists, musicians, theorists, scientists and other artists. He lives and works in Berlin.