



Emma Adler

STRG-Z

opening 06.09.2024 6-9pm

exhibition 07.09. - 19.10.2024

Galerie Anton Janizewski

Weydingerstraße 10

10178 Berlin

There was no outcry, when a district branch of the far-right party Alternative für Deutschland posted an AI-generated sharpie on social media. In the picture, the faces of barbecue guests in a pastoral setting are grotesquely distorted, as if this was an involuntary allegory of the zombie-like return of fascism. Emma Adler's installation *STRG-Z* isolates and condenses these elements in an immersive installation. Fences are reminiscent of home and garden and of the simultaneous brutality of inclusion and exclusion, a video high up on the wall tells of the horror that accompanies the return of *völkische* ideology that calls for ethnic purity. The zombies are the revenants of fascism. AI effects distort the faces, but the illusion is always broken. The exhibition takes place in a closed room, which contrasts with the simulation of a garden. A wreath of flowers refers to summer solstice rituals, roots allude to nature mythologies, garden lights come on, cold and dazzling. Stakes on the walls, which usually mark out garden paths and flower beds, are in fact recreated out of various German woods, and they

recall the stakes which, in pop culture, are used to kill revenants.

Birdsong, laughter and the crackle of a fire, celebration, all that evokes home. But this word is not neutral. It promises belonging, and yet it is integral to the vocabulary of right-wing extremists. It becomes an instrument of inhumane ideology and a pretext for violence.

Home is also contained in the concept of the uncanny (Heim and *unheimlich*). A central element in Sigmund Freud's conception of this sensation is the return of the familiar, that which is strange and known at once. With this work, Adler continues her investigation into a complex in which the internet, politics and media images are interwoven.

Adler has long been concerned with the entanglement of virtual and physical worlds. Her multimedia installations examine fascist discourse, and she follows AI-generated propaganda into the visual worlds of everyday life. Since 2020, her work has dealt with conspiracy ideologies and esotericism in the post-factual age, which have found their way from internet forums into the mainstream after Covid lockdowns. She departs from the points where the digital and physical worlds meet, where the virtual makes the leap into the real.

At the core of Adler's practice is concern with conceptions of truth and their constant transformation, especially when digital media is used for political propaganda. The digital defects she uses stand for the unveiled lies of a party that advertises itself with the slogan "courage to tell the truth".

Adler is fascinated by glitches—the ambivalent elements that carry uncontrollable meaning and often expose the lie where truth becomes fleeting. The AI-distorted faces from AfD propaganda reveal a racist normalcy behind the bourgeois façade. Phenomena, where digital and

physical realities collide, can be described as devirtualization, and transformations take place in the process. Adler's work begins where the virtual makes the leap into the real. Ideologies that stem from online communities make their way into the public sphere.

In an earlier piece, Adler takes up the look of hostile and efficient front gardens, where any trace of greenery has been weeded out, which are common to German suburbia. The artist turns such places into shorthand for the modern and bourgeois face of the extreme right which in recent years occupies seats in the parliaments. At the same time, this aesthetic can be translated almost seamlessly into the exhibition space as a minimalist environment.

Adler creates abstract installations, and she overwrites her sources—the original images—with an artistic analysis. In the past, she has often used materials that pretend to be something they are not—fake rocks, wallpaper that resembles the textures of video games—as a counterpoint to the complex relationship between lies and truth. Adler's work is profoundly political, but never didactic, and she does not engage in an archaeology of images on the internet, although her works are firmly rooted in digital worlds—but not only. In her installations, she makes ideologies visible on an abstract level.

- Philipp Hindahl

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Many thanks to the STRG-Z Video Team

AI animation and editing: Uliana Velgosh

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