

Press kit: Simon Denny. Mine

Simon Denny. Mine
September 5 – January 17, 2021
K21

Press conference and preview
Thursday, September 3, 2020, 11 am, K21

Speakers:

- Prof. Dr. Susanne Gaensheimer, Director Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen
- Agnieszka Skolimowska, Curator
- Simon Denny, Artist

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“[Surveillance Capitalism is] a new economic order that claims human experience as free raw material for hidden commercial practices of extraction, prediction, and sales” Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, 2018

With his context and research-based work, Simon Denny investigates how profoundly our perception and experience of culture is changed by the transformation of technology and politics. He examines the organizational structures, rhetoric, and visual language of high-tech companies, as well as the people behind them. Thanks to this ongoing interest, it becomes possible to understand how the mood towards the high-tech world has changed in recent years.

On the first floor of K21, the artist presents a group of new works developed for the MONA (Museum of Old and New Art) in Hobart, Australia, which have never before been shown in Europe. The focus is on extractive industry models, which mine both minerals from the earth and data, extrapolated from the labor we do on consumer apps and tools on the internet. The Australian mining industry provides a lens: as one of the most important sectors of the continent’s economy, it is, at the same time, also the cause of serious ecological and social problems. Simon Denny takes this as a starting point to reveal the connections between the mining of raw materials, data acquisition and processing, and climate change—topics that have acquired explosive topicality worldwide. His sculptures, wall works, and large-scale installations unpack the consequences of the development of the data economy and reveal extraction as one of the dominant principles in the way humans interact with their environment.

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Deep interconnections between minerals, labor and data are not only made visible by Simon Denny but can also be experienced viscerally. At the center of the exhibition is a cage-like structure based on a controversial Amazon patent registered in 2016: A narrow cage with a robotic arm was developed to protect workers entering areas where robots controlled by algorithms are active. Inside Denny’s “Amazon Worker Cage” (2019), an avatar of an endangered bird appears in an augmented reality artwork similar to Pokémon Go. It evokes memories of the canaries used in mines to warn workers of the increasing concentration of toxic gases: If the sensitive animal died, humans had to take refuge immediately. The inconspicuous bird in the Amazon cage becomes a warning sign of even greater and uncertain dangers posed by humankind’s interaction with the environment.

The ‘Theme Park for Extraction,’ continues, as Denny makes use of the presentation forms of commercial trade fairs throughout the rest of the exhibition. The space is filled with large-format sculptures made of printed cardboard, replicas of machines for the contemporary mining industry. Their performance is presented in videos that demonstrate how extraction processes also penetrate today’s working world, which is increasingly based on the moni-

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toring and evaluation of data. He has also developed a special set of courtroom sketches made with an Australian courtroom artist Sharon Gordon, based on speculative trials of the executives behind the mining companies who make and use the automated mining equipment featured in the exhibition. As another connection between the extractive practices of mining and the increasing expansion of (and extraction from) the quantification of our activities online, Denny has also worked with artist Jan Berger @ Mythical Institution to reproduce the entire K21 exhibition in the gaming platform Minecraft. In this virtual translation of the exhibition experience, the minecraft version is constructed as if our exhibition spaces exist below the Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex—the largest coal mine in the world during its active period.

Curators: Susanne Gaensheimer, Agnieszka Skolimowska

The exhibitions on the Bel Etage are supported by Stiftung Kunst, Kultur und Soziales der Sparda-Bank West.

Media partner: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

Supported by the Ministry for Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia

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Short Biography Simon Denny

Simon Denny (b. 1982 in Auckland, New Zealand) studied at the Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland (2001–05) and at the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main (2007–09). His work has been presented in international exhibitions at, among others, MoMA PS1, New York (2015) and the 56th Venice Biennale. The artist is Professor for Time-Related Media at the HFBK Hamburg. He lives and works in Berlin.

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalog, a structural component of the sculptural units in the exhibition that also serves as a board game. By building their own centralized data platform in “Extractor”, players reveal the mechanisms underlying digital capitalism. With instructions and essays by Tony Birch, Kate Crawford & Vladan Joler, Simon Denny, Boaz Levin & Vera Tollmann, Emma Pike, Jarrod Rawlins, Tiziana Terranova (deutsch/englisch). Published by Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Australia; German edition published by the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf.
64 p. / 35 €

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Opening day program

Saturday, September 5, 2020

11 am – 8 pm

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We cordially invite you and your friends to the opening of the exhibition in K21.
Registration required for guided tours and workshops!

12 am

Curator's tour

with Agnieszka Skolimowska

(with registration only)

3 – 7 pm

Art Guides

Art experts give information about the exhibition

(no registration)

12 am – 1.30 pm / 2 – 3.30 pm / 4 – 5.30 pm

Workshop for children

(aged 8 and older, with registration only)

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3 pm

Guided tour for children

(aged 6 and older, with registration only)

6 pm

Artist talk with Simon Denny & Boaz Levin

with Livestream of the virtual tour in "Minecraft", streamed on the digital channels of
the Kunstsammlung

(no registration)

<https://www.youtube.com/KunstsammlungNRW>

<https://www.instagram.com/kunstsammlungnrw/>

During the opening hours

Food & Drinks by Pardo's

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Exhibition preview

Thomas Ruff

September 12, 2020 – February 7, 2021

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The comprehensive exhibition of works by Thomas Ruff (*1958, lives in Düsseldorf) at K20 focuses on photographic series from the past twenty years, for which the artist, one of the most important protagonists of contemporary photography, hardly ever picked up a camera himself. For his often large-format images, he instead used found photographs from a wide variety of sources. The exhibition therefore not only offers an overview of Ruff's work of the past decades, but also of nearly 170 years of photographic history.

The exhibition is made possible by NATIONAL-BANK AG.

Press conference: Thursday, Sept 10, 2020, 11 am at K20

Opening day: Saturday, Sept 12, 2020, 11 am – 8 pm at K20

Technology Transformation

Photography and video in the Kunstsammlung

September 12, 2020 – January 24, 2021

K20

Parallel to Thomas Ruff's exhibition, a selection of photographic and filmic works from the collection sheds light of various forms of artistic transformation. The exhibition revolves thematically around pictorial techniques, surfaces, and the shifting of visibility: from Dara Birnbaum's Video "Technology Transformation. Wonder Woman" (1978) to Akram Zaatari's essayistic video installation "On Photography, People and Modern Times" (2012). Supplemented by loans from a private collection, the exhibition layout in the Grabbe Hall highlights three aspects of photography: portraiture, technology, and archive.

With works from the collection by, among others, Ed Atkins, Dara Birnbaum, Andreas Gursky, Candida Höfer, Jürgen Klauke, Boris Mikhailov, Carsten Nicolai, Gerhard Richter, Thomas Ruff, Katharina Sieverding, Thomas Struth, and Gillian Wearing.

As Guests: John Baldessari, Marcel Duchamp, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Wade Guyton, Spiros Hadjidjanos, Bruce Nauman, Seth Price, Kelley Walker, und Christopher Wool.

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Hito Steyerl.

I Will Survive

September 26, 2020 – January 10, 2021

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The Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen is presenting the first comprehensive exhibition dedicated to the artist, filmmaker, and author Hito Steyerl (*1966, lives in Berlin). Steyerl is currently regarded as one of the most advanced artists in terms of the current reflection on the social role of art and museums, the development of artificial intelligence, and experimentation with media-based forms of presentation.

A cooperation organized by Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf and Centre Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation.

Press conference: Thursday, Sept 24, 2020, 11 am at K21

Opening day: Saturday, Sept 26, 2020, 11 am – 8 pm at K21

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