

On Dithering

Motives of Suspension, Suture and Digression

Mai 25 until August 4, 2013



Bani Abidi

Pilar Albarracín

Artic. Texte aus der fröhlichen Wissenschaft

Robert Barry

Rolf Dieter Brinkmann

Mircae Cantor

Carlfriedrich Claus

Sigmund Freud

Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm

Runa Islam

Anna K. E.

Gerald Van Der Kaap

Mobile Academy (Hannah Hurtzig, Karin Harrasser, Chris Kondek) / Joseph Vogl

Herbordt/Mohren

Christian Morgenstern

Anna Oppermann

Dan Perjovschi

Lia Perjovschi

Andreas Schulze

Stefanie Seibold

Jan-Peter E. R. Sonntag

Jean-Marie Straub / Danièle Huillet



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Introduction

Dithering is like an intellectual perpetuum mobile, like a bachelor machine grinding to a halt. (Agentur Bilwet)

Hesitating, faltering, lapsing, pausing, wavering in decisions, treading water, lacking direction: all of the above are moments and states characteristic of “zaudern” (dithering), which in our thoroughly economized world are considered disruptive, if not downright threatening. They block, or so people say, the ability to act, the smooth course of events, and thus also productivity and growth.

The philosopher and literary scholar Joseph Vogl, in contrast, views dithering not as annihilation but as a “shadow of action,” as an “event backlog within the event.” At this threshold between action and non-action, an interval of pure “creative potency and contingency” emerges. In this sense, dithering is something that settles along joints, threshold and hinges, at places that branch and at the branches of the branchings—where anything is still possible and anything is questioned. At the same time, Vogl references the resistance inherent to dithering. Indeed, it turns “against the irrevocability of judgments, against the finality of solutions, against the certainty of consequences . . . and the weightedness of results . . . Dithering harbors the suspicion of complexity; it is aligned to an arithmetic that ranges from the hundreds to the thousands” (Joseph Vogl).

In the arts, motifs of dithering are seemingly ubiquitous: be it Hamlet’s question of “to be, or not to be,” the Grimm Brothers’ “Birnlí” (little pear) that simply does not want to fall off the tree, or *Bartleby the Scrivener* who incessantly “prefers not to.” Or be it Christian Morgenstern’s snail, who cannot decide whether he should stay in its house or leave it. “The snail gets so entangled with his thoughts, or, rather, the thoughts run away with him so that he must postpone the decision” (Christian Morgenstern). Digression and suspension seem to be the two poles of dithering.

In art, and especially in contemporary art, dithering is found not only as a motif, but also as an aesthetic method and structure. This is the case, for example, in cinema as the so-called “dead time” (temps mort), the empty moment and state of limbo introduced by Michelangelo Antonioni, where the story does not continue; or in video art, this is the loop that perpetually shifts the beginning and the end of a narrative.

Further, artists work with broadly ramified systems of reference—ones that range “from the hundreds to the thousands”—and also with methods of repetition, deferral, and permutation. They produce multiple readings and repeatedly subject the beholder to situations of undecidability. They are dealing with the digressive in lieu of the purposeful, with the unexpected in lieu of the calculable, with the equivocal in lieu of the definite. From a certain slant, dithering may also be considered a queer method.

The exhibition *On Dithering*, which runs from May 25 to August 4 at the Württembergischer Kunstverein, seizes upon dithering mainly as a methodology of contemporary art and reflects it along motifs of suspension and suture, digression and derive.

Credits and Dates

On Dithering

Motives of Suspension, Suture and Digression

May 25 to August 4, 2013

An exhibition by

Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart

Curators

Iris Dressler, Hans D. Christ

Press conference

Friday, May 24, 2013, 11 a.m.

Opening

Friday, May 24, 2013, 7 p.m.

Parallel this evening

At Württembergischen Kunstverein (7 p.m.):

Opening of the exhibition *Autopoiesis*.

Curated by Didem Yazici.

A joint project by project space Lotte and Württembergischer Kunstverein

At Künstlerhaus Stuttgart (Reuchlinstr. 4b, 18 Uhr) and

project space Lotte (Willy-Brandt-Strasse 18, 8 p.m.):

Opening of the exhibition *Apparatus Criticus & Locus*.

A joint project by Künstlerhaus Stuttgart and project space Lotte

Artists's tour

Saturday, May 25, 2013, 1 p.m.

Herbordt /Mohren

Artistic intervention

July 4–14, 2013

In the frame work of Die Institution. In cooperation with Akademie Schloss Solitude

Free guided tours (language: German)

Each sunday, 3 p.m.

Curators's tours (language: German)

Wednesday, June 5, 2013, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, July 10, 2013, 7 p.m.

Sunday, August 4, 2013, 4:30 p.m.

Hours

Tue, Thu-Sun: 11 a.m. – 6 p.m., Wed: 11 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Entrance fees

5 Euro / 3 Euro reduced / Members free

Exhibition's Reader

3 Euro

Supported by

Kulturamt der Stadt Stuttgart

Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst des Landes Baden-Württemberg

British Council

ProLab, Stuttgart

Works in the exhibition (Choice)

(Courtesy, unless otherwise mentioned: the artists)

Bani Abidi (born 1971 in Karachi, lives in Berlin)

***Reserved*, 2006**

Two channel video, 9 min.



The city has come to halt. A state dignitary is about to arrive. Traffic is blocked to make way for the unhampered movement of four luxury vehicles. School children with crumpled paper flags in hand wait patiently to wave at the passing motorcade. An anxious reception committee of officious bureaucrats paces up and down a red carpet ...
(source: <http://www.baniabidi.com/works.html>).

Pilar Albarracín (born 1968 in Sevilla, lives in Sevilla)

***La muerte de Zaldiko (Zaldiko's Death)*, 2012**

Video installation (black-and-white) with taxidermied horse head

Courtesy: Galerie Vallois, Paris

<http://www.pilaralbarracin.com>



The installation *La muerte de Zaldiko* (Zaldiko's Death) is based on a performance carried out by Pilar Albarracín involving a taxidermied horse head in an indoor riding arena surrounded by a group of living horses.

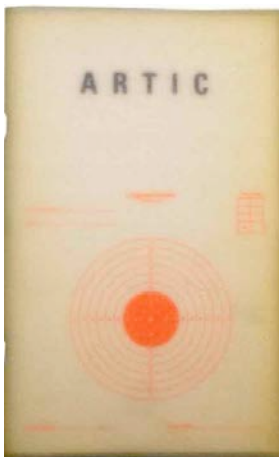
Artic: Texte aus der fröhlichen Wissenschaft, zaudern, No. 7, 2000

Eighty pages, foam binding, layout by Anita Kolb

<http://www.artic-magazin.de>

Courtesy: Archive Iris Dressler / Hans D. Christ

With contributions by Agentur Bilwet, Dan Perjovschi, Leander Scholz, Jens E. Sennewald, Bernhard Balkenhol, Roberto Di Bella, among others



The magazine *Artic*, first published in 1993, presents literary, theoretical, and artistic contributions subsumed under a certain theme for each issue. The unique graphic design developed for each issue likewise embraces this theme. *Artic* No. 7 of 2000 was dedicated to the theme of dithering. The elaborate production of *Artic*, often involving considerable craftsmanship, not only makes each single magazine into a unique copy; it also defies the economic dictate of time efficiency. In a certain sense, this makes *Artic* itself an act of dithering, disrupting seemingly efficient processes of production ...

Robert Barry (born 1936 in New York, lives in New Jersey)

***It Can Change ...*, 1970–71**

Installation, slide projection with twenty black-and-white slides

Courtesy: Generali Foundation, Vienna



The slide work *It Can Change* counts among Robert Barry's Word Lists pieces, created between 1970 and 1971. These works are comprised of a series of words or sentences where, with each new word, the meaning is expanded, shifted, or routed in another direction. What is being described here always remains vague.

(Text:)

IT CAN CHANGE / IT HAS VARIETY / IT DOESN'T HAVE A SPECIFIC TIME / IT IS NOT IN ANY SPECIFIC PLACE / SOME OF IT IS FAMILIAR / SOME OF IT IS STRANGE / SOME OF IT IS UNKNOWN / SOME OF IT CAN NEVER BE KNOWN / SOME OF IT COULD BE KNOWN; BUT NEVER WILL BE / THERE IS ALWAYS MORE OF IT BEING REVEALED / DESCRIPTIONS OF IT ARE INCOMPLETE / SOME OF IT CANNOT BE DESCRIBED / SOME OF IT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE / ITS ORIGIN IS INDETERMINATE / IT CAN COMPLETELY CHANGE IN AN INSTANT / IT IS OPEN TO NEW POSSIBILITIES / IT CAN CEASE TO EXIST AT ANY TIME / SOME OF IT NO LONGER EXISTS / SOME OF IT EXISTED BEFORE ANYONE KNEW OF IT / ANY PART MAY CEASE TO EXIST AT ANY TIME AND NEVER RETURN

Rolf Dieter Brinkmann (born 1940 in Vechta, died 1975 in London)

Der Film in Worten (Film in Words), 1982; Erkundungen für die Präzisierung des Gefühls für einen Aufstand: Reise. Zeit. Magazin (Reconnaissances for the Specification of Feeling for an Uprising: Travel. Time. Journal), 1987; Schnitte (Cuts), 1988

Courtesy: Archive Iris Dressler / Hans D. Christ

Rolf Dieter Brinkmann's posthumously published collage editions present complex text-image montages. These montages operate with repetitions and shifts or disruption and revival of personal thoughts and impressions, on the one hand, and snatches of language and imagery from pop culture and mass media, on the other. Terms and expressions like "imaginary barricades," "whence have you come," "paralyzed," "flashback," "cut," "sequel," or "Kodak-colored smile" repeatedly appear. Through linguistic convolutions, Brinkmann communicates and shifts meaning and sensory order:

"/: I was totally torn, between listening, because I heard something different than I saw, and I smelled something different than I sensed, and I thought something different than I felt, and I felt something different than I saw, and I saw something different than I smelled, and I smelled something different than I thought, and I thought something different than I heard/" (excerpted from *Schnitte*, p. 8).

Mircae Cantor (geb. 1977 in Rumänien)

Vertical Attempt, 2009

Video, 1'

Courtesy: Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris



A young boy is sitting on a sink next to a running water faucet. He uses a knife to slice into the spouting water. His cutting motion correlates with the cut of the film, thus terminating the one-second-long video. Here the cut marks both the gap and the link—the suture—of the filmic loop.

Io, 2009

Diptych, photographs, bw, each 20 x 30 cm

Courtesy: Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris



This diptych shows nearly identical photographs of a small boy who is gazing out the window of

a train toward a tunnel. At first glance it appears to be one and the same image—one positive and one negative exposure. But in actuality, the first picture shows the situation just before the train arrives at the tunnel and the second picture the moment before it departs the tunnel again. The acts of entering and exiting, juxtaposed side by side, are short-circuited to create a kind of imaginary loop.

Carlfriedrich Claus (born 1930 in Annaberg, died 1998 in Chemnitz)

***Aggregat K*, 1988 / 1993**

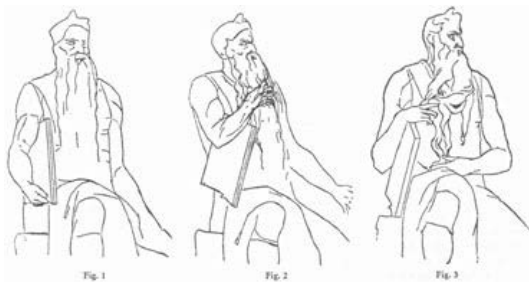
Reprint (reduced in size by 70 percent) of the 1988 edition comprising eighteen sheets, eight envelopes, and two leporellos, published by Gerhard Wolf Janus press GmbH, Berlin
 Courtesy: Archiv Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart

In his graphic and audio works, Carlfriedrich Claus fathoms the boundaries between language, drawing, text, and sound. He creates conceptual landscapes from intertwining textures, ranging from cryptic symbols to phrasal sequences, albeit hardly decipherable ones. The portfolio *Aggregat K*, which encompasses sheets of paper printed on both sides and transparencies, as well as leporellos printed on only one side, initiates a complex interplay of possible creations spawned through folding, superimposition, and layered formations. Here Claus explores the possibilities of nonverbal communication, thus orbiting the conflicting relationships between vacuity and form, chaos and gestalt, stagnation and movement, coding and decryption.

Sigmund Freud (born 1856 in Freiberg / Mähren, died 1939 in London)

***Der Moses des Michelangelo (The Moses of Michelangelo)*, 1914**

Published in *Imago: Zeitschrift für Anwendung der Psychoanalyse auf die Geisteswissenschaften III* (1914), pp. 15–36. English translation published as Sigmund Freud “The Moses of Michelangelo” (1914), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London, 1955), pp. 209–28.
<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/burt/filmphilology/FreudMoses.pdf>



Aided by a graphic animation of *The Moses of Michelangelo*, drafted according to his instructions, Sigmund Freud pursued a unique reading of this work. It shows Moses at the end of a “stormy movement” (Freud), which starts with him turning to the spectacle surrounding the Golden Calf and his related anger and ends with the repression of his burst of emotion—just in time to save the Tables of the Law, which are lodged under his right arm, from falling. Michelangelo can thus be said to have interpreted Holy Scripture as he saw fit: in lieu of a wrathful Moses caught up in the act of shattering the Tables of the Law in the heat of passion, he shows a heroic prophet who is initially torn between law and passion before ultimately reining in his temper to welcome the law. “Nor will he throw away the Tables so that they will break on the stones, for it is on their especial account that he has controlled his anger; it was to preserve them that he kept his passion in check” (Freud). In his essay *Über das Zaudern* (On Hesitation), Joseph Vogl takes up this line of interpretation by Freud. According to Vogl, it was not Michelangelo but the psychoanalyst himself who attempted to revise this biblical narrative, and not least because of a misunderstanding. Freud quite obviously overlooked the prophet’s two horns—the iconographic equivalent of a radiant nimbus—which anchor Michelangelo’s Moses in the narrative of the second (and not the first, as per Freud) descent from Mount Sinai. This was after the dance related to the Golden Calf and his burst of anger. So it is Freud himself who stops and detains Moses and who introduces an “exemplary blockade in the biblical text” (Vogl 2008, p. 20).

Runa Islam (born 1970 in Dhaka, lives in London)

Dead Time, 2000

16mm, 5 min., loop



Dead Time shows the face of a woman who is staring into space, filmed slightly from below. This scene is followed by a pan across a diffuse urban panorama, before the camera takes an interior view, where it is first trained on the closed shades of a window. From here it moves across the room, displaying but weak foregrounding and depth of field, and finally comes to rest on the head of a woman leaned upon a table. Her face is mirrored in the shiny, polished tabletop, upon which she subsequently spins a golden ring like a top, drawing the gaze of the camera to capture its strongly time-lapsed gyrations in the closing sequence. In parallel to the projection, a gradually swelling melody arises to which the spinning sounds of the revolving ring are seamlessly attuned. The title of the piece makes reference to a filmic narrative technique developed by Michelangelo Antonioni. The technique takes advantage of “dead time,” or uneventful moments, to allow transitions between the real world and imaginary images or dream sequences to play out in this state of suspension. Runa Islam divests this method of any manner of definable narration and uses it to construct a self-referential, helical movement revolving around itself.

Anna K. E. (born 1986 Tiflis, lives in New York)

Cultural Catalyst That Drives the Popular Dialogue Globally, 2012

Video (<http://vimeo.com/55451930>)

Courtesy: Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin



The camera shadows the pointe shoes of the artist, who is aimlessly meandering through her studio to classical music.

Gerald van der Kaap (born 1959, lives in Amsterdam)

Hong Kong: Reporter, 1998

Video



The loop created from a brief video fragment shows the face of a reporter who is incessantly rubbing her hands across her face to loosen it up before she goes on air to moderate.

Mobile Academy (Hannah Hurtzig / Karin Harrasser / Chris Kondek)

Joseph Vogl: Über das Zaudern (Joseph Vogl: On Hesitation), 2008

Film installation, ca. 60 min.

Produced as Nachtlesung Nr. 1 (Night Lesson No. 1) in the scope of Manifesta 7, Trento

Courtesy: Mobile Academy



In this video, Joseph Vogl speaks of dithering as a shadow of action that is more than just a cessation of movement: pausing and hesitating make it possible to experience time and history to begin with, and it essentially contributes to stimulating a sense of potentiality. "Like a submerged theme or anathema, hesitation seems to leave a strangely blurred trail that comes into sharp focus wherever—in the long history of the West—a culture of action and a culture of work are refracted and reflected on. Hesitation accompanies the imperative of action and making things happen like a shadow, like ruinous opponent. One could speak here of a hesitation-function ..." (<http://www.mobileacademy-berlin.com/englisch/2008/nightless01.html>)

Christian Morgenstern (born 1871 in Munich, died 1914 in Meran)

The Snail's Monologue

Shall I dwell in my shell? / Shall I not dwell in my shell? / Dwell in shell? / Rather not dwell? / Shall I not dwell? / Shall I dwell, / dwell in shell, / shall I shell, / shall I shell shall I shell shall...?

(The snail gets so entangled with his thoughts, or, rather, the thoughts run away with him so that he must postpone the decision.)

Anna Oppermann (born 1940 in Eutin, died 1993 in Celle)

Ersatzprobleme am Beispiel Bohnen (Substitute Problems by Way of the Example Beans), 1968–77

Ensemble

Plant referenced: beans

Topic, keywords: hysteria, sense of nature among middle-class citizens, reflective nature of drawing, interpretation of symbols and ambiguity of symbols, substitute problems
 Courtesy: Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin



Anna Oppermann saw the world, human relationships as “ensembles”: as arrangements consisting of perceptions of and reflections on events, norms, stories, emotions, and theories. She observed her own everyday life as well as that of those around her very closely, seeking out objects, images or concepts in which she saw metaphors for its absurdities and areas of conflict. She drew, photographed, painted, and described them in detail, collected texts and quotes, and finally arranged all of the parts as still lifes. She subsequently captured the arrangements from alternating perspectives and in varying constellations and added these new views to the arrangements. In this way, her ensembles successively grew out into the surrounding space.

Dan Perjovschi (born 1961 in Sibiu, lives in Bucharest)

Dan Perjovschi's biting ironic drawings, jotted down in just a few strokes, are widely known. They offer commentary both on the general craziness of everyday life and on short-term political events. In the year 2000 he was invited by Iris Dressler and Hans D. Christ to make a contribution to the *Zaudern* (Dithering) issue of *Artic* magazine. Shown in the present exhibition is the insert created at that time along with a series of the artist's current drawings.

Lia Perjovschi (born 1961, lives in Bucharest)



Lia Perjovschi's installations are based on her *International Archive of Contemporary Art*, compiled since the nineteen-nineties. Besides catalogues and documentation, it also contains merchandise articles from museum shops all over the world, popular-scientific publications, and much more. The artist presents this archive in ever-changing constellations, accompanied by her complex mind maps. In the exhibition *On Dithering*, she is showing a selection of these mind maps.

Andreas Schulze (born 1965 in Leipzig, lives in Leipzig)
U.S. Trilogy (Vegas, A Los Angeles Story, Outside New York City), 2006–7
 Three-part photo series, black-and-white



The *U.S. Trilogy* encompasses three photo series that are now being shown in Stuttgart for the first time: *Vegas*, *A Los Angeles Story*, and *Outside New York City*. Each series is comprised of open arrangements of sober black-and-white photographs that show people, objects, and desolate indoor or outdoor areas. The spaces, façades, and objects usually appear close-up, as a fragment, mere surface, or pattern. The chilliness and emptiness of these images is disrupted by a few faces charged with emotion, which, however, reflect not personalities but rather pictorial clichés.

The relationships between the protagonists, spaces, and objects remain vague, caught up in latency, in mere possibility. The gaze is consistently riveted on something that seems meaningful, yet which simultaneously conceals its meaning. Each action, each event, each oddity insinuated here is readily retracted, seeming to be only residual, like the remnants of what has transpired.

Jan-Peter E. R. Sonntag (born 1965 in Lübeck, lives in Berlin)
sundogs // Nebensonnen, 2011
 HD video, two-channel sound, 24 min.



The video installation *sundogs // Nebensonnen* is based on a musical piece composed by Jan-Peter E. R. Sonntag for Peter Carp's production of *Winterreise* by Elfriede Jelinek. The latter piece, in turn, harks back to Franz Schubert's eponymous song cycle of 1827, which integrates poems by Wilhelm Müller. Analogue to Jelinek's text, where fragments of Müller's poem series appear in Jelinek's convolutions of seemingly endless monologue, Sonntag takes up two motifs from *Gute Nacht* (Good Night) and *Wegweiser* (Signpost) respectively. He distorts and overextends them on the piano and alpine horn until they fade away, amid soundscapes of contrabass and other strings, in a seemingly boundless flow of crescendo and diminuendo. These psychoacoustic simulations of endlessly rising and falling noise, already cultivated by Sonntag in 1993, are based on a manipulation of turning points, which, similar to the Möbius strip or Escher's stairs, can never be resolved. Continuous musical progression establishes the foundation for the audio-visual composition. The visual film material is uncut and unedited. It shows a landscape that is rapidly speeding by, which is repeatedly disrupted by hints of urban and industrial surroundings. Filmed with a strong contre-jour effect, the landscape seems almost graphic in nature. The only fixed point is the close-up remoteness of the sun's glaring disc at the center of the picture.

Jean-Marie Straub / Danièle Huillet,

(Straub: born 1933 in Metz, lives in Rom, Paris; Huillet: born 1936 in Paris, died 2006 in Cholet)

***En Rachâchant*, 1982**

16 mm on Digi-Beta, bw, language: french, 6:55 Min.

Courtesy: L'Agence du court métrage, Paris



En Rachâchant tells the story of a little boy named Ernesto who refuses to go to school because the school teaches things he doesn't know. It refers to a children's story by Marguerite Duras.