

MUSEUM FRIEDER BURDA
SALON BERLIN

PRESS RELEASE

Museum Frieder Burda | Salon Berlin

DECONSTRUCTING BORDERS

Sigmar Polke / Alicja Kwade

(February 4 – Mai 6, 2017)



Our everyday reality is characterised by migration and mobility. At the same time, topographic, national and ethnic borders, and especially the fight for them, dominate the daily news. Parallel to the major show SIGMAR POLKE. ALCHEMY AND ARABESQUE at Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden, Salon Berlin is combining selected works of Sigmar Polke from various decades with a sculpture by the Berlin-based artist Alicja Kwade in an exhibition entitled DECONSTRUCTING BORDERS. In their own completely different ways, each of the two artists critically address the phenomenon of drawing territorial borders.

The starting point of the project, which is curated by Patricia Kamp, is represented by Sigmar Polke's fluorescent painting *Amerikanisch-Mexikanische Grenze (American-Mexican Border)*, which he made in 1984. Employing the grid technique he had been using since the 1960s, Polke transformed a newspaper picture of illegal Mexican migrants trying to overcome the steel fence to get to the US, into a shimmering composition. While the neon paint seems like poisonous acid, screen dots and the grid pattern of the fence cut through the layers of the picture. Given the current plans of the new US president, Donald Trump, to erect a wall along the entire length of the 3,141 kilometre-long border between the south-western US and Mexico, Polke's image appears almost prophetic. At the same time, Polke stayed away from the emotional charge of the issue. With his ironic blending of politics and pop, he keeps his distance from the subject and instead, questions both the effects of media images and the observer's stance.

While Sigmar Polke (1941-2010) deconstructs visible borders and delineations in his paintings, invisible boundaries materialise in the work of Alicja Kwade (*1979). Her sculpture *Reality Zones* (2016) is made of metal rings modelled on the lines dividing the world's time zones. The rings are also connected from West to East and fall to the floor like a fragile chain. The standardisation of time is aimed at simplifying the processes of trade, law, travel, and communication that hold global society together. Yet if we look more closely, we can also see little kinks and dents in Kwade's time zone rings, where actual country borders run. Time, therefore, is also a question of geopolitics. With her poetic and political work, Kwade deconstructs reality and questions the validity of these conventions.

The modern era brought with it a rapid deconstruction of borders and acceleration of mobility, production, trade, and communication. Seemingly without effort, we cross frontiers and time zones. But by the time of postmodernism, Paul Virilio was predicting a paradox final stage of this development: "racing standstill". Humanity threatens to slip into regression as a result of digital communication, in which images are transmitted in real time. The human being stares motionlessly at the flickering screen, which allows him to be "there" simultaneously, anytime and anyplace. However, this ultimately leads to a "momentariness without history", a coma-like state which the French philosopher characterised as "medial ghettoization". From our computers or smartphones, we follow the activities of our friends on social networks, or watch reality shows, the latest American series or even wars, refugee flows and the disintegration and reordering of political systems.

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“In our “post-truth” times, in which calls for separation and isolation are growing louder around the world, DECONSTRUCTING BORDERS sees itself as a stimulus to rethink our borders, inward and outward, visible and invisible”, says Patricia Kamp about the exhibition. Polke’s painting *Interieur (Interior)* (1966), in which the representative period furniture appears to disintegrate in grid dots, is an attack on bourgeois complacency. His *Hütten (Huts)* (1999), which appear to fade into streaks, seem like a cool elegy to the notion of protected sanctuaries, just as the *Eisberge (Icebergs)*, which can also stand for social, ecological or emotional aggregate states, melt and dissolve. The manipulated photocopies indicate that we must address both: the ideology of media images and the end of our comfort zones, which we had taken for granted for so long.

Opening hours:

Thursday - Saturday 12 pm – 6 pm

Further information and images:

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