

EDUARDO

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An error is a starting point
Conversation with Konrad Wyrebek
Daniele Capra

DC: Your paintings are based on the random errors and imperfections generated during the process of transmission of electronic images, or deliberately using the compression algorithms of software programs. In both cases, you focus on a particular condition of the image as an incomplete/incorrect message, incapable of transmitting all the expected information the viewer requires. Thanks to painting, you then transform this quasi-image in a full-image. What do you believe an image is?

KW: That's a good question. I'm not sure what the answer is, but I'm trying to figure it out. It's definitely complex: it deals with intellect, senses, impressions, and it's quite hard to contain with language. Maybe that's part of an answer: it's a different absolute and independent way of communicating. It carries information, which in a digital age is coded and can be read or assembled in more than one way, depending on the background setting (cultural, historical, social, etc.). As you mention, it also has a margin of error, but I don't see this as an incorrect message, rather I see it as something more accurate and complete.

DC: The word "error" comes from the Latin verb "errare", which means "wander", "stray" or "mistake", and it can give the idea of an opportunity you can discover only by deviating from your comfort zone. I believe that your method can be considered to be an error-based research...

KW: I like that definition. I can confirm that it definitely feels like I'm wandering, researching and questioning here...

DC: But the final result (i.e. the painting) is the sum of the starting inputs, plus the sequence of errors you can control – that is a full-image. Are you interested only in the process of transformation, or do you also evaluate the result from an aesthetic point of view?

KW: I evaluate the results aesthetically. It all starts even before the transformation – when I search for certain colours in the source materials that I will use. During this process, which can take from a few weeks to months, I end up with thousands of images. I then look for the colour, composition, shapes, texture, rhythm, etc.. I have to make sure I select something that is both powerful and interesting enough that it will take me over a month to turn it into a painting. The finishing layers are in varnish, visible only at certain angles, but this takes about two additional weeks to apply.

DC: How do you choose your source images? Do you have a procedure, or does it happen by chance? Is the picture important in itself, or is it just a starting point?

KW: First of all, I look for topics that interest me; a topic that I believe matters and is relevant for the times and society we live in. For example, world distribution of news (you can see news readers in my video work installation), climate change, global warming, or, more recently, even the canons of beauty and lifestyle. The subject and source of the starting image are very important for the conceptual layer of my practice; it's as important as the process itself, and only after that comes aesthetics.

DC: We are accustomed to define pictures as either figurative or non-figurative (abstract) based on the correspondence between the subjects and elements of reality. Your paintings aren't based on pure representation, but rather the final result is a *real* image of something that lived for moments in the electronic stream. Even if there are many elements that come from the language of abstraction (such as geometric structure, the use of patterns, etc.), do you consider your paintings to be figurative works? Don't you think that the process itself can be considered the real subject?

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KW: Yes, the process is an important, integral and conceptual layer of my practice. I start with video footage, which is figurative, and select images of something that is relevant for the times and society we live in. The works of this exhibition might seem quite abstract, however they do originate from figurative representations. Often times, I like to leave it up to audience to work it out whatever it is they're facing – for me, the ability to question is more important than the answer itself.

DC: Due to the development of technology and communication, we live in an era made of a continuous flow of images. Thanks to painting, you are able to slow down the time of an image you captured from reality, and extend its duration. In theory, the image you painted can even last forever. Isn't this a classical and somewhat contemplative approach to image?

KW: Yes sure, "Exegi monumentum aere perennius,"* it's very classical. However, it can also be very romantic, trying to capture something that is highly ephemeral, lasting just a fraction of second on your phone or laptop screen. It can be very cathartic and meditative for the artist, since I spend another month and a half to turn it into a painting. It can be an existential mapping attempt to achieve perfection in imperfection. It's a circular and experiential process. I think all of those above and many more, and we could have conversation about it for hours going into and out of classical and romantic characteristic. Due to the technology we have access to all the eras and concepts in the same time. We shape this eclectic mass culture like clay and create something original that is unique for the present and the time we live in.

* "I have created a monument more lasting than bronze", Horace, Odes, III 30.