



RESEARCH PROJECT

„...each grows stronger when nourished by the other.“

Interview by Wen Bi with Margareta Barthelmeß

"Seeing, hearing and feeling - phenomena in nature, science and art" - this is the theme to which the ZERO foundation will devote its attention in the coming years. The historical knowledge from the ZERO era will become the input and trigger for new art processes.

The artistic practices of the participants are as diverse as their references to ZERO art. At this point we would like to introduce you to the participants on a monthly basis.

Margareta Bartelmeß was born in Koblenz in 1993. From 2013 to 2016 she studied geophysics at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, KIT. In 2017, she changed to the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf to study art in the class for stage design with Lena Newton.

Wen Bi: Are you familiar with the ZERO artists/the ZERO movement in the 1960s? How do the artworks or concepts of the ZERO artists influence you?

Margareta Bartelmeß: When I look at the artworks and actions of the ZERO artists, I am inspired by the euphoria and self-confidence that emanate from the works. I also really like the thoughts on light and space. The works seem to me to be a kind of basic study when dealing with space, material, light and movement. It's also a great inspiration for me in thinking around stage space.

Are you interested in the contemporary discourse between art and science? How do you integrate scientific concepts in art making?

Yes, very much. I'm always happy when art and science find points of contact. When I lived in Karlsruhe, the ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medien was always my favorite place to go for contemporary art. To find out about current research, I like to attend events at the Haus der Universität here in Düsseldorf. I think science communication is a very important topic to get research out of its "specialist bubble" and make it accessible to a wider audience. And that's where art can make a big contribution.

In my own work, only individual scientific aspects come into play, for example, pictures that I take out of their intended purpose. Special features of mine are smaller programming tasks and 3D prints for my works. However, I wouldn't call that scientific work, but rather playing with technology, which I simply enjoy.

In your opinion, should an artist implement socio-political topics in an artistic way?

Yes and no. In general, I think that any topic can be implemented artistically. I always find it admirable when a work of art refers to the socio-political situation. However, there is a kind of blurring relation there. The more concrete the political statement becomes, the flatter the artwork often becomes. The more complex the work of art becomes, the more vague the political statement becomes.

Did you miss the creative part when you studied geophysics?

The two courses of study are very different, especially in terms of applying. I definitely think that creative processes are part of scientific work. However, in physics, the more you learn, the more specialized you become in your field. The more a problem is researched, the more explicit the questions become. I found this to be a limitation on my creativity. I wanted to throw all my questions into one big pot and find more than one scientific answer for them. That's why I first started to work at various theaters. The idea that a space could be more than just a mathematical construct excited me.

Did you get a different view of art from your previous involvement with the natural sciences?

I don't know. I've always been interested in both, so I can't say what influences my view of what.

How do you combine your art with science?

I usually don't consciously try to incorporate scientific aspects into my work at all. That happens more by chance when I'm dealing with a subject and thinking about what something looks like exactly. Then observation from very close or very far away is an easy way to find out something about it. Or, when reading scientific texts, I find aspects that interest me and that I think are exciting to investigate in a way other than a scientific one. For example, in an aesthetic or emotional way.

How do you think the use of technology might influence the possibility of observation and perception?

Technology always influences our perception. It starts with the fact that interiors are illuminated with artificial light. Many people wear glasses and almost everyone has a camera in his smartphone. My observation is that almost any technology, no matter how unimaginable it once seemed, quickly finds its way into our everyday lives. And, of course, into art as well. What I find exciting in art is again making specific observations while being aware of the technology you are using, and thereby gaining a new perspective. But whether that's binoculars, a telescope, or a computer tomograph, the principle is the same.

In the tour, you made an installation of topographic aerial photographs and old landscape photographs. What does the overlap and the linking of artistic and real space mean to you?

This overlap is an observation from my everyday life. I'm sitting in front of my laptop in the living room right now, I have both a text document and a window open in the browser. At the same time, I have a view of the house opposite and its windows through my window. In addition, I can look through the open living room door into the hallway via a mirror. Which room am I in? If I am not reminded by a physical condition where exactly I am, I am in some way in all these rooms at the same time. Or rather, I am always where I am directing my attention. The installation was an attempt to artificially recreate this sense of overlap and also to mimic the different temporality of the spaces through movement.

You have experience with theaters and stages, how do you combine scientific thoughts, artistic ideas and practical experience in theaters in your art making?

What excites me about theater is that you can deal with topics in a very concrete and abstract way at the same time. The concrete level comes just from dealing with a text, working with a lot of people, and having to have concrete communication. The abstract level comes from intuitive experimentation. This creates an interesting field of tension, which gives me great pleasure. Both as a participant and as a spectator.

The ZERO foundation is supported in this project by a research fellowship from the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia. The foundation was able to win the MIT Museum Studio and Compton Gallery of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, MA, USA, as well as the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf as cooperation partners. In response to a call for entries at the academy, 43 art students applied to participate. Six artists were invited to participate in the international collaboration: Margareta Bartelmess, Till Bödeker, Yunju Lee, Sean Mullan, Johannes Raimann, Christoph Thormann.