

Kate Andrews

The Semantics of Softer Landings

26 May to 28 July 2024

Short guide to the exhibition



Städtische Galerie Bremen

Kate Andrews offers, with her exhibition *The Semantics of Softer Landings*, a view into her recent artistic creations. Multiple series in various media intertwine a sensory experience for visitors into a grand work of art without pathos. The shown artworks convey an intermediate state. Of chance and artistic control. Of intuition and composition. Of gestural settings and geometric forms. Of abstraction and figuration. Of space and area. Of sensory experience and intellectual analysis.

Kate Andrews uses the intermediate state for a systematic structural analysis, in which she turns ambiguity into a quality for the audience in a positive sense. We become part of analysis and art, in particular through the art pieces that reach into the space. In the title of the exhibition *The Semantics of Softer Landings*, the artist clarifies that it is about a structural analysis of levels of meaning. And so, one can comprehend the creation, configuration and viewing of the art works, especially in the grids of the repeating formal settings of the abstraction of shapes and picture motifs.

However, according to the exhibition title “softer landings” (could be the landing of a stair or landing after a flight) are being semantically analysed and form a lyrical metaphor of our own sensory-aesthetic experience. Which is otherwise difficult to express in universally applicable words and remains in an ambivalent scope. All the more direct and clear does this sensory experience – the softer landings of art and its audience – enable us an insistent understanding of structures and structural fractures, and intermediate states in our everyday life, far beyond art. In this sense, Kate Andrews' works are, on the one hand, her attempts at an artistic understanding through slow progress without a concrete goal in mind. And, on the other hand, a guide for us to encounter the inherently ambivalent world through the works.

Kate Andrews' solo exhibition is part of the Karin Hollweg Prize 2020, which the Friends of the University of the Arts awards annually for an outstanding artistic position among the master students.

How little I know (I – V), 2024, Digital print on paper, framed, 70 x 50 cm

Five examples from this series of collages offer a first view into Kate Andrews' artistic approach and a kind of blueprint for the effect of the mixture of chance and control, which run through the works in the exhibition. New imagery emerges out of only partially recognizable and comprehensible references, with Kate Andrews systematically combining two found source images. These images are random finds and are being significantly changed by cutting them up. The artist reacts to the found sources and develops through her interventions a new image. About which she does not know much beforehand, as the title suggests. Occasionally, the original motifs can still be identified and also offer clear objective associations, as is particularly evident in the combination of mountain and statue. Nonetheless, most of Kate Andrews' collages are on the border between abstraction and figuration, and our objective classifications are permissible but not provable.

Landing sequence (I - III), 2024, digital print, steel rods, dimensions variable, and Studies in syntax (I), 2024, digital print on paper, steel chain, 70 cm x 50 cm x approx. 80 cm

The three *Landing sequences*, photos on the walls, that reach into the space with metal rods, and the *Studies in syntax I*, consisting of the photo on the pedestal and the chain that is running over it, are building an installation together. Kate Andrews uses her photo camera in a way that largely gives up control over the resulting image. She selects the motif but then uses, for example, long exposure times to ultimately let the camera generate the image. This creates photographs that evoke associations with familiar phenomena – sun, sand, seismicity, waves, etc. However, the motifs in the images remain so abstract that we cannot clearly identify them and do not know whether we are looking at a micro or macro view. All photos show movements and are accordingly dynamic. This is transferred into the room and onto the viewers through direct application to the exhibition walls. Using the metal rods and the chain, Kate Andrews transfers the dynamics into the space itself; starting from the “picturesque” photo motifs, she creates a spatial drawing of which we become a part when we move through it. The artist emphasizes specific elements of the photographs through the spatial interventions. In this way, the chain picks up the direction of movement in the photograph. And the ring, that holds the chains together that go around the back wall, hangs exactly in front of the brightest point of light. An experience that is conveyed alongside the movement is (the) fragility and a certain danger. One must be careful not to bump into or trip over the chains and metal bars in the

room. To the extent that we are activated as recipients of art, there are also obstacles to our viewing of the photographs. This makes us even more aware of the conditions in the exhibition space.

The two walls in the middle are sculptural objects and yet still fulfil their function as backgrounds for two-dimensional works. The rods and chains emphasize the striking architectural elements – the ribs of the ceiling, the columns, the niches under the skylights – up to the transition into the original brick staircase. In this way, not only are we in motion, but the entire space is set in motion through us.

Untitled (grey matter) I - III, 2023, graphite on canvas, 2 x 180 cm x 130 cm, 120 x 90 cm

Two paintings from this series hang in the small gallery room, and another large canvas is in the large gallery room. Although the material and size indicate that the pieces are paintings, Kate Andrews' uses a more drawing like approach. First, she once again gives up control over the creation of the image and leaves it to chance by spreading graphite dust over the canvases. This technique is hardly controllable, the graphite dust spreads all over the studio, not just the canvases.

After the uncontrolled distribution, which creates grey areas and streaks, Kate Andrews reacts to the abstract image with a few lines, however in the layer of dust, image associations are suggested. Her reduced and clear interventions form a grid in the same materiality. At least two image levels and an intermediate state between gesture and geometry emerge, which again leaves the proportions unclear. Once again, we think about objective descriptions, one might see a window or generally room that opens. Kate Andrews would not deny this interpretation, but it cannot be proven conclusively and is likely to be different for everyone. More present than any attempt to read something in these images is the captivating impact and particular feel of the graphite on the light canvas, which gets enhanced by the precise drawing elements.

The texture of hours (I - III), 2024, felt-tip pen and collage on paper, framed, 2 x 70 x 200 cm, 70 x 400 cm

The large-format drawing collages of *Textures of hours*, which are each extended across multiple pages, already indicate through their large format, that it was not actually possible for the artist to keep the entirety of the piece in mind when drawing and collaging. The attempt to grasp them as a unity is doomed. The focus therefore lies even more on all the internal structures and their relationships with each other. It is striking that Kate Andrews obviously reacts to her own

statements in a process-like manner, supplementing them and moving them further.

This leads to juxtapositions of layers of the image that remain in a balanced tension. Exact grids get confused by gestural, evaporating lines. Collaged sections suggest an image motif that, however, remains abstract when fitted into drawn forms. Colours appear as accents. All image elements extend beyond the edges of the papers, and in the exhibition, beyond the frames, nevertheless the overall drawing is clearly defined. The artist's process-based search, which is reflected in our observation, seems like a statement about the uncertainties of exploring and understanding the world and environment in our time. Certainties are questioned, the big picture eludes understanding, we oscillate between looking at the significance of a minor detail and the overarching structures. They offer to get into the details everywhere, but they also lead out again, only to attempt a new entry immediately again.

Kate Andrews herself points to the processual nature with her title. At the same time, she claims a material analysis of time when she speaks of the *texture of hours*, or rather, she makes it clear that the different signs that she finds and invents in her drawing collages result in such a time texture. Which, in turn, only becomes clear when we re-enact it.

Ellipsis (A month wrapped up in minutes) I – II, 2024, digital print on fabric, 158 cm x approx. 300 cm, 158 cm x approx. 200 cm

Two works in the back room of the large gallery take the material analysis further to another level. These works are, again, photographs whose motifs can only be guessed at. We think we can see structures of actual fabrics with folds and perhaps facades of buildings. However, the individual large digital prints, which are relegated to the background as individual photographs in favour of two even larger overall images, remain as abstract as the photo prints on the walls in the small gallery space and on the pedestals throughout the exhibition. Here are primarily surfaces and their structures, as well as light and colour values that are positively recognizable as the content of the works. Printing the images on a piece of fabric and hanging them frameless in the room (at a distance from the wall) enhances the impact, as fabrics are combined to form a curtain. When we pass them by, we even move them through the air. The impression that something is hidden behind it, which even gets created by the abstract motifs, is amplified by the arrangement. The works, but above all, their effect in the space, thus take on something mystically sublime, however, this cannot be related to a passionate existential level. They rather open the space in the sense of an imaginary stage and thus our movements within it as well, which reinforces the

combination with the drawings and photographic spatial interventions in the same place.

Untitled (night geometry) I - VII, 2023, graphite on paper, framed, 70 cm x 50 cm

The principle of *Night geometries* corresponds to the graphite works on canvas in the artistic process. Graphite dust spreads on the paper but adheres to this material differently and has a different impact too. Kate Andrews then intervenes in the dark, dusty expanses with small geometric settings. This creates spaces in a misty grey that has its own cloudy structure, but first, visualises the limitlessness that it also has as a material. It takes on something cosmic within the spaces that we see, with all the implications of existentially incomprehensible infinity, which in turn can always be read back as dust on paper.

The often-precise forms with which the artist reacts acquire their own grammatical structure, a kind of declension of the forms. This, in turn, leads to the fact that in the sequence of the seven individual drawings on display, each of which stands on its own, a narrative is created. And one can imagine a protagonist who plays the role of the front picture plane against the dusty background. Kate Andrews shows this series framed with passe-partout, which highlights the individual image and gives the series additional meaning. Once again, it becomes clear how subtly and, above all, in terms of interaction, the artist arranges her works in the exhibition and relates them to one another. Each artistic approach is given an appropriate form of presentation, which overall creates the impression of a grand intervention.

Studies in syntax (II - VI), 2024, digital print on paper, brass rod, 70 cm x 50 cm x approx. 100 cm, 70 cm x 50 cm x approx. 60 cm, 70 cm x 50 cm x approx. 100 cm, 70 cm x 50 cm x approx. 80 cm, 70 cm x 50 cm x approx. 60 cm

Further *Studies in syntax* after the first setting in the small gallery space, which is part of the larger spatial installation there, follow in the two parts of the large gallery space. Here they first seem like an intervention in the space too, through which the parts of the exhibition are connected, and which add additional dynamic to the other works. Each syntax study consists of a photograph on a pedestal in the dimensions of the photo print and a drawing-like extension into the room that refers to existing architectural elements. The special effect of the photographic motifs becomes particularly clear in the individually set *Studies in syntax*. By looking into the picture from above, we are drawn deep into it; not only a space opens, but an entire cosmos. This is because we are confronted with phenomena such as pure light. They are grounded in the room by the metal rods

and chains, and at the same time, their fragile impact is increased. With the images in these studies, Kate Andrews also refers to the basic qualities of photography, which always includes light as a material, which is enhanced here to a haptic and sculptural effect.

***Archipelago*, 2024, digital print on paper, wood, 60 cm x approx. 1200 cm**

The exhibition concludes with another spatially related setting of a series of works, which in the same exhibition space is again framed through the relationship to a graphite canvas and a multi-part drawing. We encounter photographed collages floating slightly above the floor and arranged according to the long wall, the row of columns in the middle of the room, and the sequence of lights on the ceiling and their wave structure. The original motifs are clearly recognizable as semi-precious stones. They come from a book that Kate Andrews found and in which she was fascinated by the existing staging. She took up the mystical effect of the extraordinary colours and shapes and analysed them systematically by making a cut in the middle of each motif and then reassembling them and photographing them in the same form. In this way, the mystical exaggeration is deconstructed, while at the same time the impression of a macrostructure, e.g. a landscape, is reinforced in each image. The result is a cinematic sequence of images, which is elevated by the presentation form in this exhibition. As we walk through the room, we can quickly find the motifs that originally belonged together, but as with the drawings and the spatial installation, we cannot take in the entire picture at once and so automatically wander from one fascinating arrangement to the next.

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