

RESET THE APPARATUS!

The Persistence of the Photographic and the Cinematic in Contemporary Art

While notions of the digital and convergence still dominate current debates, the artistic research project RESET THE APPARATUS! focuses on contemporary art practices that demonstrate a persistence of the photographic and the cinematic. The term “apparatus” or “dispositif” in French underlines the aspect of a specific *disposition* or arrangement. Not only the act of reception but also the act of production, too, can be regarded from a spatial viewpoint. The making of an artwork involves the body of the artist and his/her relation to the photographic material or medium as well as the mechanical parts of the machinery. Envisaging such a *dispositif of production* can, on the one hand, throw light on the relationship between the material base and the activity of the producing subject and, on the other, help to clarify how the apparatus is rearranged or “reset.”

The terms “photographic” (instead of “photography”) and “cinematic” (instead of “cinema”) no longer adhere to the respective mediums’ technological implementation as we know it, rather they appeal to the *concept* underlying photographic and cinematic practices. Photography and film based on photo-chemical materials may have become obsolete, yet what persists is the idea of the photographic and/or cinematic in the sense of a self-reflexive awareness of these mediums’ particular logics, roots, and histories. Far from romanticizing pre-digital, analog pasts, the project asserts a critical engagement with the conventional apparatus or *dispositif* and exemplifies the myriad ways how it can be “reset.” Dealing with the photographic and filmic can generate insights into the contingent nature of their apparatuses, new methods of artistic production, or even a reinvention of the given medium.

Our research revolves around the following questions: How does the notion of the “apparatus” contribute to a more nuanced understanding of artistic practices? How can the temporal aspect inherent in the idea of “persistence” be conceptualized without falling into the traps of linearity and teleology? Is the analog/digital opposition helpful to distinguish between “old” and “new” media, and if not, then how might it be reconsidered? Why does the intelligibility of photo-chemical

photography and film appeal to artists (and some amateurs too)? How is technological change related to the body and the senses? And – crucial for a project based on artistic research – what drives artists to put into crisis the familiar photographic/cinematic apparatus? Finally: Which broader critical function does this phenomenon fulfill?

RESET THE APPARATUS! with its transdisciplinary, international team of artists and scholars, explores the phenomenon of the persistence of the photographic and the cinematic by merging artistic and scholarly approaches, which will bring about new ways of understanding our relation to media both old and new.