

Galerie Noah Klink  
Kulmer Strasse 17  
10783 Berlin  
info@noahklink.com

Gerrit Frohne-Brinkmann: *Dirty Parrots*  
April 26 – June 3, 2018

Anyone who wants to understand their own present needs to be an outmoded observer. Gerrit Frohne-Brinkmann demonstrates this contradictory balancing act. He allows for an understanding of the actuality of things by temporal displacement. In the end, it is no longer clear whether they belong to yesterday, today or tomorrow. Future becomes archaeological, and you yourself are somewhere in between at best.

Dirty Parrots is a zoo for discarded toy birds. In 2007 the company Hasbro launched an animatronic parrot named Squawker McCaw within the product series FurReal Friends. The manufactured item responds to touch and voice commands, sings and dances, communicates hunger and tiredness, is pleased about compliments and — as befits a proper Parrot — repeats the sentences of its owner. 15 specimen of this Psittaciform species have found their way from the nursery into the gallery via ads and internet auction houses, now babbling in chorus, visibly marked by the exertions of being used as toys. The magic of technical liveliness, which previously quickened children's heart beats, today seems disenchanting. This is relentless technological progress. There is no comparison with today's voice-controlled companions, whose incredible intelligence and ability to learn very clearly demonstrates to us that we have come much closer to the old visions (and dystopias) of the living machine; much closer than we would like. The birds in Frohne-Brinkmann's installation are so hopelessly outdated that they seem to belong to a different era. And yet they are closely connected with us; we must acknowledge in them a Western need to culturalise the supposedly natural, a need to integrate them into the anthropological — be it through imitation, sacralisation or destruction, always for the sake of own superiority. It seems that a talking parrot wants to be somewhat like a human being — a literary topos ranging from Pinocchio to Louie the monkey king; and perhaps this is the reason why talking parrots have always been allowed to entertain rulers and authorities in colonial mansions as well as in the Vatican. A few years ago, a toy company turned the tables and built an artificial parrot, which today entertains an art-minded audience as a wonderfully bizarre antique. In a more or less distant future, someone will spend a lot of money for a deceptively real, artificial parrot (like the owl in "Blade Runner"). Thus with certainty and only shortly afterwards, when the next version of this artificial parrot reaches the market, no child will be enchanted by the then technically obsolete imitation. As you can see, basically all of this has happened already. The sentences we hear today, pre-spoken by previous owners and stored in the damaged robotic birds, sound from a distant place that naturally belongs to the past. Before we know it, this place will become our future; for example when artificial intelligences build dolls of Siri and Alexa to amuse themselves about the technological primitiveness of human beings.

The final performance of Squawker McCaw offers a foretaste with aftertaste. His words could be: Every epoch has the talking parrots it deserves.

Text by Elias Wagner

Translated by Katerine Niedinger