



TIME(LESS) SIGNS

Otto Neurath and reflections
in Austrian contemporary art

Austrian Cultural
Forum London

1 October 2014 –
9 January 2015

EXHIBITION GUIDE

Entrance

Barbara Höller *1959,
lives and works in Vienna
Everyday, 2012–14, pictograms from
all over the world, selection and
visualisation by the artist

If you would like to participate, please
send your favourite pictogram in public
space to office@zeitlose-zeichen.at
www.barbarahoeller.at

Vitrine under staircase, and wall

Gerd Arntz 1900–88
Original drawings for pictograms, 1933
Isotype 'Picture dictionary', 1930–40
Printing blocks of Isotype pictograms, 1940s

Otto Neurath 1882–1945, and
Marie Reidemeister 1898–1986
International picture language and *Basic by
Isotype*, 1936 and 1937 (London: Kegan
Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.)

Although Isotype was not constituted by
pictograms alone, illustrations found in
both these books hint towards the use of
pictograms in travel and traffic signs, uses
that have since become common.
www.isotyperevisited.org

Niko Wahl *1974, lives and works in Vienna
I.M.O.N., 2010, fused sheet glass, printed
paper, ashes

Neurath was forced to emigrate twice, and
today he is a figure little known to a wider

public. His far-reaching visual ideas and
autonomous approach toward bringing
about social change remain as a shadow
on ashes between molten glass.
www.nikowahl.at

Staircase to Salon

Sito Schwarzenberger *1976,
lives and works in Vienna
Top-view Order, 2012 and
Supermarket Abstraction, 2012/14,
digital prints on canvas

A flowing formal displacement occurs
along the hard and narrowly defined line
between having meaning and no longer
having meaning; in the case of the picto-
gram, the latter is a reversal of its purpose.
www.sitoform.com

Christian Hutzinger *1966, lives and
works in Vienna
Untitled (CH 05/2010), 2010, acrylic on
canvas

'My paintings are never abstractions
of real objects. They develop the other
way around, reminding one – sometimes
more, sometimes less – of things in the
real world,' remarks Hutzinger on his
geometric-abstract, hard-edge painting.
And yet for the beholder, shaking off
perceived associations to the world of
everyday things is no easy undertaking.
www.christianhutzinger.com

Salon (rear to front)

Otto Neurath · Gerd Arntz · Marie Reidemeister

Original charts explaining the 'Vienna Method of Pictorial Statistics', c.1933

These charts were produced by the Mundaneum, an international affiliate of the Social and Economic Museum, for exhibiting in England. They were made in Vienna and shipped to the Mundaneum's London office for display. Hand-crafted from pre-printed elements, the charts are among only a few surviving originals of this kind.

www.isotyperevisited.org

Bernhard Cella *1969, lives and works in Vienna

Annual Table on Art in Austria, 1995, screen prints on handmade paper, edition 7/50

The screen print series 'Complete Survey of Austrian Art from 1993 and 1994' comprises statistical tables representing a full year organised according to event type, size and time of year. Spatial and seasonal density serve as an indicator of the autonomy of contemporary art. The means of depiction selected is designed to express the approach to and the social perspective on art. www.cella.at

Lena Knilli *1961, lives and works in Vienna

Endowment (Child/Woman/Time Skirt and Children/Two Ground Plans), 2010, mixed media, acrylic and industrial painter on paper

Knilli is interested in the starting points from which the individual develops and unfolds – the things that have been passed on to us as 'codes'. In the series *Endowment* the shapes claim to speak a commonly known language, but the meanings they carry are altered by manipulations and unaccustomed connections.

www.lenaknilli.at

Matthias Klos *1969, lives and works in Vienna

Untitled, since 2007, silhouettes in various dimensions

Since 2007 the artist's work has included a continually expanding series of silhouettes. The material and technique are always the same: a standard A4 sheet of white paper is folded in the middle, and then a design is cut into it without any preparatory drawing. A great variety of forms arise from these fixed parameters: filigreed or compact, figurative or abstract, sketchy or thoroughly formulated. The 'documentation of a situation' (Klos) and a processual approach to formal creation are key aspects of a practice that stays close to the questions central to every sort of artistic production, of beginning and perfecting, of idea and 'work'.

www.m-klos.com

Hermann Josef Painitz *1938, lives and works in Vienna

National Assembly Election, 1972, screen print, edition 24/100, courtesy MUSA (Museum, Start Gallery and Artothek of the City of Vienna)

Painitz can rightfully be called the first Austrian artist to pay homage to Neurath's pictorial language and social achievements in his work. In this example he graphically illustrates the distribution of votes and seats in the 1971 Austrian National Assembly election, thus making a political fact into the organising principle of his painting.

www.zeitkunstnoe.at/de/st.-poelten/ausstellungen/hermann-painitz

Martin Kaltenbrunner / Günther Geiger / Sergi Jordà / Marcos Alonso

Reactable Mobile, 2010, electronic musical instrument, application

The award winning *Reactable* (2005) is an electronic musical instrument with a Tangible User Interface, which makes sound, rhythm and music into a graspable and visual experience. Multiple users can

play simultaneously by moving, rotating and connecting simple Plexiglas objects. The pictographic symbols form the elements of an interactive programming language for sound and music. Since 2010 it has been available as a versatile music app.

www.reactable.com

Michael Wegerer *1970, lives and works in Vienna and Lower Austria

Perceptions of Life, 2010–14, wall installation/data visualisation: C-print, drawing, screen print, Ikea clocks

The 'Happy Clock', developed in 2010 in cooperation with Sérgio Camiera and now part of the installation, is the point of departure for and nucleus of an ever-growing object data visualisation project. The clocks visualise statistical surveys of internet databases from 52 different countries worldwide, whereby the information presented links values reported for creativity and education with a value expressing subjectively experienced happiness.

www.mikewegerer.com

Olaf Osten *1972, lives and works in Vienna

Commuting 090, 2012, felt-tip pen on pocket calendar, courtesy Galerie bäckerstraße4, Vienna

Commuting is a continuing series of spontaneous drawings in Osten's used pocket calendars. It describes the balance between continuity and change that we all are more or less in search of. As a pictogram-like expression of the feeling of timelessness, *Commuting 090* (2012-8-16) functions as a representative visual metaphor for the exhibition project TIME(LESS) SIGNS – as a placeholder for something that on account of a certain autonomous quality does not vanish into the Zeitgeist of a bygone era, but remains.

www.olaf-osten.com

Basement

Waltraud Palme *1959, lives and works in Vienna and Lower Austria

SIGN: TABLE, 1997, screen prints from the hand printed artist book *Waltraud Palme: Zeichen-Tisch. Eine Bildauswahl aus dem Tisch-Objekt mit 2760 Piktogrammen* (art & print-wien)

For Palme 'sign' refers to a tangible thing, such as a traffic sign, flag or pictogram. These items visualise something extracted from the world. They explain and direct attention, inasmuch as they can be deciphered. The 2,760 signs of Palme's table-object *SIGN: TABLE* (created for the 1995 exhibition "Philosophers' Tables" to honour Otto Neurath) deny this possibility. The rounded rectangles serve as frames for a plethora of forms, which arise from a perpetual search for traces. 1,380 forms were subjected to various graphic transformations: diminution, reflection, doubling... They attract the gaze, but they remain puzzling.

www.waltraud.palme.ist.org

Richard Kriesche *1940, lives and works in Graz and Vienna

the sculpture of mercurio – printed, illuminated, created, 2005/12, light object, documentation

The steel sculpture *mercurio* in Bruck/Mur (Styria) is based on the universal symbol of the running escape figure. Both, the symbol and *the sculpture of mercurio*, are oriented toward alarming the human being. Since the pictogram of the escape figure is of a global nature – being globally readable, globally identical, globally omnipresent – it transforms, on a meta-level, the world in its entirety into a latent danger zone. This recoding of the symbolic into the real, and with it of the present into the future, corresponds to the singular transformation of the 2-D universal symbol into the 3-D reality of *the sculpture of mercurio*.

<http://kulturdata.joanneum.at>

[Basement, *continued*]

**Otto Neurath · Gerd Arntz ·
Marie Reidemeister**

Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft:

bildstatistisches Elementarwerk (Society and economy: elementary work in pictorial statistics), 1930

Selection from a folder of 100 printed charts that marked a high point in the first phase of Isotype. Here the 'Vienna method' of graphic design reaches maturity. A team of consultants, including cartographers, historians and others, was specially employed by the Social and Economic Museum for this publication. It is a kind of atlas, suitable for use in schools. The loose-leaf pages allow the charts to be shown alongside each other and compared.

www.isotyperevisited.org

Anthony Burrill *1966, lives and works in Wittersham, Kent

Design Drawing 3, 2004, vector line illustration

Burrill's work is part of a series of simple geometric drawings inspired by a school technical drawing manual and memories from the artist's childhood and teenage years.

www.anthonyburrill.com

Visual Arts Room (left)

Nikolaus Gansterer *1974, lives and works in Vienna and Berlin

All the Things We Need, since 2002, drawings on advertising material

The work consists of a constantly growing visual archive of images distributed on advertising leaflets. By totally blackening out the content of the advertisements with ink, Gansterer brings a dark side of the familiar product world to the forefront of our perception. This 'subvertising' encroaches on the economy of commercial iconography, raising questions on

the border between information and disinformation, need and desire, promise and delusion.

www.gansterer.org

Gert Linke *1948, lives and works in Tulln

Eudora Goldkind EU 340, 2012, graphite and shellac on blotting paper soaked in linseed oil

I'm Cold, 1983, cast steel

In his subtle manner, Linke intermixes reality with an individual utopia, which spreads itself out before him of its own accord as soon as he begins to analyse things. His irony and humour are presented under the guise of mythical encryption.

www.basis-wien.at/db/person/15360

Ilse Chlan lives and works in Vienna

Patterns of Economic Efficiency, 2011/12, pigment inkjet print on paper

Chlan's point of departure was an image from Thomas Clarkson's 1786 *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*. It depicts the various decks of a slaving ship, and it is still valid as a symbol of the exploitation in today's European and global economy.

www.chlan.at

Wilfried Gerstel *1966, lives and works in Vienna and Berlin

1+1+1=1, 2012, fired manganese clay, oil paint

This wall sculpture approaches the idea of the Christian Trinity using the pictographic language developed by Otto Neurath and Gerd Arntz. Relief technique expands the language into the third dimension, giving rise to new possibilities for interpreting the idea of the Trinity on yet another level. While the equation used clearly accents the mystical paradox of Christian monotheism, its mathematical incorrectness is an expression of the political economist Neurath's distanced relationship to religion.

www.wilfriedgerstel.net

Hazem El Mestikawy *1965, lives and works in Vienna

Seven Heads, 2009–2014, installation of cardboard, paper, photo print and inkjet print

El Mestikawy's installation is a contemporary interpretation of the great work of the Austrian philosopher and urbanist Otto Neurath and his graphic designer Gerd Arntz. The mixed-media piece is grounded in the equity of all sides and on the readiness of all parts to exchange positions. No side is stronger or weaker: all parts make an equal contribution and occupy an equal space. Equity is the fundamental reality for the construction of all civilization; interactivity and exchange is the principal condition for a perfect equilibrium. Replication is obligatory for the sustainability of the overall form.

www.atrium-ed-arte.at

Peter Weibel *1944, lives and works in Karlsruhe and Vienna

M/W Object Image of Desire, 1988/2012, documentation: photo print, text

The digital print shows an exhibition view of Weibel's installation at the Museum of Applied Arts Vienna in 1988, in which he had removed the 'M' and 'W' from the doors of the men's and women's rooms. For the duration of the exhibition, these letters were attached to two panes of glass, which were mounted on white pedestals at a height that presented them clearly in mid-air before the eyes of exhibition visitors. Destroying the symbolic order allows a dysfunction to arise, which *ex negativo* proves how important it is to have a public language of signs.

www.peter-weibel.at

Visual Arts Room (middle): Films

Karl-Heinz Klopff *1956, lives and works in Vienna

60 Seconds in the Colors of My Shirt, 2006, computer animation, sound, 1 min

A fictive, seven-color bar graph is built up at one-second intervals in the form of vertical colored stripes on one of the artist's shirts. An electronic timer beeps synchronously as in a countdown.

www.khklopf.at

Christian Rupp *1970, lives and works in Vienna

up&DOWN – Dow Jones Roller Coaster, 2012, computer animation, video with sound, loop 1 min 30 sec

The film shows a virtual roller coaster ride, giving the viewer a front-row seat. The ups and downs follow a graph charting of the Dow Jones Industrial Average from spring 2007 (at the start of the subprime mortgage crisis in the USA) to spring 2012 (in the midst of the EU economic crisis). While national economies and many private households are severely affected, most of the world's richest people actually manage to increase their accumulation of wealth. A crisis for the majority is an opportunity for others.

www.christian-rupp.com

Sito Schwarzenberger

disappearance of the aesthetic difference, the difference that makes a difference?
2012/14, MP4, sound by Daniel Hafner,
3 min 28 sec

Forms move in synchrony with the sound. The image machine receives live signals from the sound machine, translating them into visual information. Formally reduced pictograms, charged with bundled information, are influenced by minimal acoustic signals and overlaps, becoming constructive abstract moving compositions.

www.sitoform.com

Clemens Kogler *1980 / **Karo Szmit** *1978

Le Grand Content, 2007, animated film,
DV PAL, Beta SP, 4:3, colour, stereo,
3 min 57 sec

Le Grand Content examines the omnipresent PowerPoint culture in search of its philosophical potential. Intersections and

diagrams are assembled to form a grand 'chain of association massacre', which poses itself the challenge of answering all the questions of the universe and then some. It fails completely at this endeavor, of course, but in its failure it still manages to produce some magical nuances and hues between the great topics death, cable TV, emotions and hamsters.

www.clemenskogler.net
www.karoszmit.blogspot.com

Jun Yang *1975, lives and works in Vienna, Taipei and Yokohama

Revolutions, 2011, animation, HD video, 9:21 min; courtesy Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna

What are the mechanisms of revolutions? What are the images remaining in our memory? That which starts as a single movement, a small action, becomes a mass, a revolution overthrowing the existing power to install a new one. One absolute, one truth replacing another. The audience participates as a witness.

www.martinjanda.at

Visual Arts Room (right)

Karl-Heinz Klopff

Streets (Gloucester Place, Crawford Street, York Street, Bickenhall Street, Baker Street, Dorset Street), 2009, series 1996 – continuing, C-print mounted on acrylic glass

Local spatial surroundings are meticulously captured as a pictogram, in an alternative language of space, and as such this information is then applied to the window of an apartment situated within the area depicted. The image reveals a dual structure: it consists of a photographic citation of reality and a graphic representation of a piece of territory excerpted from that reality. The window offers a view that denotes the frame of a symbolic act of visually and mentally exchanging narrative patterns and lines of action. www.khklopff.at

Christoph Hinterhuber *1969, lives and works in Innsbruck

02 systems (wonderland / illegal), 2002, screen print on composite board, courtesy Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman, Innsbruck/Vienna

Hinterhuber's approach is characterized by the transformation of highly complex layerings and mental structures through a long process of reduction into compact visual information systems.

The information, however, recedes to the point at which it just barely remains information; it has ceased to inform, to point at something beyond itself. Thus, in looking at Hinterhuber's images, one always has the feeling that something is at a turning point – with regard to optical or spatial perception, or to the trains of thought triggered by his work.

www.chinterhuber.com

Open3.at : Carl-Markus Piswanger *1971 / Robert Harm *1979, live and work in Vienna

Austrian federal budget forecast 2011–14, 2010, visualisation based on Open Government Data

Toilet Map Vienna, application 2012

Open Data, in particular Open Government Data, offers an opportunity to provide freely available data to the interested public. The Austrian association Open3.at aims to implement different OGD projects in Austria, ranging from visualisations to surveys and the first worldwide 'Open Data Poetry Contest' in 2011. The graphic representation of data is an integral part of the work, especially as a means of presenting 'bulky' data to interested recipients in an understandable way. www.open3.at

Barbara Höller

Neurath's Legacy on YouTube, 2012, selection and visualisation by Barbara Höller

YouTube provides a wide selection of videos related to the exhibition theme: countless funny, didactic or activist animation

clips take up the symbol language of Isotype. Increasingly, however, amateur clips are being replaced by perfectly animated visualisations that make no attempt to conceal their economic motivations. One is tempted to draw the conclusion that one of Otto Neurath's central goals has been achieved, namely that of providing access to education for all people. And yet one should not forget that 65% of the world population cannot use the internet.
www.barbarahoeller.at

Bernd Oppl *1980, lives and works in Vienna

For Your Safety, 2002, video object, film DV PAL, colour, stereo, 3 min, courtesy Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna

The promises of safety with which one is familiar in the context of air travel are heightened to the point of absurdity in the rescue euphoria. The expressionless faces of the pictograms of safety logistics – driven on by a pulsing soundtrack that sometimes is a background, sometimes becomes dominant in the foreground – distill the mania to its essence.

Dingbat, 2008, video object, film Beta SP, 4:3, B&W, stereo, 1 min, courtesy Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna

In *Dingbat* black symbols culled from the TrueType font Wingdings appear against a white background. As if they were a swarm of insects, the signs organise themselves into structures becoming increasingly concrete. Each of the Wingdings symbols and pictograms convey a clear message; in combination they trigger associations and begin to tell stories. The suspicion arises that the symbols are communicating a secret message, before they all disappear into the white background.

www.berndoppl.net

Lena Knilli

Routes: Using My City as an Example (West Berlin), 2011, industrial painter, coloured pencil, chalk on paper

The series was created in winter 2011/2012, as a mental exploration of routes that Knilli had traversed and repeated, from A to B and C. The artist worked with the notion that these routes write themselves into us organically, that they mark us, becoming a part of our corporeality. In this drawing we see a segment of West Berlin, where Knilli grew up as a child. Here one can appreciate a one-sided 'organ development': the East Berlin streets are still missing.

www.lenaknilli.at

Andrea Ressi *1970, lives and works in Vienna

ELEMENTS/FRAGMENTS – urban landscape infographics (Lower Lea Valley, London: infrastructure landscape), 2011/12, coloured pencil on paper

These drawings from a whole series present a survey of exemplary global city landscapes of the 21st century, in this case an area of London. Ressi's artwork makes use of the well-known, easily and universally readable language of infographics – signs, logos and pictograms – in depicting the essential features of complex urban situations.

ELEMENTS/FRAGMENTS – shifting city landscape, 2012, acrylic on MDF, variously combinable individual elements

Ressi's installation shows an arbitrarily expandable cityscape in constant transformation. The work demonstrates urban phenomena on both a global scale (corporate brandings) and a local scale (terrain vague, social housing). Like pieces in a game, the individual ELEMENTS or FRAGMENTS can be continually recombined to form new landscapes.

www.toposcape.com

Exhibition catalogue

ZEIT(LOSE) ZEICHEN: Gegenwartskunst in Referenz zu Otto Neurath / TIME(LESS) SIGNS: Contemporary Art in Reference to Otto Neurath

With essays by Maria Christine Holter and Christopher Burke et. al., German / Engl.; Künstlerhaus Wien, Maria C. Holter, Barbara Höller (ed.), Künstlerhaus k/haus: Vienna 2013, ISBN 978-3-900354-39-8; booktrade edition: Kerber: Bielefeld/Berlin 2013, ISBN 978-3-86678-792-6

For the duration of the exhibition the catalogue is available for sale. Please ask at ACF reception.

Further reading

Isotype: design and contexts, 1925–1971
Christopher Burke, Eric Kindel, Sue Walker, (ed.), Hyphen Press, London, 2013. ISBN 978-0-907259-47-3

The transformer: principles of making Isotype charts
Marie Neurath and Robin Kinross, Hyphen Press, London, 2009, ISBN 978-0-907259-40-4

From hieroglyphics to Isotype: a visual autobiography
Otto Neurath (edited by Matthew Eve & Christopher Burke), Hyphen Press, London, 2010, ISBN 978-0-907259-44-2

Exhibition Credits

Curators Maria Christine Holter, Christopher Burke

Exhibition graphic design
Christopher Burke, Olaf Osten (logo)

Editorial consultants Christopher Barber, Robin Kinross (Hyphen Press)

Building services Christopher Gunson

© texts by the authors. All texts on the contemporary artworks are excerpts from the exhibition catalogue.

Typeset by Christopher Burke in FF Celeste Sans and FF Parable.

Accompanying Events

(all at ACF London)

Tuesday 14 October, 7pm

The 'Wiener Methode der Bildstatistik' (ISOTYPE) – between art and design

Lecture and book presentation by curator Christopher Burke

Thursday 13 November, 7pm

Helping to fight Hitler and his gang – films by Otto Neurath & Paul Rotha

Lecture, film screening and book presentation by Neurath-specialist Günther Sandner

Wednesday 3 December

5pm: *Curator Guided Tour* led by Maria C. Holter

7pm: *Neurath Reloaded: Information Design Now*

Designer Erwin K. Bauer in conversation with artists Michael Wegerer and Anthony Burrill

Exhibition website

www.zeitlose-zeichen.at

Austrian Cultural Forum London

28 Rutland Gate, London SW7 1PQ
www.aclondon.org

For further information please contact Vanessa Fewster:
press@aclondon.org

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