
Philipp von Rosen Galerie

Markus Huemer

We Now Have Clarity, But We Don't Know What

June 3 – August 26, 2023

Opening on June 2, 2023, 6–11 pm

In the exhibition *We Now Have Clarity, But We Don't Know What* with Markus Huemer (*1968 in Linz, lives and works in Berlin) we show new paintings that explore the functionalities of and illusions about Augmented Reality (AR).

In AR, interactive digital images are merged with reality by displaying digital information onto the real world. A broad segment of the population became aware of the AR phenomenon with Pokémon Go. In this game, which is played on smartphones, AR integrates Pokémon (small, animal-like figures) into the player's real-world environment, creating an immersive gaming experience. The software captures the player's real-world environment through the camera, analyzes the surfaces, and places the Pokémon in an appropriate location in real-time. The Pokémon is displayed three-dimensionally, its position and scale are calculated and adjusted, and it looks as if it was part of the real environment. Thus, Augmented Reality appears on the player's screen – an extended reality, displayed through the medium of the screen. The same is true for the different levels in Huemer's works. Painted images of reality, in this case the exhibition spaces of our gallery, overlap with digital image fragments.

Huemer integrates fragments of images into his works, which are first and foremost images of reality (in this case: gallery rooms) – similar to what the software in the game Pokémon Go does with the Pokémon in the players' real environment. The painted images of the rooms on the canvas can be compared with the camera recordings on the smartphone screen. However, this is already no longer our immediate reality, even without the integration of digital "foreign bodies", but only a quite real-looking painted reality.

The image fragments Huemer uses in his works are neither purely fictional nor purely digital. He creates them by scanning his surroundings with the help of 3D software – the works in this exhibition are the scanned exhibition spaces of our gallery. He thus scans the surfaces of the spaces and the objects within them and creates digital, three-dimensional models. These models are then painterly interwoven with the painted images of the space, or integrated into the painted spaces as fictitious objects. The artist deliberately uses only fragments of the scanned surfaces and not the complete, motif-bound models themselves for his paintings, in order to introduce a further level of distancing. The fragments, however, recur directly to the 3D models: they are those forms that become visible in a digital scan when the scanned model is rotated and – digitally – penetrated through its surface ("skin").

In our exhibition, the painted images of the exhibition space, which are in turn superimposed by painted images of the digital image fragments, hang in the real exhibition space. As viewers, we are confronted with very different levels of reality and perception and find ourselves in precisely that environment, which is the digital and photographed and then painted origin of the works shown.

Huemer's digital change of perspective makes it clear that every digital image is merely an illusion. It astonishes the artist all the more that these digital images take on a real character through the fusion with reality in augmented reality. For Pokémon Go players, the reality depicted on their smartphones seems even more real and important than a direct look at the surroundings with their own eyes.

Deception, lying, and pretending of reality was already a domain of painting centuries before the emergence of AR, since it mirrors a three-dimensional reality on a two-dimensional surface – knowing full well that this is precisely what it is: deception, lying, and pretending. In this respect, Huemer considers himself an expert in this field of fiction. He has always pursued this aspect – the questioning of the reality of the depiction in, or the depictive function of, paintings; in this respect he continues his own painting tradition with the new paintings. It is different, however, with the titles of the works. Whereas previously his titles were always completely absurd (and in this way underscored the distance between what is represented by the painting [signified] and the material that is forming the

representation [signifier]), the titles now have a direct relationship to Augmented Reality. He has borrowed them from texts that describe the qualities, capabilities, and possibilities of augmented reality. So there is a relationship of proximity between what is depicted (something created with AR) and the titles that relate to AR. However, the titles are not uncritical descriptions of what is (supposedly) seen, but rather ironic references to the phenomenon of AR. In this irony, there is in turn a connection with the artist's earlier titles.

With his paintings, Huemer invites us to question the boundaries between reality, perception and interpretation. Visitors to the exhibition find themselves in our rooms and thus in a very specific level of Huemer's works – reality. By involving the viewers in the reality level of his works, because he shows the paintings to the viewers in the very same rooms he has painted, Huemer creates a connection between the painted images, the digital image fragments and the actual environment. The result is an interaction between the work and the viewer that raises the question of objective and subjective reality. Even if visitors to the exhibition directly experience physical reality, their interpretation of this reality – like every form of perception – is subjective.

Huemer's work can be compared to a Matryoshka doll, where each layer reveals another dimension of reality. Similar to the opening of the dolls stacked inside each other, we discover more and more dimensions of reality.

For more information and pictures please contact the gallery.