

Exhibition

# Along the Lines

8 December 2015

– 14 January 2016

**Jochen Flinzer**  
**Jenny Keuter**  
**Axel Malik**  
**Patrick Vernon**

Vernissage

Tuesday

8 December 2015

19:30

ICI Berlin

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U-Bhf Senefelder Platz (U2)

A digression, a not-coming-to-the-point opens the concrete to the unknown; simple shifts and interruptions lead to explorations of unforeseen realities. Digressions manifest themselves in many ways – as distraction, excursus, or detour – and are commonly deployed as a rhetorical or literary device, but also as associative parlendo or political strategy. Digressions are supposed to render narrative accounts more accessible, provide access to remote areas, divert from the topic or argumentation, disturb the flow of storytelling, increase suspense, or delay the result. The question therefore becomes: what do digressions distract from? Is there a current, path, red thread, or direction to lose sight of?

The group exhibition **Along The Lines** focuses on the notion of digression in the visual realm, displaying artworks by Jochen Flinzer, Jenny Keuter, Axel Malik, and Patrick Vernon.

Faint pencil traces, scribbled messages, despairing lines, stitched contours, and stretching threads will continue the reflections on digression and present themselves in space or on paper, ranging from the elusive and emblematic to the raptures of minimalism. The works, mostly pen, thread, and print, reveal the polysemic play of wandering lines, contours, and forms.

Curated by Claudia Peppel

Opening Hours:

Tuesday and Thursday: 11:00 – 16:00

Wednesday: 11:00 – 18:00

Friday: by appointment

Permeating the Line

**On Jochen Flinzer (\*1959)**

The works of Jochen Flinzer retrace lines, or rather, ‘draw’ them anew with the use of needle and thread. Handwritten texts, outlines of objects, structures found on postcards, magazines, or lottery tickets – everything can serve as embroidery pattern. The resulting pieces are displayed in such a way that both sides can be seen: the thread that follows covers a line and pierces through to the other side of the cardboard, where it reveals a disfiguring tangle of lines. Thus, the works deny the possibility of a total view and can only be perceived in a shift of perspective, in the transition between two positions that reveal antagonistic, yet inseparable pathways of the line: focusing and aberrant, readable and unreadable, figuring and dissolving, purposeful and contingent.

In an almost obsessive exertion on unusual templates, Flinzer transfers the reproductive practice of stitching according to a ready-made pattern into the field of art. De- and recontextualized, the needleworks allow for playful references and readings. The headline “Gay String-Pullers” of a perforated issue of *DU & ICH* (Germany’s oldest gay magazine), for instance, no longer merely refers to politically influential persons, but also – quite literally – to the stitching artist himself and hence the question of his agency, his sphere of influence.

It is the experiences of everyday life that Flinzer attends to by means of his diverse finds. Sexuality, being a fan, relationships, hopes and fears, as well as worldly wisdoms command our attention through his minute reworking. The relation between fore- and background, front and back are reconfigured in the process. The handwritten passages on postcards, recounting holiday events or sentiments, undergo a process of appropriation that speaks of care and diligence, but also of a subtle violence – a process that generates erratic lines crisscrossing the side of the image, like non-signifying calligraphies pointing into digression.

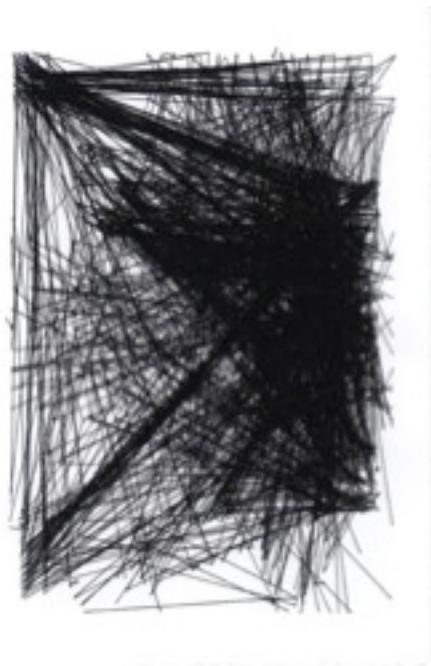
John MacLean

# DU&ICH

DES HOMMES UND SEINER WELT



Jochen Flinzer, *DU&ICH*, 2015, 29,7 x 21,0, silk thread, paper, front



Jochen Flinzer, *DU&ICH*, 2015, 29,7 x 21,0, silk thread, paper, back

## Three Failed Attempts To Elucidate

### **On Axel Malik (\*1953)**

A page, populated by figures: hundreds, running at full speed, suggesting a mode of life at once cerebral and sensible, drawn one at a time, each given shape, just like the one before, by chance details. Always in haste, the figures extend the horizontal line towards other lands, only to be arrested by the margins of the page, which seem like partitions or the weave of a fabric. Others, suspended vertically, like slackened or tangled springs (or twine, barbed wire, lace, filaments), align their delicate thinness, skipping, curling. As these traits without depth, yet not without life, project themselves before us, one after another, we try to read. We try to read a page. We expected writing, familiar territory. Not for long. We were in error!

That slows the eye. In its doubt, it abandons its habitual, blind reading movement. Yet, disoriented by not being able to decipher what turned out not to be writing, the eye, so used to deducing a conclusive meaning, can now only question. There's something that's not to be read but to be seen, in the scanning of these graphic apparitions from which sculpted events have surged, without the least regard for linguistic units. Letters, words, symbols? They mean nothing here! The strokes ordered by the unique thrust of the hand have invaded and conquered the sacred space of the page of writing.

We have no choice but to merely look: without thinking of symbols, without casting a net to catch meaning or thought. We realize there's a function of the figure that's not signified and is not to signify. But even if it doesn't signify, perhaps these traits still represent? The eye, momentarily reassured, approaches again and, taking a closer look, searches for resemblances: aren't we looking at dancers, horses, lovers, cats, insects? But the resemblances don't last. They blur. The eye's lost, no longer knows how to untangle the butterflies caught in the fine mesh of the net. The grid is without intention, without image.

Let's try a different strategy. We approach the artist, discretely, ask him, since he's told us his hand inks these pages the way others write their private diaries. 'Tell us, Mr Malik, what do they recount, these figures? What emotion do they record? What were you thinking of?' However, the answer comes back: 'Of nothing. The spirit, empty, blank. The tracing hand: set free.' The gesture flows from the hand. A blank space, a silence; it resumes. As it is deployed, the ink transposes the infinitesimal, accelerated circling motion. The eye has learned to digress, to move from one frustration to another.

Axel Malik, *Untitled* (N° 8), 2000, 12x16, acrylic on paper

Suspended in Errans

### **On Jenny Keuter (\*1985)**

There's no such thing, the saying goes – its origin lost in a misunderstanding of the Aristotelean corpus –, as a straight line. And if there is a straight line, the saying runs on at times, if there is something that needs to be thought, imagined as a straight line, it would be sight. And indeed, there is a curious affinity between sight and line, between line of sight and the way in which the line schematizes rather than depicts. Drawing, after all, can neither be thought of as a medium nor as a cluster of artistic or 'visualizing' techniques. Rather, it is a schematization of sight itself, deferring to form, erring to form, rather than in-forming. 'Le dessin', Jean-Luc Nancy remarks in his recent book on drawing, 'c'est la forme non donnée, non disponible, non formée.' In this constitutive schematization of sight that is drawing, the line becomes straight not on paper or in space, but only in signifying, almost, the idea of the straight line.

Jenny Keuter draws. She knows how to draw with yarn in space, with a brush on canvas, with a printing screen. Her works bear titles made of generic names—'imaginative spaces', 'spatial structures'—or the time-honored 'Untitled', thus signaling her attention to the way in which her drawings withdraw from the image into the schema. These transpositions across media or materials allow Keuter to schematize the schematization that is constitutive of drawing across all material boundaries, in- and outside the frame, resisting the plenitude of the image, yet resisting, also, in an increasingly playful fashion, familiar idioms of abstraction and their autonomizing pull. Thus, her one-off screen-prints, like the one reproduced here, proliferate drawing in an ambiguous superimposition that registers as repetition. The result is a curious suspension of the division of geometric and gestural abstraction: a quasi-mechanical lyricism.

Keuter's installation 'In Errans' at the ICI Berlin is made of nails—or: site-specificity—and yarn of three different colors. Its straight lines (there's no such thing...) 'draw in' the site, the surrounding library. Yet it does not aestheticize let alone dramatize the space. The lines bouncing between the architectural elements do not fuse with an environment, they remain—one is tempted to say 'ontologically'—distinct; it's as if reality repelled a drawing that maintains a clear 'schematism' even in its three-dimensional materialization. Her drawing appears suspended in space, where it weaves a schema, an assembling and disassembling quasi-sign leading the gaze astray, giving us a clear view of nothing else but the irreducibly digressive potential of our line of sight.

Arnd Wedemeyer

Jenny Keuter, *Untitled*, 2015, 29,7 x 42,0, acrylic on paper (serigraphy, one-off print)

The Line Is Never Linear

**On Patrick Vernon (1958-1998)**

Patrick Vernon was a restless wanderer who committed to paper the vivid impressions, the extremes of experience and also the loneliness associated with his many arrivals, immersions in new realms and inevitable departures. Contours, abstract lines, open forms, and fragmentation, graceful interweavings – Vernon's artistry combines a poetic intensity with a delicacy of particular charm. Ecstatic, curiously evocative and often self-contradictory, his pictures attest to powers of meticulous observation and a subtle cheerfulness, but also to an instability and a restless search for meaning. Many explore transitions, the liminal and the ambiguous.

His filigree monochrome line drawings combine expansive with strictly reduced forms, vitality with rhythmic order, diffusion with constriction. Linear structures and crosshatching create distinct tissue-like zones and patterns, in which human figures or abstract forms that are merely hinted at assume a surprising presence. The fine architectural constructions that seem to float in the space of the picture evoke imaginary apparatuses or fantasy constructs and at the same time develop a monumental heft. Outlines and lines generate a tension between density and reduction, movement and countermovement, form and transformation – marking the impossibility of conclusion.

*Sirène dans la falaise* shows a large fantastical female creature surrounded by a dense field of vertical lines. The figure and the small shapes near her appear both abstract and substantive, even though no body or head can be made out and there is no established point of view. The composition fascinates through the play of stasis and motion.

Claudia Peppel

Patrick Vernon, *sirène dans la falaise* (detail), n.d, 56,2 x 24,1, ink on Japan paper

Artworks by Jochen Flinzer, Jenny Keuter, Axel Malik, Patrick Vernon

Texts by John MacLean, Claire Nioche-Sibony, Claudia Peppel, Arnd Wedemeyer

Graphics by Jens Ludewig - [newoldnow.com](http://newoldnow.com)

Cover: detail of *untitled* (SW 6), n.d., by Patrick Vernon

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