

Distant Worlds

Jens Hanke / Jules Verne

Exhibition March 3 to May 26, 2024 at Schloss Britz, Berlin

The Kulturstiftung Schloss Britz has realized an exhibition in close cooperation with the artist Jens Hanke and with additional loans from board members of the German „Jules Verne Club e.V.“ (Bremerhaven), which we consider so successful that we are now offering a version for adaptation to other exhibition venues.

About the exhibition in Berlin-Britz

In the small, Wilhelminian-style Britz Palace in Berlin, the exhibition was able to dovetail with the historical furnishings of the house, which made the upper-class ambience a foil against which Jules Verne's literary achievements and his intellectual context could be well illustrated. In the rooms, which were refurnished in the style of the 1880s, a number of „disruptors“ were integrated in the spirit of Jens Hanke's contemporary art. In turn, the literature of the Gründerzeit - using the oeuvre of Jules Verne as an example - was able to provide additional impetus and raise questions for contemporary positions, ranging all the way to current developments in the field of artificial intelligence and revealing surprising parallels to Verne's way of working. From this pool of ideas and history, the graphic and painterly work also received a new interpretation. In his paintings, Jens Hanke deals with the depiction of fictional spaces, the development of which often follows discontinuous patterns: His landscapes and spaces are not consistently constructed, seeming primarily to depict cognitive and perceptual psychological processes. Hanke's oeuvre is also characterized by literary and visual designs of science fiction. Not only the literature of Stanislaw Lem (1921 - 2006), but also Andrei Tarkovsky's feature film „Stalker“ (1978/79) form a kind of inspirational matrix for his visual work and the overarching intellectual context. However, the film adaptations and book illustrations of Jules Verne will also have found their way into his „collective“ or rather „individual“ memory.

In his works, some of which are large-format, he depicts topographies and spaces that are often characterized by futuristic or retrofuturistic architecture. In addition, there are objects that can be read as mechanical or technical devices. In deserted rooms, they develop a virulent life of their own or cluster into conglomerates that radiate a strongly suggestive effect of process, production and dynamism. Jens Hanke's paintings and drawings are the products of a fictitious and suggestive confrontation with the unreal. His objects are either urban or technical in nature. While the paintings are generally clearly structured in terms of form and color, the content and narrative context of the individual elements must first be explored by the viewer.

For the Berlin exhibition, a sound installation closely linked to the setting and two video works were created, which could also be effective in a different context. Thematic settings were created in six rooms (Volcano, Journey, Transfer, Systematics, Dream, Catastrophe), which analyze the intersections between Verne's and Hanke's world of thought and the reality of their lives.

In the Berlin exhibition project, Jens Hanke's works were placed in an extended historical context. In Schloss Britz, with its historicist interior, they were historically anchored and formed an amalgam with the architecture. In other exhibition rooms, exhibited publications and illustrations on Jules Verne's work can also compensate well for the pointedly emphasized framework of historically furnished rooms.

The exhibition is aimed at an audience interested in contemporary art. It is also aimed at people who are interested in early forms of „science fiction literature“ in the field of tension between art and artificial intelligence.

Distant Worlds

Foreword

Exhibitions on well-known personalities of the 19th century have a long tradition at Schloss Britz: Empress Elisabeth of Austria (2011), Walter Benjamin (2022) or, most recently, Wilhelm Busch (2023) have been honored in very different ways and opened up for the present. The *Ferne Welten* exhibition attempts to locate a charismatic personality from the second half of the 19th century in her time, make her legible for us today and interpret her through contemporary art.

In six thematic rooms, parallels are drawn between the work of Jules Verne (1828 - 1905), the well-known prolific writer, head traveler and forefather of science fiction, and the contemporary artist Jens Hanke (*1966). Aspects such as technical progress, the view of exotic places and cultures and a reference to utopian - or dystopian - states play an important role. The result is an amalgam of Verne's literary world of ideas and Hanke's visual art. Accordingly, Hanke's current paintings, drawings and objects are arranged into thematic fields that are characteristic of Verne's working methods, the „scientific novel“ of the late 19th century and especially of the author's *Extraordinary Voyages* (*Voyages extraordinaires*).

In the historic rooms of Schloss Britz, artefacts relating to Jules Verne are intermingled with what at first glance appear to be Jens Hanke's strange works of art, allowing the entire castle to be read (once again) in a different way. The enthusiasm for the French author's travelogues, which was also evident in late 19th century Germany, is palpable. Here, too, Verne had a fascinated audience who received his scientifically based geographical descriptions and adventurous novels with breathless excitement. His books and novels, like those of his contemporary Karl May, were based on the study of maps and detailed secondary literature. Neither of them visited the distant locations of their works themselves, if at all.

The exhibition can be visited in very different ways. Without the aid of accompanying texts, it appears as a solo exhibition by a contemporary artist whose works repeatedly enter into a dialog with illustrations of Jules Verne's texts. With the help of textual handouts, an expanded perception is created, a closer reference to Verne and French literature of the late 19th century.

We would like to thank the artist Jens Hanke for his inspiring exhibition ideas and the dedicated implementation, as well as the Jules-Verne-Club Bremerhaven e. V. and especially the board members Bernhard Krauth and Andreas Fehrmann for their support in terms of content and the provision of loans.

Martin Hikel

District Mayor of Neukölln and Chairman of the Schloss Britz Cultural Foundation

Dr. Martin Steffens

Managing Director of the Kulturstiftung Schloss Britz

Jens Hanke and Jules Verne

From the idea to the exhibition

The idea for the exhibition *Ferne Welten (Distant Worlds)* came about after a studio visit by the two curators Rebekka Liebmann and Martin Steffens to Jens Hanke in June 2023. The artist presented his recently completed series of paintings, which are now being exhibited in context for the first time. Inspired by the painting, the curators developed a concept together with Hanke that does justice to the exhibition venue Schloss Britz and the idea pursued there of combining aspects of the cultural history of the 19th century with positions in contemporary art.

In his artistic work, Jens Hanke sometimes uses literary and cinematic sources that create „images“ in his mind. However, his works resulting from various impressions and influences do not appear illustrative or directly dependent on concrete contents of collective memory. Rather, he listens to the echo that his memories of what he has read or of previously recorded visual or acoustic impressions evoke and that lingers with him in the form of „synapsal afterimages“ (the title of an exhibited series of drawings). In his works, he therefore carefully observes the results of this mental and neurophysiological processing and translates them into highly individual designs. The perspectives in his paintings jump, no uniform space is created. The different zones follow their own laws and must be actively assembled by the viewer to create meaning.

With the exhibition *Ferne Welten (Distant Worlds)*, we are undertaking an experiment: we are showing the result of an „experimental arrangement“ that literally relates 19th century fantastic literature to contemporary works of art that are actually only highly implicitly influenced by it. To be clear: Jens Hanke's works were not created as a commentary or reflection on Jules Verne. However, they can be read as such or are possibly also the results of a Jules Verne reception - but this is actually unintentional.

Jules Verne can be regarded as a prototypical representative of the *fin de siècle* (France) or the *Gründerzeit* (Germany). As a deeply conservative Catholic, he led a life in which he endeavored to maintain the outward appearance of bourgeois respectability. After studying law (forced by his father), he initially earned his living on the Paris stock exchange. At the same time, however, he tried to make a name for himself primarily as a librettist of operettas and plays. And although he was married and part of a bourgeois family, his life in the context of the theater world of the time was quite volatile. In his later successful novels, on the other hand, all intoxicatingly emotional elements were left out; Verne even prudishly shied away from using the word „love“ in his texts. Throughout his life, he strove to be recognized as a serious artist and writer.

Although Jules Verne wrote dozens of travel novels, most of them were only written in his head. His rather sporadic travels did not take him beyond the countries of Europe and North America. In his books, however, he strove to open up every corner of the world through the travel adventures of his literary characters. In order to provide as little misinformation as possible, the member of the *Société de Géographie de Paris* used the latest publications on the geographical characteristics of individual regions and provided very precise details alongside a sometimes rather sparse „plot“. In his Amazon novel *The Jangada: 800 Miles on the Amazon*, published in 1882, for example, a rare foray into the crime novel genre, he gives a precise picture of the Amazon and its countless tributaries, islands, cataracts, indigenous and immigrant inhabitants and does not fail to provide information on the population of even small villages. He also deals extensively with the flora and fauna and provides information on the climate, cultural history and economy.

With his themes and subjects, Verne made himself the representative and governor of his (rather petty bourgeois and conservative) readers, who mostly had to do without touristy changes of location, but were nevertheless very interested in adventures and exotic stories. However, his literature also always had an educational approach. Jules Verne's themes are those of his time: technical inventions, national self-confidence, the imperialist expansionism of nations in the colonial sense, interest in economic success and, above

all, breaking out of the confines of home and a fascination with adventure, expeditions and exploring one's own physical possibilities. In this way, he describes phenomena that are sometimes considered problematic today. His particular interest in Africa - especially the then still largely „undiscovered“ interior of the continent - can also be explained by the popular „voyages of discovery“ and the underlying colonial practices of the European states. Verne's audience was not only fascinated by the wealth of the „Black Continent“, but also by the cultures of the „natives“, who were often defamed as „savages“ or „cannibals“. Accordingly, stereotypical national character traits or cultural attributions are passed on in his novels. If he generally champions a credo of civilization, many of his protagonists are committed to an unbroken belief in progress and economic expansion, which the author often ironizes, however, as he was unable to support it due to his conservative attitude.

Most of Jules Verne's more than 80 published novels have fallen into oblivion today. However, the particularly exotic titles *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, *Journey to the Center of the World* and *From the Earth to the Moon*, which seem like forerunners of later science fiction literature, have remained well-known. These works show the protagonists in the most extreme situations imaginable and are of particular interest today due to the technical (im)possibilities conveyed in the stories - after all, it is now actually possible for us to travel to and explore the deep sea or the moon.

In addition to paintings and drawings, Jens Hanke has included media that are rather unusual for him in the exhibition: Sound objects, a video work and an installation process material in the sense of a collage, which establish further references to Verne's lifetime and his reception. The sound and film recordings, which are themselves of colonial origin (they were recorded during a German expedition to Africa in the 1920s), are alienated in the context of the exhibition and placed in relation to his own works. In addition to illustrations of Verne's original publications, these „tracks“, which can be read more associatively, are an invitation to connect Jules Verne's cosmos with Jens Hanke's cycle of works.

For what is the link between these two artists? It is the poetic spaces and imaginary journeys to which they invite readers and viewers. Verne achieved this by means of his unique literary imagination and by using the most exact geographical, technical, zoological, botanical or mineralogical details possible - in other words, by means of science. Hanke, on the other hand, does not want to depict realistically; he prefers to give free rein to his thoughts and subsequently to the brush or pencil. Nevertheless, the drawings are by no means created out of nothing. Such seemingly strange works as *Gossip in the Afternoon* - possibly showing two AIs chatting over coffee - or *He Came down and Left Again* - what happens to a Californian pool that no longer wants to be a pool? - are equipped with a „staffage“ to guide the viewer into certain, but always subjective, patterns of interpretation. What both artists have in common, however, is that seen in a temporal context, machines are not merely astonishing (Verne) or everyday aids (Hanke) - machines can impress through their beauty. Even if machines and technical devices of all kinds play an important role in Jens Hanke's paintings and drawings, the artist is actually concerned with the inner processing of sensory impressions and the metaphorical realization of his subjective perception. Although there are no human depictions in the monumental paintings, they cannot be separated from a personal ingenuity that creates a world that only appears to lie beyond the human sphere. For this is the construct of a brain that Hanke conceives as autonomous, but which cannot be imagined without processing the real. And this is where Hanke's artistic method meets the way artificial intelligence works.

The exhibition is divided into six exhibition rooms, each with a title that points to subliminal content and provides an explanation (see pp. 16-23): a further level that conveys possible interpretations and is intended to provide visitors with stimuli for interpretation and opportunities for constructive confusion.

Rebekka Liebmann, Dr. Martin Steffens

A journey through the mind

Jules Verne and Jens Hanke - brothers in spirit?

Legend has it that Jules Verne climbed aboard a ship in the port of Nantes at the age of eleven. The Atlantic is still a long way off, over fifty kilometers to the mouth of the river in Saint-Nazaire, but here, in the port, in the shipping district where the boy grows up, the tides are already tugging at the river, a world already seems to be in the air. And what he knows about it: how big it is and how different. He can hardly wait to get to know it when, as the anecdote goes, a hand is placed on the back of his neck; his father, the lawyer, has felt the wind in his sails and pulled his son off the ship at the last moment.

The fact that Jules Verne wrote books is therefore a warning sign for the fragility of every historical reality: was he looking for the world into which he was not allowed to sail back then, in 1839 - and fortunately found an even bigger one there, one that did not end at his father's hands and the oxygen content of the atmosphere? Or, if he had sailed: Would he have gotten his fill of the Other, after a ride or two, would he have reconciled and apprenticed in his father's business? Or would he have set his stories not in fantastic, albeit always physically correct, dimensions, but in naturalistically described islands of the Caribbean? Would he have heard stories of giant squid and sea serpents, told by long-grayed slave traders who decades earlier had made Nantes the most important French port for this commodity, constantly navigating a cruel, lucrative triangle between Brittany, the African west coast and the Caribbean colonies? Or, if he had sailed: perhaps only once, and a storm over the Black Atlantic would have swept the young Jules Verne and his ship into the depths.

„Travelers are strange creatures who travel great distances and go to great expense to see new things, without having bothered to look at their own feet or their own heads, where there is as much that is unique and unknown as one could wish for;“ said the French satirist, author and journalist Alphonse Karr, known in mid-19th century Paris as an eccentric, who was a great traveler. He was the inhabitant of a house whose furnishings were intended to capture the magic of the Orient, with milky-purple tinted windows that shut out the outside world.

Traveling is like dreaming, says Jens Hanke, who would probably have got on well with Karr, and also with Jules Verne, the ship's boy who was prevented from leaving Europe only sporadically. Something that takes place in the mind, somehow. The thought wanders from the back of the head to the front - where it is dark, in the coils that intertwine under the roof of the skull, full of goo, it creeps and wanders to the front behind the forehead and becomes an idea there, can be said and thought and visually imagined, the fingers take it up, begin to run, and suddenly it is there, in the light, pen on paper. But how it arises, the thought - the question remains. How does the information get into the synapse?

Karr began to grow flowers in Nice in 1851, when the monarchist restoration of Napoleon III buried the French Republic with a coup in Paris. It was there, at the same time, that Jules Verne published his first short story, *A Drama in Mexico*, which tells of a mutiny on two Spanish warships, but also of a dramatic journey through the wild country of the newly founded Mexican Republic. Poisonous snakes and intrigues and rock avalanches, in the end the surviving royal officers of the flotilla cut the liana ropes of a swaying bridge over a rocky gorge and send the rebels to their deaths. A rather crude, politically rather conservative plot that hardly gives any indication that Jules Verne would one day anticipate science fiction. Even as the inventor of eccentric characters such as Captain Nemo or Phileas Fogg, Verne would remain a conservative citizen with the mindset of European white superiority, struggling for recognition as a serious author among France's literary elite despite his wild adventure stories.

Perhaps Verne not only traveled around the world in his head, but also into a life that he could not live. Karr, on the other hand, traveled concretely every day. In 1845 he published *Voyage autour de mon jardin*,

Journey through my garden, almost 700 pages long, in which the author sees the enormous journeys of the world from a microscopic perspective, the traveling that connects everything and through which everything also passes by here at some point, the migratory bird, the beetle, the drop. One of the many books that try out travel in miniature at this time, discovering the foreign within one's own four walls, starting with Xavier de Mestre's *The Journey Around My Room*, 1790: the aristocrat has engaged in an illegal duel and is sentenced to six weeks' confinement, which he uses to explore the microscopic connections in his immediate vicinity, his thoughts wandering in his chamber no less than after weeks at sea.

In the mode of these mental journeys, time loses its linearity, its flow, the past trickles into the future and trickles back from there. Jens Hanke was born in 1966, a hundred years after Verne's *Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, a rather unknown novel in which the title character goes mad when he tries to hoist a flag on the North Pole, because the North Pole is an active volcano that rules magnetically over an ice-free Arctic Ocean, shooting its lava jets glaringly across the sky. Two years earlier, in his famous novel *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, Jules Verne had the Hamburg professor Lidenbrock descend the Icelandic volcano Snæfellsjökull with his nephew. And strangely enough, this book also features glaring lava fields, volcanic eyes. And we learn from Jens Hanke, who takes up this image in a graphic, that it is the same with volcanoes, that everything that falls in also comes out again, and if that is the case, perhaps we should imagine the artist's head - and then presumably that of all artists - a little like a volcano.

Incidentally, Jens Hanke was born in Eilenburg, just over 150 kilometers away from Spremberg, the birthplace of the mad alchemist Wilhelm Storitz, who discovered the secret of making people invisible in one of Verne's unfinished last novels from 1901 - and thus carried out an invisibility assassination attempt on his lover Myra, who had been promised to someone else. But you can be sure that this is pure coincidence. Unfortunately! If only a later East German focus of an alchemically immortal (and hopefully therefore also laissez-faire) Jules Verne and the *Sonderschaftler*, the *Architectures of Mind* Jens Hanks, had got on well. What could the two of them have designed together? *The Seventh Journey*, which Hanke conceived in Neukölln and Stuttgart for a collaboration with twelve artists, took up a short story by Stanislaw Lem; his project *Home Again* is a cycle of paintings that refers to Caspar David Friedrich's *Sea of Ice*, intertextual pop art. Brothers in spirit, is the title of this text. With a question mark that cannot be interpreted away.

On the other hand, little brothers, and that would be Jens Hanke thinking linearly, can also easily play with what the big brothers seriously and arrogantly place at the center. So: where Verne doesn't actually anticipate science fiction because his imagination is so great, but because his fictions with scientific facts have enormous plausibility, Hanke can ask himself how to catch the information that drips out of the synapses when they burst. Or why art is like a knot that loses energy, although this is ultimately physically impossible. *Secretly Growing Under My Skin* is the name of his sound installation, in which Hanke's graphics and illustrations of Verne's stories are juxtaposed with recordings from ethnological-colonial sound archives, biological pulses and black holes captured in sound. Ethnology, physics, biology, a space shared by both.

Verne has his protagonists travel to the moon and into the deepest depths of the oceans; in Hanke's work, the AI gossips. He recommends the abstract content of his works to viewers as direct current generators, brain scanners, visual osmoses. Verne calculates how to get to the moon with what is at best a very matter-of-fact irony: „It means, Nicholl replied: half a v in the second minus v zero square is equal to gr multiplied by r on x minus 1 plus m in the first on m multiplied by r on d minus x, minus r on d minus r ... - X on y rises to z and rides over p, Michel Ardan shouted with a bright laugh. And you understand that, Captain? Nothing is clearer.“ However, the moon travelers in *Journey around the Moon* miscalculate, merely orbiting the moon, the physical reality and origin of which is discussed in detail before they land back on Earth.

And Britz Castle, the third major protagonist of the exhibition, seems to be far removed from this line of ancestors. When Verne embarked on his studious travels around the world from his room, schnapps was being distilled here, and from 1880 a beet sugar producer had the building restored to its present form, historicist - antilinear, so to speak - in the neo-Renaissance style. It is Jens Hanke who now integrates the

building into the fantastic worlds. He imagines it as a spaceship and then has an AI invent a story in which a wormhole opens up here, a secret passage to the Alpha Centauri system - but one suspects it is more for another journey in the mind.

Steffen Greiner

Overview

The rooms of the exhibition are assigned to specific contents. The following texts serve as suggestions for approaching the concept.

Room 1 - Volcano

Half a Brain or I Don't Live Here Anymore

Volcanism is one of those geological phenomena that fascinated Jules Verne throughout his life and which he incorporated into many novels as a dramatic element of suspense. Being propelled by balloon over an erupting volcano or even using one as an “elevator” to “get out” of the earth’s interior are just two examples. In *Journey to the Center of the World*, the author erroneously advocates the theory, which was still being discussed during his lifetime, that the Earth’s interior is not excessively hot. In a figurative sense, however, the eruption of a volcano can also stand as a metaphor for the eruption of imagination, creativity and creative power. In literature and the visual arts, such eruptions are necessary in order to approach an artistic work and bring it to a conclusion with the necessary tension.

Room 2 - Voyages

Energy Exchange - Voices From Behind the Wall

Jules Verne liked to travel, but did not leave what was considered the “civilized” part of the world at the time (i.e. Europe and North America). As an enthusiastic captain, he spent many weeks and months of the year on his sailing yacht, which also served as his workplace during voyages on the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Some of the nautically inspired passages have been lent credibility by his own experiences. Imaginary journeys played a very important role in his writing. Inspired by geographical research trips and scientific publications, Verne - like Karl May - was able to give a plausible description of topography and climate, even though he had not been there himself and the countries he wrote about had not yet been scientifically researched.

Room 3 - Transfer

Think Tank or The Accidental Tour

The change of location plays a major role in Verne’s work. Whether voluntarily or by force, his heroes set off on the most arduous journeys to rescue lost relatives, to prove a scientific theory or simply to win an honorable bet. Even if the *Extraordinary Journeys* sometimes led to places that were hardly or not at all accessible at the time (moon, deep sea), Verne gave careful thought to the technical nature of a lunar rocket propulsion system, for example. For the *Nautilus*, Captain Nemo’s submarine in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, Verne also drew on contemporary research and design experiments with scientific ambition, research and design experiments.

Room 4 - Systematics

AI - Gossip in the Afternoon

Jules Verne fell back on a gigantic fund of geographical, geological and cultural information. In some publications, the plot almost seems to take a back seat. The focus is on the description (or retelling) of journeys on the globe or in the atlas, which is why the term “scientific novel” is applied to Verne. Gathering correct information and compiling it into literary texts also corresponds to the current method used by artificial intelligence (AI) in more and more areas. An example of its now frighteningly effective “intelligence” and “creativity” is provided by the Britzer Sextant, a publication accompanying the exhibition, all of whose contributions were created by AI.

Room 5 - Dream

Inbetween - Two Worlds

Jules Verne's novels were written with a narrative structure, that focused on the facts. The “heroes” pursue their plan purposefully, defy all odds and are successful in the end. The experiences that the author subjects his protagonists to are sometimes highly dramatic. For many people, the images (especially those of the cinematic adaptations) burn themselves into their memory and return in their own (nightmare) dreams. In a figurative sense, however, Verne reworks the dreams of his time, even if they are often less poetic. Economic success, expansionist policies and a race between nations play a role with great regularity.

Room 6 - Catastrophe

Distortion - Having Missed the Bridge

Jules Verne's life was characterized by various disappointments. He did not have a good marriage, his contact with his own child was difficult and his professional and literary beginnings were also marked by many disappointments. However, his greatest life catastrophe was probably the attempt on his life by his mentally disturbed nephew. Hit by a pistol bullet, the author's health was impaired for the rest of his life. In his literature, it is the task of his protagonists to expose themselves to the most hair-raising situations - and to overcome them heroically. The real quintessence is: for a true hero, there is no giving up and no (real) catastrophe!

*Half a Brain or
a Call From Behind the Wall*

A landscape of houses in an advanced stage of densification. As a horizontal massif, it obscures the view into the distance; only at the very top edge of the picture can a glimpse of what lies beyond.

It is difficult to delineate individual façades; they overlap and penetrate each other right into the interior. One would like to believe that there was a mistake in the image capture or storage (too much LSD in the liquor?). The house shapes are based on an abstract vocabulary of ribbons and rectangles, which in places degenerate into crude angular cascades. Even the plant forms have had to adapt to these angles.

A discreet settling movement in the foreground. Is this why the two twin window bands seek our gaze? If they are not just the two poles of a direct current generator, connected via a common beam to the storage unit, which provides plenty of escape energy. Excess electricity seems to be emitted into the space in between, which the renegade island has already left behind.

There must be an undefined force field, a network operating in the background.

JH

*Half a Brain or
I Don't Live Here Anymore*

Two modes of representation are at loggerheads here, so to speak: one obeys the classical perspective, the other has grown up without it and reserves the right to dwell on the two-dimensional. The way the spatiality disintegrates here could be due to a degenerated macula in one eye. Both optic nerves feed the receptors with incompatible information, so that a deformed image is inevitably generated in the visual cortex.

But where do we actually get the certainty of what is wrong and what is right in the generated image? This is where our visual experiences, our store of memories, come into play. The stored images interfere with perception and are always good for interference. Perception is, after all, a psychological process. As an artist, I am at home in the resonance space that is created in the process.

However, it requires a comparison with the current perception, no matter how polyphonic it may be, in order to be able to orientate oneself in the terrain. It's just as well that we have the tower with the viewing slit! Behind the barriers piled up like Caspar David Friedrich's ice floes, which are supposed to seal off this world from the other, we can make out a horizon whose dawn - if you want to understand the color spectrum - promises a golden age.

JH

Distortion -

Having Missed the Bridge

This could be a synaptic „afterimage“ of the kind that might occur after waking up in hospital - when the question arises as to how you got into a horizontal position on this strange bed. Image fragments, recorded in microseconds and stored for resuscitation, but unfortunately in different areas of the brain. They first have to find each other again! It is still far from clear which fragment belongs to what, but one thing is already clear: some sequence of events must have been interrupted rather abruptly. Now the visual memory is in the process of activating energies, scanning areas of the brain so that this last image from an unclear before can be completed and released from its fragmentation. This would at least provide a visual anchor around which the unconscious events could be gathered as a story. And you could make sense of why the bespectacled creature in the greenish suit has now entered the field of vision in addition to your own horizontal position in the strange bed ...

JH

Energy Exchange

Voices From Behind the Wall

Here, two distinguishable spaces emerge quite quickly from a network of lines in which dark forms rest like weights, but which, fraying at the edges, immediately begin to penetrate each other again - a kind of „visual osmosis“. And as both seem to be equipped with different energy fields, a lot of electricity flows. This is good for us, as it can power the lamps hanging above the structures. Without them, we would not be aware of all the confusing events, the constant flow between the antipodes of black and white, through the many barriers that create turbulence and inject a little dynamism into the perpetual motion machine. For me, it is the visual analogy to a thought process that, triggered by a difficult question or task, wants to evade or refuse it for the time being.

JH

*Gossip in the Afternoon or
the Damaged Brain*

This picture is essentially based on the attached drawing. A kind of series that plays with two positions; for example, you could see the two halves of the brain in it. Unmistakably different in size and presence! The right part, which has quickly outgrown itself, seems to lack structure for the time being; its interior in particular still appears very diffuse and awaits development. Only the contours are pronounced, sensors can be seen there and an intake module that promises to inhale large quantities of matter. So far, however, there is only a delicate, thin strip floating in the maw, and it is not even certain in which direction it is moving. A large supply nozzle extends into the outer space - is this the energy supply? In the form of folded matter? In contrast, the much smaller part on the left has long been finished and functional. Its communication channels have been working for quite some time and probably need cleaning; there are signs of clogging. But who knows. It could just as well be two AIs, say Siri and Alexa, hanging on the domestic chimney shelf, maintaining and coordinating the connection to the household pantry so that the necessary nutrients are always available in the right quantities.

JH

*Think Tank or
The Accidental Tour*

Duality is also at the forefront here, albeit disturbed by the massive intervention of a huge yellow form. It is reminiscent of a Californian pool that no longer wanted to take in the daily poolgoers and remembered its ability to fly, especially as it had recently been the godfather of a flying object.

He took off - unfortunately without first familiarizing himself with the landing instructions. The flight was short and ended with a remarkable crash in the terrain of two think tanks, which were visibly thrown out of their routine by the impact of the foreign object and the resulting shock. They now find themselves in an open-ended situation where a reset might be for the best. Which would also have the advantage of not having to repeat past mistakes ...

Always strange: originally they are just abstract shapes. Suddenly they start to come to life, to step out of abstraction and into the world of objects - as if they were disguising themselves. But they never become completely at home there. As hermaphrodites, they acquire a kind of dual citizenship that allows them to claim the advantages of both worlds.

JH

Somehow It Couldn't Turn Right

The rally stripe pattern speaks for itself: it's all about speed here. In such a speed-obsessed environment, structure is the be-all and end-all of survival. Which a divine hand has obviously given a good shake, pushing everything together and fragmenting it hopelessly.

But time does not stand still, rest is alien to the smallest particles we know. They oscillate until an idea of a new order manifests itself from all the fragments and an object emerges that can fly and escape the chaos. The picture is also a bit of a parody of the box and grid pictures of minimal art. Dead End, after the energy crashes have calmed down somewhat, is a splinter aesthetic that claims the slogan „Who's afraid of red, yellow and blue“ and has a reference to the dynamic time of the New Wild Ones.

But no, The Death Is Not the End: according to the law of conservation of energy, this resource must be tapped into somewhere.

JH

*Early Morning Takeover
Mission Accomplished*

A rocket in a flash of thought could not decide on the direction of its flight. The connection to the initial starting point of the thought had been interrupted, a wobble had set in. Somewhat helpless in its own universe, the display had started to spin and could no longer find the marker for orientation. All of a sudden, the hope of reaching the destination quickly had faded and given way to hopelessness.

An overtaking maneuver loomed in the corner of my eye. It came unexpectedly and contributed to a further increase in the panic level. The rocket was no longer sure of itself and lost itself in an awkward dance. The once so clear target blurred into a diffuse fog and the original mission was forgotten.

Disorientation paralyzed all further thought. The otherwise reliable information patterns seemed to have dissolved into various swirls of gray. The task now was to pause and wait in humility for the situation to change.

JH

Jens Hanke

1985-90 Studied at the Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig
 1993-94 Studied languages in Dublin and London
 1994-96 Teaching as a visiting artist at Columbia College Chicago
 1994-2000 Artistic work in Chicago
 since 2000 Artistic work in Berlin

Awards and scholarships

2023 LEUE & NILL Award, paper positions berlin
 2022 Scholarship Stiftung Kunstfonds, NEUSTART KULTUR
 2020 Project funding Cultural Foundation of the Free State of Saxony
 2013 Project funding Senate Berlin
 2011 art Karlsruhe Prize 2011 of the State of Baden-Württemberg and the City of Karlsruhe
 2006 Project grant from the Neukölln Cultural Office
 2002 Grant from the Art Fund of Saxony
 1997 Pollock-Krasner Grant, New York
 1994 DAAD Scholarship, USA
 1993 DAAD Language Scholarship Dublin, Ireland
 1992 Cultural Fund Scholarship
 1991 Scholarship from the Reclam publishing house, Leipzig

Short biography

Jens Hanke was born in Eilenburg in 1966. He studied at the Academy of Visual Arts in Leipzig. A DAAD scholarship enabled him to go to Chicago, USA, in 1994, where he spent 6 years. He has lived and worked in Berlin since 2000. Hanke's work is rich in associative meanings. He is concerned with the phenomenon of perception as a psychological process. He uses elements of modernism and surrealism and weaves them into a visual network of different pictorial worlds. His multi-layered work includes drawings, books, collages, paintings and large wall installations.

Solo Exhibitions

- 2024 Diving Slowly Into My Mind, Berlin Brussels Art Projects, Brussels
 Secretly Growing Under My Skin, Kunstverein Ludwigsburg e.V.
 Ferne Welten, Schloss Britz, Berlin (*)
 Kulturraum, Wolff & Müller, Stuttgart
 Visuelle Osmose im Nachtbetrieb, Kulturhaus Karlshorst, Berlin (August)
 Fünfgezackt in die Hand, Kunstpunkt, Berlin (September)
- 2023 He Wouldn't Mind Living on the West Coast, Malte Uekermann Kunsthandel, Berlin
- 2020 It Hurts to Turn, Neu Deli, Leipzig (*)
- 2019 Strangers in a Cloud, Galerie Hunchentoot, Berlin (*)
 They Never Made It Home, Alte Feuerwache Loschwitz, Dresden
- 2017 Secrets Dance on Their Own, Galerie Hunchentoot, Berlin (*)
- 2016 Die Sonderschaft, Galerie Hunchentoot, Berlin (*)
 Having Gotten off the Road, Literaturforum Berlin
 Rise and Shine, nachtspeicher23, Hamburg
- 2014 Two Thoughts Slightly Ajar, Galerie Hunchentoot, Berlin (*)
- 2013 Having Been Down by the Fishes, balzer art projects, Basel, Schweiz
- 2012 Songs on Reflection, Galerie Carolyn Heinz, Hamburg
 Island Me, Galerie Hunchentoot, Berlin (*)
- 2011 One-Artist-Show, Galerie Hunchentoot, art Karlsruhe
- 2010 Mining Ground, Digging Field, Galerie Hunchentoot, Berlin (*)
- 2009 CDF Reconfigured, Hermann-Grochtmann-Museum, Datteln (*)
 Four Times Home Again, Literaturforum Berlin
- 2006 Home Again, Studio Galerie, Museum Sensenhammer, Leverkusen
- 2004 Atomic City, Galerie APEX, Göttingen
 Malerei, Galerie Inga Kondeyne, Berlin
- 2003 In Between, Galerie Kleindienst, Leipzig
 Extented, Galerie Inga Kondeyne, Berlin
- 2002 Transfer, ACC Galerie, Weimar (*)
- 2001 Lining Up, Galerie Inga Kondeyne, Berlin
- 2000 Sequence, Galerie Fassbender, Chicago, IL, USA (*)
- 1998 two.o.two south state, Galerie Beck-Eggeling, Leipzig
- 1997 Logarithm of Two Seasons, Galerie Fassbender, Chicago, IL, USA
- 1995 Zeichnungen, Galerie Buskies, Horneburg
- 1994 Place, Museum Sensenhammer, Leverkusen
- 1993 Neunet-h, Galerie Lang, Berlin
 Misa-Cortex, Galerie Buskies, Horneburg
- 1992 Songlines, Galerie Dependance Specks Hof, Leipzig (*)
- 1991 Umbra, Galerie Buskies, Horneburg (*)

catalogue (*)