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The Venice RMX. About Anatoly Shuravlev's Black Holes

Anatoly Shuravlev (*1963) is what you call a long-runner, someone who has been active in the field of contemporary art since the mid 1980s – and who has been moving back and forth between Berlin and his hometown Moscow for almost two decades now.

At the beginning, Anatoly was interested in the semiotic analysis of word and text. In his paintings, objects, and installations of his early years, he dealt with questions of "truth" and representation, of signifiant and signifié. Then, during the early 1990s, there was a big "turn" in his oeuvre and Anatoly started to work with photography – reflecting the definition of the image by the medium. For example, he photographed mid 19th century engravings which were produced during the first ethnological research trips of Western scientists to the historical sights of Egypt or to the rain forest in Brazil. The artist processed them photo-technically so that engraving disappeared in favour of a diffuse, "photographic" depiction of those places, taken at a time when the technical medium of photography did not exist ("Impossible Photography"). At the same time, the artist has been aware of the ideological content of the impressions that the foreign travellers received during their trips. In the sense, their depictions function like a portrayal of the "other".

Anatoly continued to investigate these aspects of the "politics of representation" in various other photo-based projects. Tiny c-prints with a size of 6 mm x 9 mm or with a diameter of 10 mm became one of his trademarks in this process. The small prints were mounted on plastic cubes and installed to the wall in huge amounts and in various shapes. Usually the prints show imagery that the artist shot with his analogue camera from magazines, the TV, from film, and from the Internet. What one sees and can recognise in these tiny images, remains speculation to some extent. Although we can identify certain celebrities, landscapes, objects, or also parts of human bodies, it is almost impossible to make precise statements about the photographic details. The perception of this particular body of work with the tiny prints is not dissimilar to the process of watching Television, it imitates the habit of

zapping, when we perceive the image as a whole but can no longer refer to single details. In an abstract sense, this specific way of perception of the artwork or the mediated world can be compared to the perception of world.

In his project "Black Holes", Anatoly deals with a similar topic and transfers the aspect of world perception into a confrontation of photography with painting. The work creates an all-over installation in the surrounding space that consists of specks of bleeding black paint applied to the walls in a formalistic way and reminding of the Action painting of the 1950s. When seen from the distance, the overall wall painting is perceived as an abstract structure that develops into some kind of universe since it surrounds us on all four walls. When inspecting the walls closer, small circular photographs with a 10 mm diameter come into sight in the centre of each of the black paint specks, showing a variety of historical personas, from Gandhi and Stalin, to Putin and Medvedev, to the world of pop and even pornography. When enlarging the distance to the photographic object, the black paint specks function like cosmic black holes that let the photographs disappear in space through their rotating forces. In this sense, Shuravlev creates a space that does no longer appear as a whole but is only perceptible through details, a world that does not have the quality of an integral cosmos but of a fractured universe.