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FUTURE LIGHT

Maria Lind, Vanessa Joan Müller, Martina Kandeler-Fritsch (eds.)

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Preface

The VIENNA BIENNALE 2015: IDEAS FOR CHANGE is the first Biennale to connect art, design, and architecture, opening up new perspectives on key issues of our time in an all-encompassing, interdisciplinary approach, reflecting upon our changing society.

Initiated by Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, the Vienna Biennale 2015 was established in recognition of the fact that we are living in a new modern age in which digitalization pervades nearly all areas of life, thereby fundamentally changing our civilization—comparable to the Industrial Revolution, the effects of which were dealt with by twentieth-century Western Modernism.

Consisting of several parts, the project “Future Light” addresses the question of how the metaphor for the Age of Enlightenment—the identification and disclosure of the existing framework in the fight against mysticism—has changed over the centuries, and what potentials could be implied by its opposite: obscurity. The aspiration of complete transparency causes a latent discomfort which increasingly gives way to the desire for realms of shade and unclear zones. Here, opportunities for negotiation beyond the system’s laws appear still to exist.

“Future Light” presents itself as three different threads, bound within this reader and further discussed herein. “Future Light” encompasses the group show “Escaping Tŕansparency” at the MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art; the solo exhibition “Loving, Repeating. Renate Lorenz und Pauline Boudry” at Kunsthalle Wien; as well as commissioned work from Ayreen Anastas and Rene Gabri, Marysia Lewandowska, Metahaven, STEALTH.unlimited (Ana Džokic and Marc Neelen), and Stefan Gruber (STUDIOGRUBER) with Paul Currion.

Both the MAK and the Kunsthalle Wien are not simply institutions with the mere purpose of showcasing work. Rather, they are places for discussion, for experimentation, and for the presentation of art that emanates in each of today’s societies. Their inherent interdisciplinary mindset turns them into places

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where a project, such as "Future Light," is able to unfold in an ideal way and is embedded in broader contexts, within which it provides impulses that can be received and further developed. With a seismographic view on future challenges, artists react to present-day issues. By taking notice of their surroundings and viewing them with the potential for aesthetic and discursive transformation, they open up a scope for thinking and inspiration that goes beyond controlling regimes. The criticism they express becomes, to some extent, a deliberate noncompliance, reflecting on existing circumstances in a new way. For a long time now, the MAK and the Kunsthalle Wien have been supporting this kind of art, which forms the ground for each institution's self-image.

As files available for download, the texts from "Future Light" incorporate a form of digitalization which coheres with accessibility and availability. With every download, however, the file feeds each user's geodata into its design, thereby subtly allowing the ambivalence of the digital to become apparent.

We would like to thank Maria Lind and all the authors of the "Future Light" book who wrote articles on a central present-day issue and who, rather than revise, recontextualize the idea of the Enlightenment. They each, through different approaches, unfold potentials of opacity, semi-transparency, and clouding in terms of a radical thinking that abandons a desire to improve visibility and expresses alternatives within the debate on permeability. This reader is therefore not a mere publication accompanying "Future Light," but part of the project, enabling the exhibitions' ideas to live on when the exhibitions themselves become a thing of the past.

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