



Press Release

APPLIED ARTS. NOW

Valentin Ruhry. Grand Central

A Cooperation of the MAK and the University of Applied Arts Vienna

Opening	Tuesday, 7 October 2014, 7 p.m.
Exhibition Venue	MAK GALLERY MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	8 October 2014 – 11 January 2015
Opening Hours	Tue 10 a.m. – 10 p.m., Wed – Sun 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Free admission every Tuesday, 6 – 10 p.m.

With the minimalist, thoroughly executed, large-scale installation *Grand Central*, Valentin Ruhry offers a subtle critique of the experiential dimension of modern consumer culture. As part of the programmatic series APPLIED ARTS. NOW, this solo exhibition alludes to the corporate design of the product displays for digital devices from international corporations. The work is meant to be interpreted against the background of the topic of decentralization, an integral component of the digital world, visions and developments that evoke contemporary, global concepts of consumption.

With the title *Grand Central*, the artist, who was born in 1982 in Graz, both literally and figuratively references the theme of decentralization. He also points to the place where a company known around the world for its technological innovations in software and hardware has operated one of its largest stores since 2011: Grand Central Terminal in New York, which is frequented by 750,000 people daily. The subtle self-evidence of the presence of product displays in the middle of large expanses of public space is amplified by the absence of cash registers and check-out lines. With the sacred quality of their product displays, seductive aesthetics, and emotional advertising campaigns, companies today—particularly in the digital realm—subliminally play with the spirit of consumption in today's society.

In the MAK GALLERY, Ruhry will present his interpretation of an important component of such consumerist appeal: the display, minimalist, elegant wooden tables. Instead of the technologies normally offered for sale, Ruhry presents a selection of everyday objects from the context of the train station, which are made of cast, brushed aluminum. To complement these works, the artist developed a series of wall-mounted pieces as well as a thematically related work using lights.

Before the exhibition at the MAK, Valentin Ruhry spent several months in the United States, where he continued his research on decentralized networks and alternative currencies, among other projects. In his exhibition concept, the artist, whose work shifts between sculpture and conceptual art, was inspired not only by questions of formal aesthetics, but also by current sociological and economic issues such as the sharing economy, Bitcoin, startups, regulated markets, and the “new” art market, in which social networks play a prominent role.

“The internet is technically a decentralized infrastructure. However, it is increasingly developing into a digital dictatorship due to the omnipresence and cooperation of global corporations. At the same time, attempts are being made to establish new decentralized networks through peer-to-peer technologies such as torrents, which often fail, however, due to ethical questions or the attempted politicization of the networks,” Ruhry says, explaining the observations that motivated him to deal with consumer culture in his art. Ruhry also follows the development of a new, anarchically capitalist spirit that manifests itself in alternative concepts, among other things, that put individuals in precarious positions by circumventing government regulations under the pretext of the “sharing economy.”

Earlier this year, Valentin Ruhry began a project in collaboration with the artist Andy Boot which deals with the art market in the context of the cyber world. On the website cointemporary.com, Ruhry and Boot offer works for sale by other artists spanning several generations. Buyers pay in the alternative currency Bitcoin, with the aim of spurring people to question the de facto market value of artworks.

APPLIED ARTS. NOW

Valentin Ruhry: Grand Central is the seventh exhibition in the series APPLIED ARTS. NOW, which intends to provide a platform for contemporary forms of applied arts in order to generate greater visibility for especially interesting positions taken by graduates of the University of Applied Arts who live and work in Austria.

The series began with the exhibition *PATRICK RAMPELOTTO: Adventures in Foam* (25 January – 26 May 2012), followed by *STIEFEL & COMPANY ARCHITECTS: Faux Terrains* (23 May – 16 September 2012), *taliaYsebastian: The Committee of Sleep* (3 October 2012 – 6 January 2013), *MARCO DESSÍ: STILL LIFE* (30 January – 5 May 2013), *Lisa Truttmann: MY STAGE IS YOUR DOMAIN* (19 June – 6 October 2013) and *soma architecture: Immanent Elasticity* (13 May – 14 September 2014).

Visual materials on the exhibition can be downloaded from MAK.at/press.



Press Fact Sheet

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Curator	Marlies Wirth
Accompanying Program	Thursday, 20 November 2014, 5 p.m. Exhibition talk with the curator Marlies Wirth and the artist Valentin Ruhry
Admission	Thursday, 11 December 2014, 5 p.m. Curator-guided tour Regular price: €7.90 / reduced price: €5.50 / family ticket: €11 Free admission for children and young people up to 19 years old
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Vienna, 7 October 2014