

WARREN NEIDICH

Horizon Swell

Galerie Fons Welters, Amsterdam
September, 2011

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Galerie Fons Welters

September 3 - October 15

curated by Marta Gynp

Before the time of Christopher Columbus' discovery of America in 1492 man meditated upon the horizon as the site of his limitation both physical and mental. A site forever retreating where giant serpents awaited with gaping mouths to swallow unwary sailors in salty brine. The horizon instilled both fear and wonder and as such was a place of sublime contemplation. Today we live in a similar moment of uncertainty to say the least. That horizon is no longer the tangible line created by a natural phenomena and real physical conditions but instead a fragmented distributed network-continuum based on mathematical presumptions, which we assume to be true, linked together ad infinitum. We no longer peer out to infinity but instead gaze into a constructed virtuality and subsequently alienation.

For the work 'Horizon Swell', 2011, Warren Neidich has once again returned to Malibu, California, the site of his earlier work 'Double Vision, Malibu', 1999, to investigate the conditions of this alienation and anxiety as we enter into the new unknowns of the age of information. In 'Double Vision, Malibu' and other such works made between 1997-2003, Neidich constructed low-tech self-made apparatuses in front of an array of photographic, video and cinematic cameras. The metaphorical lack of super-impossibility of the apparatuses of objective and rational science, and those of artistic practice,

the cameras, represents a kind of incommensurable void that is the true essence of the earlier forms of alienation.

Here in 'Horizon Swell', 2011, made some 10 years later, using surfers as the metaphor of his investigations, Neidich has taken these one step further. In this moment of semio-capitalism, in which capitalism instead of producing goods is producing psychic stimulation, the surfers, or web surfers if you will, and the environments they find themselves, are delinked from their real significations first of all as bodies in space, next as icons of a counter culture in which individualism and radicality are lauded, to become something antonymous. Perhaps this is why Neidich has chosen to use perverted colours in these pictures; colours that frame the moment of the un-surfers failure and crashing.

The surfer is searching for the most gigantic wave with the most psychic capital and as such requiring the superstructure of cognitive capital with its virtual machinery of sponsors, high technology and branded super stars to engage with them. The un-surfer of Neidich's work is finding ways to subvert these very conditions and is the trickster boarder, bucking bronco of the wave form, whose bodies is flung into the air and anti-gravity where new individual combinations of sensory and cognitive majesty are possible. A place of destabilized

schizophrenia in which, like Deleuze and Guattari intuit the possibility for diversity of thought and assemblages of new meanings are possible.

Warren Neidich is an artist and writer living between Los Angeles and Berlin. His artworks have been exhibited internationally at such institutions as the PS1 MOMA, The Whitney Museum of American Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Ludwig Museum, ICA-London and Temporary Kunsthalle, Berlin. Selected future exhibitions 2011 include Galerie Moriarty, Madrid, The Emily Harvey Foundation, NYC, Extra City, Antwerp, Zentrum für Kunstprojekte, Vienna and The MAC Center, Vienna. He is recipient of the Vilem Flusser Theory Award, Berlin, Germany, 2010 and is a Fulbright Scholar Program Recipient, 2011. His monograph of drawing projects, *Lost Between the Extensivity/Intensivity Exchange* was recently published by Onomatopée, Eindhoven. *Cognitive Architecture: From Biopolitics to Noo politics* was the outcome of his research and collaborative project with Deborah Hauptmann at the Delft School of Design, TU Delft School of Architecture, Delft.



HORIZON SWELL

2011

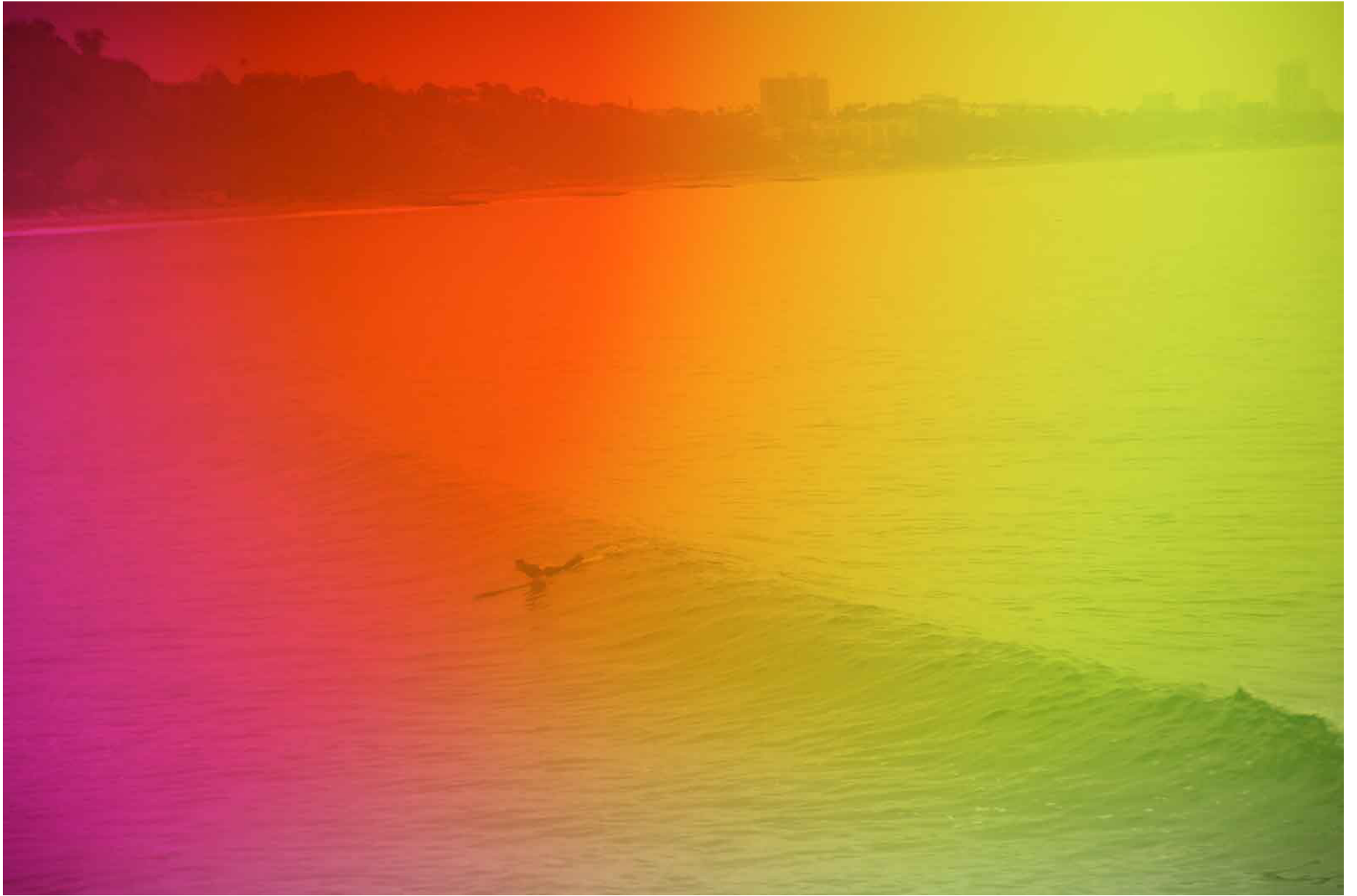
Installation View



HORIZON SWELL

2011

Installation View



HORIZON SWELL
Lone Surfer Malibu

Pigment Print
2011



HORIZON SWELL
Orange Surfboard

Pigment Print
2011



HORIZON SWELL
Falling

Pigment Print
2011



HORIZON SWELL
Surfer Under Pink

Pigment Print
2011



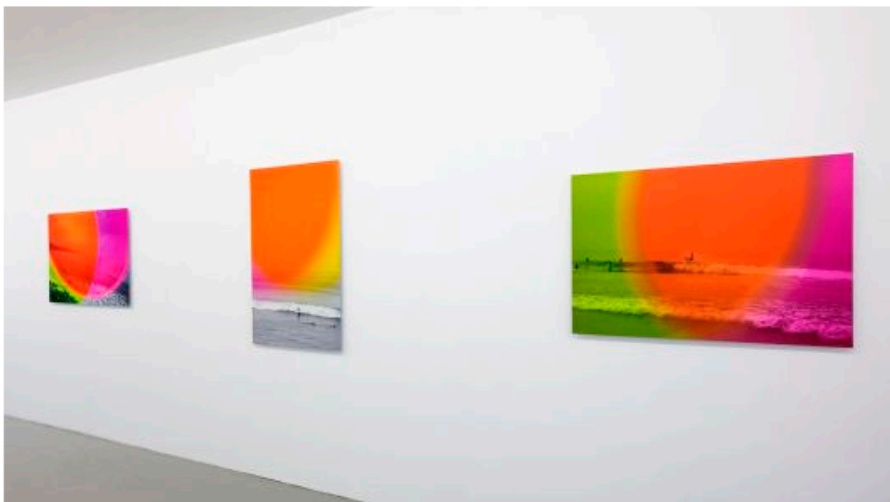
HORIZON SWELL
Falling Backwards

Pigment Print
2011

METROPOLIS M

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Gezwollen horizon Warren Neidich bij Fons Welters



Tentoonstellingsoverzicht Warren Neidich bij Galerie Fons Welters. Foto: Gert Jan van Rooij

De surffoto's van de Amerikaanse kunstenaar Warren Neidich hebben ondanks de zoete kleuren iets verontrustends. Jack Segbars zoekt uit hoe dat komt.

De expositie *Horizon Swell* bij Fons Welters bestaat uit een installatie van zes foto's die als onheilspellende wachters in een erehaag het publiek verwelkomen. Wat er precies gevierd wordt, lijkt in eerste instantie verscholen en ondanks de uitbundige kleuren niet vrolijk. Het zijn foto's van surfers aan het strand, schijnbaar geschoten in zwart-wit. Daaroverheen zijn kleurvlekken te zien. Deze kleurcirkels komen voor op alle foto's en bestaan telkens uit hetzelfde palet kleuren: geelgroen, oranje en paars. De vormen zijn zelden perfect rond, meestal zijn ze uitgerekt tot ellipsen. Soms zie je slechts twee van de drie kleuren, soms maar een. De taferelen van de surfers variëren van een overzichtshot tot beelden van een enkele surfer. Maar altijd is er een horizonlijn van de branding zichtbaar, een witte, wassende baan.

Het geheel lijkt oppervlakkig te verwijzen naar een zestiger/zeventiger jaren beeldtaal waarin met filters of kleureffecten op een ondergrond extra gelaagdheid wordt gesuggereerd. De beeldtaal en het onderwerp van de surfer lijken te refereren aan de begindagen van de vrijgevochten beatnik- en hippiegeneratie. Een tijdperk waarin de extra ruimte als belofte haar intrede deed. Toch doen de beelden daarvoor te afstandelijk aan: de foto's zijn te scherp, er is te weinig korrel, het spectrum is te vlak. Het fluorescerende geelgroen, oranje en paars is te schreeuwerig. Ook is de wijze van ophangen te rigide en zijn de foto's te eenvormig van maat. Met deze kenmerken hevelen de beelden plots over naar de koele tachtiger jaren zuurstokesthetica van Miami Vice en Duran Duran.

Navraag bij de kunstenaar maakt duidelijk dat de ondergrond niet uit zwart-witbeelden bestaat. Hij heeft kleuropnames met filters voor de camera gemaakt waarbij veel kleurinformatie opzettelijk verdwenen is. Op de plekken waar dit niet het geval is, leidt dit tot de ellipsvormige kleurvlakken. Dit gegeven draait de eerdere betekenis van de beelden volledig: alles komt plots in het licht te staan van de manipulatie en het mechanistische proces van de beeldconstructie.

Ineens bestaat er geen vrije ruimte meer die eerder van het onderwerp uitging. De iconische ruimte van de surfer – die staat voor de vrijheid van het individu en de autonomie van beweging – wordt ingepakt in de alomvattendheid van de manier van de representatie en textuur van het geheel. De surfer als vrije actor verdwijnt. De oude belofte van vrijheid inclusief het in dit tijdgewricht doorwoekerende equivalent ervan, wordt ingesnoerd binnen de regie van de beeldgever. Neil Young *meets* Houellebecq.

Volgens een tekst bij de expositie wordt voor Neidich die omvattende wereld gevormd door de allesincorporerende systematiek van de neoliberale ideologie die de menselijke flexibiliteit en creativiteit inpast in het geheel. Ook zonder deze ideologische duiding wordt met deze grimmige beelden een beklemmend tafereel getoond. Een beeld dat dringend oproept tot nieuwe surfers en een nieuwe horizon.

Warren Neidich - Horizon Swell

METROPOLIS M

by Jack Segbars

The exhibition Horizon Swell at Fons Welters consists of an installation of six photographs that act as ominous guards paying tribute to the audience as they enter the gallery. What exactly is celebrated, seems at first glance hidden and despite their exuberant colors not joyful.

They are photographs of surfers at the beach, apparently shot in black and white upon which superimposed blotches of color are visible. These circles of color appear on all the photographs and are comprised of the same palette of colors fuchsia, orange and chartruse. Their shapes are rarely perfectly round and are mostly elongated into ellipsis. On some of the images only two out of three colors can be seen, sometimes just one. The scenes of the surfers vary from a panoramic shot to images of a single surfer. But each time a horizon line is broken by a cresting wave visible, as a white, swilling band.

As a whole the entire image superficially seems to refer to a sixties/seventies visual idiom in which with the use of filters creating a layer effect refers to a form of Psychedelic experience or as a visual idiom referring to the surfer and surfer culture in

those heady beginning days of a liberated beatnik-and hippy generation. An era in which the extra space as promise made its entrance. Yet the images are too detached for that: the images are too sharp, there is too little grain, the spectrum is too level. The use of color: fluorescent yellow-green, orange and purple is too shrill.

With these characteristics the images are suddenly transferred/shifted over to the cool eighties candy-and neon aesthetics of Miami Vice and Duran Duran.

After inquiring with the artist it became clear that the base of the images is not made out of black and white photos. He has produced these effects and affects by a kind of choreography of colored filters, normally used to light film sets, dancing in front of the camera lens causing a good deal of color information to deliberately disappear. Large swaths of space where once there had been color are now emptied of it leaving instead a grey sea. This fact turns the previous meaning of the images completely around: suddenly everything is to be understood as a result of manipulation and within the conceptual framework of an investigation into the process of image construction. Although in this case that construction concerns the production gone wrong. After all one also wonders if the photographs were processed correctly or if the films

had been left in the hot sun where it had become disturbed.

Suddenly no more free space is left that previously sprung from the image and had represented a kind of freedom and autonomy of movement. Instead the surfer is wrapped up in the comprehensivity of the modus of representation and texture of the totality that we call reality today infused as it is by the effects of Neo liberal Capital.. The old age promise of freedom, including up until this era enduring contemporary equivalent of it, is restricted within this stage setting. Neil Young meets Houellebecq. According to Neidich this all comprehensive world consists of the all consuming systematics of the neoliberal ideology that adapts human flexibility and creativity to its own needs. Even without this ideological interpretation a stifling picture is presented by these images. An image that urgently calls for new surfers and a new horizon.

Warren Neidich is an American artist who alternately lives and works in Los Angeles and Berlin. His work addresses the relation between representation and the formation of cultural systems and history.