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**SFMOMA ANNOUNCES NEW-MEDIA INSTALLATIONS BY
ALEXANDER HAHN AND YVES NETZHAMMER**

From July 10 through October 5, 2008, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) will present *Room for Thought: Alexander Hahn and Yves Netzhammer*. Organized by Rudolf Frieling, SFMOMA's curator of media arts, the exhibition pairs two computer-generated video installations that propose a complex layering of spatial and psychological realms. *Luminous Point* (2006), an interactive video projection by Alexander Hahn, creates a virtual simulation of the artist's Manhattan apartment that acts as a metaphor for his mental landscape. Premiering at SFMOMA, Yves Netzhammer's newest site-specific video and mixed-media installation, *Furniture of Proportions* (2008), offers a highly stylized system of imagery that explores the intersection of sculpture and moving image. This is the first time Netzhammer's work will be on view at a U.S. museum. Occupying adjacent galleries, the two works conflate image and meaning, stranding them without resolve and fostering a productive tension between the two.

"What at first registers as a cool and impersonal computer aesthetic in these artists' works is experienced as deeply poetic, subjective worlds of objects, transformations, and narratives," says Frieling. "The visitor is drawn in by an atmosphere of suspense and secrecy, and then actively participates in making sense of implied or seemingly inscrutable meanings—a process that actually corresponds quite closely to the experience of being in the world. Thus, the two works provide the viewer with 'room for thought'."

Hahn and Netzhammer, both Swiss born, represent two generations of artists who have consciously worked with the computer as a formal artistic tool and means of expression. Both artists combine a variety of media such as photography, video, sculpture or drawing with computer techniques in order to articulate a deep concern with the histories of philosophy and art. Hahn and Netzhammer also share a fascination with human thought processes and the interplay between external images in the world and internal images in the mind. Undertaken as an open-ended investigation, their art is concerned with transience and states of change, and calls into question assumptions about hierarchical systems in our world. Blending fact and fiction, the works presented here deal in surrealistic effects, cyclical flows of meaning, associative thinking, and temporal multiplicity.

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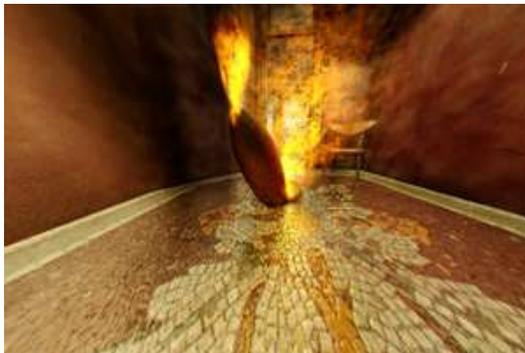


Yves Netzhammer, *Furniture of Proportions*, 2008;
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Anita Beckers,
Frankfurt, Germany; © 2008 Yves Netzhammer

Alexander Hahn

Hahn (born 1954), who lives in New York and Zurich, is widely regarded as a pioneer of new media. He developed his practice in the 1970s parallel to the work of other major video artists such as Bill Viola and Gary Hill. Beginning in the 1990s, Hahn began experimenting with digitally reworked animations that combine documentary film and video, photography, and computer-generated imagery. Filled with associative, often cyclical image-streams, his work generally revolves around problems of representation—specifically the rules governing individual and collective memory—and raises questions about what it means to perceive, store, and recollect visual knowledge in both time and space.

This interest is most evident, perhaps, in *Luminous Point* (2006), a single-channel interactive video projection that engages the viewer in a self-guided, virtual tour of a digitally constructed environment—a hybrid world of actual photographic documents and invented imagery that slips between reality and fantasy, memory and imagination. The journey begins in Hahn’s Lower East Side apartment in Manhattan—also his studio and archive—which the artist has reproduced as a computer simulation. Using a handheld remote control to guide the eye of the “camera,” the viewer navigates a labyrinth of virtual spaces and is compelled to make directional decisions. At the end of a stairwell, one reaches Hahn’s apartment door and glides through the peephole into various rooms that are seamlessly populated with décor elements and artifacts drawn from incongruous times and cultures. Historical ceiling frescoes adorn the bathtub; Assyrian mosaics and medieval interiors commingle with the artist’s actual furniture. At one point, the space seems new and orderly; at another time it appears long abandoned. One moment the bathtub is full of water, the next it’s empty, as if viewed in a different time or parallel dimension. The user also



Alexander Hahn, *Luminous Point* (still), 2006;
Courtesy the artist; © 2008 Alexander Hahn

encounters impossible props—such as a zppelin airship from the 1900s, quietly hovering in a corner—drawn from the artist’s diverse cache of imagery and motifs. Traveling outside the apartment, one has the option of following animal tracks into the woods, exploring a salt mine in Poland, or wandering the streets of Manhattan, among other image-sequences derived from video footage shot by the artist.

The process of negotiating one’s own path and pace through *Luminous Point* results in a unique order of images each time, and prompts the viewer to make his or her own associative connections among the visual elements. A jumble of place and time, cultural and personal detritus, documentary and myth, Hahn’s electronic realm is at once an approximation of the real world and an abstraction of it. Faced with the work, the viewer is invited to consider themes of remembrance, loss, and the nature of personal artifacts.

Yves Netzhammer

Zurich-based artist Netzhammer (born 1970) began working in the mid-1990s and has become known for his graphically dynamic drawings, animations, and sculptural installations that explore the interconnectedness of things. His animations are created entirely with computer software, utilizing Freehand for two-dimensional drawings, and AfterEffects and Cinema 4D for three-dimensional animations. Dealing in extremely reduced forms, Netzhammer’s

mainly figurative imagery features recognizable, although de-individualized, humans, animals, plants, and iconic objects, set against abstract backgrounds. He intentionally blurs the hierarchy among these elements and implicates them in enigmatic relationships or cryptic patterns. Through the use of genderless and faceless figures with simplified anatomical features, he investigates various modes of physical contact, the vulnerability of the body, and the existential condition of humans. Offered not as traditional narrative illustration, his pictorial lexicon—or, “thought-imagery” to use the artist’s own term—functions more akin to a system of encoded signs that, uprooted from reason and familiar context, stand in opposition to the world of everyday images.

Many of Netzhammer’s previous site-specific room installations experiment with interaction of projected video animation and sculptural forms or graphic surfaces. *The Imprecise Bodies* (2006) casts onto a single gigantic balloon two projections that depict changing human bodies. *The Subjectivization of Repetition Part A* (2007)—a sculptural intervention recently installed at the Swiss pavilion of the 52nd Venice Biennale—alters a structural feature of the pavilion and incorporates into it drawings and projections that allude to themes of cultural otherness, functioning as an alien element in relation to the existing architecture. A companion piece to this installation, *The Subjectivization of Repetition Part B* (2007), was simultaneously on view in Kassel, Germany, as part of the supporting program of *documenta 12*. In this work, animated sequences of human and plant forms are projected through a complex maze of vibrating, mirrored walls and suspended orbs, multiplying the space and the viewer’s reflection.

For SFMOMA’s presentation, Netzhammer continues to explore the relationship between sculpture and moving image with *Furniture of Proportions* (2008), a new site-specific room installation incorporating interrelated animations, wall drawings, and theatrical props that synthesize to cumulative effect. Channeled through a series of tubelike sculptural forms, multi-channel video projections are cast onto walls or refracted by mirrored surfaces. This intricate spatial narrative operates on multiple levels, forming both an investigation of the way the mind assimilates information and an elaborate meditation on the shifting landscape of image and idea.

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Museum hours: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:45 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day): Open at 10 a.m. Closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: New Year’s Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas. The museum is open the Wednesday between Christmas and New Year’s Day.

Koret Visitor Education Center: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:30 p.m. Summer hours: Open at 10 a.m.

Admission prices: Adults \$12.50; seniors \$8; students \$7. SFMOMA members and children 12 and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings after 6 p.m. admission is half-price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by Muni, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, and Caltrain. Hourly, daily, and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415.348.0971.

Visit our website at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

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