

friedrichs pontone

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on view
october 5 - october 29

opening reception
thursday, october 5, 6-8 pm

For immediate release



Philip Gröning: Oktoberfest Phantom

Friedrichs Pontone is thrilled to announce the U.S. debut of works by German multidisciplinary media artist Philip Gröning. This momentous exhibition, opening October 5th, 2023, is set to redefine the boundaries of art and technology.

At the heart of this innovative exhibition is Gröning's cutting-edge work, "Oktoberfest Phantom". "Oktoberfest Phantom" represents a groundbreaking leap in the world of contemporary art. Gröning, a visionary of the digital age, harnesses the power of artificial intelligence to craft an immersive experience that transports participants into the heart of Munich's annual Oktoberfest—yet with a haunting twist.



Philip Gröning, "Oktoberfest Phantom - Hofbräuhaus Alois", 2020-2021

In this spectral vision, the viewer encounters a bustling festival devoid of human revelers. Gröning's ingenious approach to creating his statistical reconstruction of reality involves instructing AI to scour thousands of images and videos, seeking common visual elements. The result is a mesmerizing display of the festival's landscapes and surroundings, void of human presence save faint visual echoes of the crowds; here, humans are reduced to unidentifiable organic matter. Sculptures, which represent retranslations from the statistical universe of AI into our physical world, complete this digital archeology project. These objects appear almost as if they've fallen from outer space, providing a sensual depiction of the statistical concept of existence that forms the very foundation of AI.

Through an audiovisual collage of thousands of individual moments from Munich, the interactive experience immerses participants in a ghostly Oktoberfest, where they can vividly see and hear the bustling scenery and festivities, but the people who breathe life into such events remain tantalizingly out of reach. This poignant creation, conceived during the confines of lockdown, serves as a mournful recollection of a time when communal celebrations were a part of everyday life. As the influence of AI continues to grow in our daily lives, Gröning's "Oktoberfest Phantom" is a haunting commentary on the relationship between technology and human absence; viewers become voyeurs in a richly woven narrative—a spectral festival they can only observe, never partake.

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Gröning's work underscores the intricacies of human memory and AI's limitations in recreating our complex existence. As he states, "An Artificial Intelligence was then given the task of identifying points constant in space amongst this immense amount of data. The AI fails in this task. The constant movement of visitors and the ever slightest movement of the tent roofs result in a highly fragmented, frail, ghostlike reconstruction of what once was the Oktoberfest. A statistical reconstruction of reality. Based upon the most personal memories. Surprisingly the mass of personal images results in an Oktoberfest devoid of any individual representation of humans."

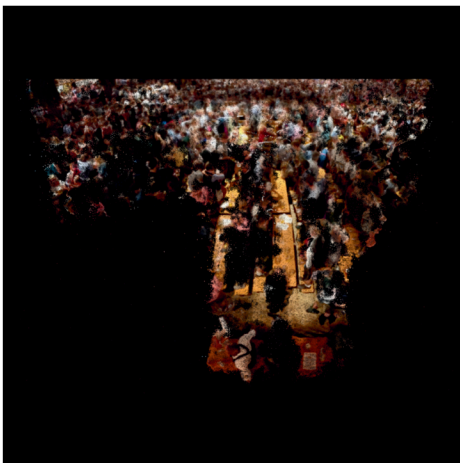
"Oktoberfest Phantom" is, in essence, a true representation of collective memory.



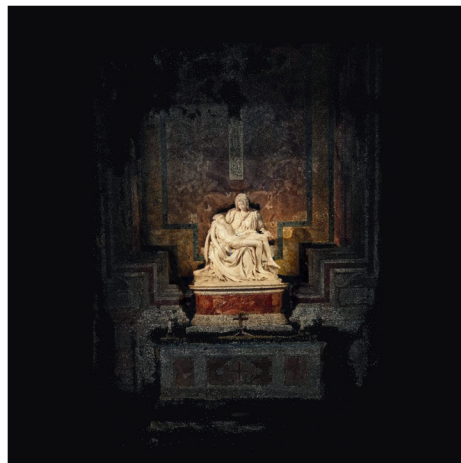
Philip Groening, "Statistical View of St. Pietro - Diagonal", 2019

"Oktoberfest Phantom" is just one facet of Gröning's exploration of burgeoning art forms. As part of the exhibition, Gröning also presents his remarkable series of works focused on St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, jointly created with Rolf Muetze. Utilizing tens of thousands of images sourced from various social media platforms, Gröning conjures entirely new perspectives on this iconic landmark. Gröning's work transforms familiar places into ruinous and haunting statistical visions. The resulting images possess an eerie, almost spectral shadowy quality, seemingly floating in mid-air representing the volatile focus of the visitors as well as the century old cathedral.

Friedrichs Pontone is honored to host this trailblazing exhibition, providing visitors with a glimpse into the future of artistry in the digital age. In an era where technology increasingly shapes our reality, Gröning challenges us to redefine our understanding of human presence, absence, and collective memory.



Philip Groening, "Oktoberfest Phantom - Hofbräuhaus Breughel", 2020-21



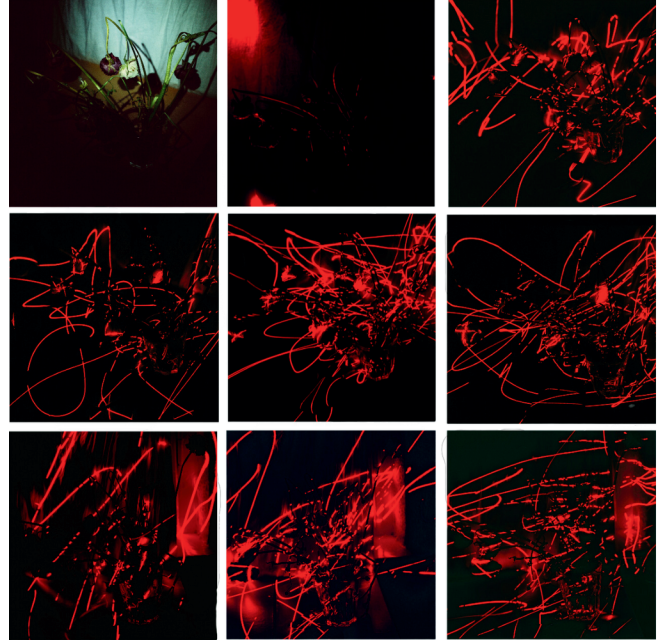
Philip Groening, "Statistical View of St. Pietro - Pietà", 2019



Philip Groening, "Oktoberfest Phantom - Braeurol Tent", 2020-21

Philip Gröning

Philip Gröning is a distinguished director and multimedia artist. Born in Düsseldorf, Gröning spent his formative years in both Germany and the United States, though he now calls Berlin and Munich his home. His illustrious career boasts a diverse body of work, including celebrated films such as "Into Great Silence (2005)," "The Police Officer's Wife (2013)," and "My Brother's Named Robert and He's an Idiot (2018)." Gröning has earned numerous accolades, including the European Film Award, Sundance Jury Award, and the Venice Biennale Special Jury Award, solidifying his place as a trailblazer in the world of cinema. Beyond the silver screen, Philip Gröning's artistic journey has led him to explore the frontiers of multimedia art. He served as a visiting professor for time-based media at the Munich Academy of Art from 2018 to 2019, where his project class delved into the realm of AI as both a subject and a creative tool. Gröning's artistic endeavors extend to photography, performance, VR, and AI, reflecting his commitment to pushing the boundaries of contemporary art.



Philip Groening, "Flowers - Laser Drawing Upon Reality", 2021

In recognition of his exceptional contributions, Gröning was honored as a fellow at the esteemed German Academy Villa Massimo in Rome in 2016. His work has been shown in museums around the world and is currently held in the permanent collection of the MoMA in New York City, the Duke Franz von Bayern collection, and the Stephan Goetz collection.

About Friedrichs Pontone

Friedrichs Pontone was established in 2022, opening its new flagship gallery space at 273 Church Street in the historic gallery neighborhood of Tribeca, across from Barnett Newman Triangle, dedicated to showcasing groundbreaking international artists across various mediums. With a commitment to fostering innovative and thought-provoking art, the gallery provides a platform for emerging and established talents to engage with diverse audiences. Gallery founders Martin Friedrichs and Domenic Pontone bring a combined 40 years of experience to their new venture. Martin Friedrichs previously held the position of director at Galerie Gmurzynska US Inc. and Hollis Taggart. Domenic Pontone is the founder of Pontone Gallery London and director of The Albemarle Gallery London.