

**Pentti Monkkonen**  
***PLATTENBAU***

In my last show at Truth and Consequences I showed the skull truck paintings, where I applied various painting techniques to the surfaces of relief sculpture.

With these new paintings I am attempting to embed small sculptures into the surfaces of the paintings. The sculptures are of a large beetle originally designed to be a phone case.

Can ideology be embedded in design? Were the ideals of the GDR embedded in their wall paper?

I saw photos of a child that looked like me at the same age playing in front of a GDR apartment block. It made me feel like I could have grown up in this alternative world. The 1970's wall paper used to cover the prefab concrete walls of the "plattenbau" reminded me of the home interiors I experienced in my own childhood. I had a track suit similar to a guy in the photos.

I get strong sensations from 1970's design because it formed the atmosphere of my early childhood. But I don't know if it has any meaning per se. What does it mean to have a bunch of patterned orange/ yellow wallpaper everywhere? To wear a polyester tracksuit?

The resonance of the beetle in Kafka's "Metamorphosis" is that it doesn't make any sense, like a black hole at the center of the story. But then it also embodies the feeling of having a consciousness, the alienation underlying existence, the realization that life has no meaning.

When we think of smashing our phone in anger it's a bit like suicide, of smashing our auxiliary brain.

Jonathan Franzen made a comparison of the internet and the GDR; they are both totalitarian systems one cannot opt out of. They also both have a strong connection to surveillance; in the GDR it was secret police and citizen informants and now we are compelled to self surveillance; selfies, geotags etc.

Phones and drones are like large insects, buzzing around in the air and our pockets, sucking our time and energy, while we suck their information.

To try to interpret an artwork is like spying on someone's phone; you can see who they called but not what they talked about, or where they went but not what they did. You never really know what an artist was thinking when they made a work, you just have a set of formal clues, a record of different moves.

Artists hope to be a "person of interest" you want to find out more about, they hope their particular images bubble up in sea of information to trigger a deeper investigation.