

# **media block-richard-kriesche**

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Neue Galerie Graz, Universalmuseum Joanneum,  
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**media block-richard-kriesche**

**Neue Galerie Graz**

**Universalmuseum Joanneum**

June 3 until October 10, 2016

The exhibition *media block-richard-kriesche* presents an overview of Richard Kriesche's work from 1964 to today. As one of the main exponents of Austrian media art, Kriesche achieved international recognition. He repeatedly focused on the social meaning of art and broadened the conventional concept of art by expanding into the areas of technology, the economy and science.

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## Number Systems

Numbers play a special role in Richard Kriesche's work: he works with numerical codes, precise measurements, size ratios and numerical proportions. Even in his abstract pictures from the 1960s he was not interested in beauty or conveying subjective moods. Instead, he demonstrates a systematic approach to art, working with geometric shapes or with the primary colours of yellow, red and blue. These early works already indicate the close relationship between art and scientific research that becomes even more evident in his later works. Like experiments in scientific research, some of Kriesche's installations take place under clearly defined spatial and temporal conditions. With an analytical, investigative gaze, his art seeks to open up new approaches to the world.

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## Crossing Boundaries

Kriesche's strategy focuses on the crossing of traditional boundaries: his art boldly extends into fields such as the social sciences, therapy, technology, research, mass

media, advertising, politics, the economy, industry, robotics—even space travel and genetic engineering are included. He cooperates with experts, such as in the EU-wide research project on *graz*, 1915. Kriesche has repeatedly invited exchange between the disciplines, so allowing mutual learning between fields that at first glance might not always seem to belong together. His art is not to be found exclusively in typical art spaces, museums or galleries. You might come across it in the middle of the street, on TV or on the Internet. It merges with our everyday life, surprising us on the front page of a daily newspaper, for instance, or as an advert on television. Yet it is not just the boundary between art and everyday space that is crossed, but also that between the artist and the public: Kriesche deliberately integrates us into his art and calls on us to participate.

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## Communications

For a long time now, spatial distance has no longer been of critical importance when we want to communicate with one another.

Exchanges with people far away on a daily basis present no problem. You might be in different places—but somehow also in the same place, thanks to the telephone, Skype, WhatsApp etc. In many of his projects, Kriesche has examined communications: between public and private space, between TV studios, even between Earth and space. Since 1991, a steel plate has been located on the Graz Schlossberg. It refers to the *artsat - MIR* art experiment, in which contact was established between an ORF studio and the Soviet space station MIR.

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## Media Interest

When do private persons become persons of public interest, and why? Why are we less interested in many people from our surroundings than in people on the front pages of newspapers or on TV shows? In *kapellenstraße 41* (1973), Richard Kriesche propelled into public view the private space of people who usually attract little attention: he photographed the inside of a wooden barrack inhabited by a family and had

these pictures mounted on the outside of the barrack. The aim of the project was to change the family's living conditions. Passers-by gained a glimpse into their private sphere while at the same time video recordings were made of the passers-by themselves and transmitted into the wooden barrack on the family's TV monitor. In *nationalfeiertag 1978*, Kriesche took up the format of the news broadcast: to a large extent, the news determines what we take an interest in and it is an important source of information. He takes on the role of the news-reader or the president in his TV address. Who, in fact, decides who gets to have their say in public? And nowadays are YouTube and social media helping us to break up old power structures?

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## Image - Reality

In our everyday life we are faced with countless images presented to us as a reflection of reality. To a great extent, how we see reality is determined by mass media such as TV or the Internet. And yet how real is the story told by these images? Can an image

replace one's own experience of reality? In 1983, Kriesche covered parts of the rooms (such as sections of the radiator or the wall) at the Galerie im Minoritensaal in Graz with photographs of the same sections: so optically the visual image corresponded directly with what it covered. In *zwillinge* (1977), Kriesche proved that reality is complex and not always easy to interpret: a woman sat reading on a chair, while the monitor next to her showed her identical twin in the same pose. The image on the monitor offered a view that was indistinguishable from the situation, but which actually depicted a simultaneous situation in another room.

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### Change in Perspective

We do not always find art pleasant: when, for example, it intervenes in our personal surroundings and changes the familiar appearance of it, that can be irritating. It is within this irritation, however, that the potential lies to make us take a closer look at the familiar, remember the suppressed, discover new aspects and investigate things that had previ-

ously seemed obvious. Often minimal interventions can create a new awareness of a situation. Kriesche, for example, highlighted growing piles of rubbish on the streets of London caused by a strike (*the garbage strike*, 1970/71) or the war damage on an Egyptian obelisk (*cleopatra's needle*, 1971). In *heimat eine zeit-skulptur* (1982), part of a trench from the Second World War was set in concrete. By 'disturbing' our everyday perception, art can have a consciousness-altering effect. It can make us more aware of new issues and provide new ideas for human interaction. Kriesche worked on projects with prisoners from the Karlau jail (1974), with a Roma family in Burgenland (1977), with children in hospital (1979/80) and with women with mental disabilities (1981). For many, the opportunity to present themselves via the media and to observe themselves or to be observed changed their awareness of their own situation. In several of Kriesche's installations the public was filmed and were able to observe themselves on monitors. Changing your perspective once in a while can help you reconsider your own point of view.

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### Technology

Technical developments have always changed mankind's approach to the world: increasingly, machines are replacing human exertion, technical aids allow us to see things that we would never be able to make out with the naked eye, and the computer seems to be relieving us of the power of thought. Many of our capacities and tasks are being 'outsourced'. In his work, Richard Kriesche has always exploited the technological possibilities of the age: while in the 1970s this meant, say, polaroid, video and TV, later this became things like computers, the Internet and robots. In *brainwork* (1980), the artist used his brainwaves to enlarge and reduce his own image simultaneously transmitted to a monitor. In 1996 Kriesche even shifted an exhibition, which was officially supposed to take place on the premises of the Neue Galerie, entirely onto a CD-ROM. The artist's genetic code was also used in the dissociation from the masterpieces of art history. In *robotics – ein weltmodell* (1986), during which two robots set each other in motion with the push of a

button, we are ultimately faced with the question: for just how long will machines continue to need us humans?

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### Museum

In 2013 the Neue Galerie Graz acquired around 60 key works by Richard Kriesche for its collection, shown in this exhibition as *media block-richard-kriesche*. These are not just completed works but also the documentation, publicity and text materials for several projects. Richard Kriesche's artworks evade the traditional categories of the museum collection, since they often do not consist of a completed product, but rather situations and processes. What can in these cases be collected and preserved are individual elements and 'relics' of the artwork, such as photos, monitors, films, etc. However, these all belong to different categories and are stored in different locations within the museum collection. The categories used are too narrow for an extended concept of art.

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## Short Biography

Born **1940** in Vienna, lives and works in Graz

**1963** Graduated in graphic arts and painting (Academy of Fine Arts Vienna) and also history of art (University of Vienna); taught at the Federal Technical College in Graz

**1970/71** Study year at UCL in London

**1983/84** DAAD Artists' Programme in Berlin

**1985/86** Period of research in the USA

Since **1988** various teaching positions including the TU Vienna, the University of Art and Design in Offenbach/Main, the École Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Paris

**1996** Deputy head of the Styrian government's Science and Research department

**1997** Head of scientific and artistic affairs at 'foku' for the Styrian government

Since **1999** European Commission for 'policy development in the culture sphere'

**1999–2003** Member of the working group preparing for Graz's year as European Capital of Culture 2003

**2007** Ehrenkreuz award for science and art of the Republic of Austria

Participations at the Biennale di Venezia (34<sup>th</sup>, 42<sup>nd</sup>, 46<sup>th</sup>) and Documenta in Kassel (6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>).