

# Anne Neukamp

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## Formats of Subliminal Messages

Contemporary painting encompasses many simultaneously existing positions. The work of German artist Anne Neukamp represents a distant, analytical-critical approach to the image. The process by which it is made incorporates experimental starting points. Its construction operates within the clearly defined framework of advertising visuals. It explores specific formal relations whose constitutions carry within them a predefined function – the subliminal transmission of information. This framework is the “position of representation” of consumer society, which plays out on the level of a specifically constructed aesthetic. It is an analytical study of what contemporary society visually canonizes in relation to quickness, change, consumerism, and consumption. Neukamp uses the tools of painting to amplify the schemata and templates that establish the strategy of the media transmission of rapid information. She seeks the logic of pre-prepared mechanisms, which she uncovers and then hides again. She is interested in the principles of construction, formal reduction, the dematerialization of objects, and the visually compelling surface of this aesthetic. She removes selected elements of communications and advertising registers from their original contexts in order to liberate them in favor of a freely created image.

Through reduced and stylized descriptiveness, the motifs found in Neukamp's paintings relate to the interface between the two contradictory worlds of today's Western consumer society as she sets her sights on artificially nurtured false consciousness and the concrete physical presence of the recipient. The former represents a system that takes advantage of available strategies for manipulating people into any form of dependence and then offering them (under certain conditions) a solution. It is a form of collective manipulation. The latter assumes that, as critically thinking, autonomous beings, people are capable of resisting unwanted influences and recognizing their destructive role. It is a form of self-defense against the hidden mechanisms of social manipulation. The principle of “reshaping” functions in two directions. The first is opportunistic, the second critical.

The interface between these two worlds is also the site of their overlap. Neukamp finds this “overlapping” in the painterly *thematization* of a *subliminal message*. The painting as it is perceived by Anne Neukamp can be compared to a deep archeology in which all accessible layers of the terrain formation must be explored in order to reveal its evident as well as hidden

components. The uncovering and covering of various layers reshapes and re-functionalizes the visual composition, setting this static model into changing interpretational motion and thus intensifying or weakening subliminal messages. Through the emancipation from clearly targeted messages, Neukamp examines post-production calculations involving visuality, which make their way from the world of advertising and PR into the methods and approaches of contemporary fine art. The visual face of informational totalitarianism is dismantled in order to reveal its hidden side, the template, which offers up new formal impulses and raises questions associated with the psychoanalytical aspects of marketing strategies.

*Torsion* (2017) is a typical example of how Neukamp works with the motif of "generalization," with a cycled "rhetoric," and with the reshaping of the associations aroused within the viewer. Unlike advertising, thanks to its internal transformation the painting itself is changed into luxuriously packaged *disinformation*, into an ambiguous tectonic situation. And yet there is something hygienic to it, something that a priori rules out the dimension of ways of knowing other than the one that is unilaterally and one-dimensionally presented to and often forced upon us. We are faced with the malicious contours of visual totalitarianism hidden behind the beauty of curves, colors, signs, and symbols and their repeated, visually compelling configurations (hyperreality); and the beauty of design, which obscures the rapidly spreading emptiness. It is a beautiful camouflage for the all-pervading banality and brutality of trade and commerce.

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