ROEHRS & BOETSCH

PRESS RELEASE

BANZ & BOWINKEL – PALO ALTO

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Presented in Switzerland for the first time, 'Palo Alto' is the second virtual reality work conceived by Banz & Bowinkel. Approaching the computer-generated as a counter-experience, rather than a simulation of the physical, the artists investigate the critical aspects of the similarities of the two in the virtual representation.

Crossing a meagre and desolate landscape, in its aesthetics plainly generated by a machine, the user perceives the ambiguity between the fabrication of the events and the familiarity of some elements. Figures with human features wander aimlessly, quoting talks on artificial intelligence of great world corporate leaders at the meeting with the visitor. A tall, restless fountain of white bodies dominates the sight; at distance, a disproportionately large insect crawl calmly the ground. An underground tunnel leads to a control tower, to be explored through an elevator without walls. The top floor room, glazed on each side, houses a large pendulum swinging between two luminous words, 'true' and 'false'.

'Palo Alto' is a surreal situation where no understanding is provided about the reasons for its being. The computer thereafter becomes the generator of preconceived realities with their own orders and borders, to which the user complies drawn by the narrative and without further questions. Suggesting that everything we attempt to define as real or authentic is fraught with difficulty if not at all possible, the work exposes the virtual as a ground for post-truth politics shaped by invisible gatekeepers by means of redundant, selected sets of information.

Using a mixture of computer-generated still and moving images, interactive virtual reality installations and augmented sculptures **Friedemann Banz** (1980, Germany) and **Giulia Bowinkel** (1983, Germany) explore the relationship between virtual and real spaces and how their separation collapses with the advancement of technology. For this, the technological tools - which form an increasingly inescapable part of contemporary society - serve as both source and material. In creating their works with the computer, it becomes a tool to investigate the interactions with it. In the same way, they also reflect on the new possibilities and challenges that the growing dependency on these devices poses.

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Computers have a binary reality that differs from the way we see the world. Increasingly, however, the computer monitor serves as the window to the world. Banz & Bowinkel thus examine how this growing entanglement of man and machine changes our understanding of reality.

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