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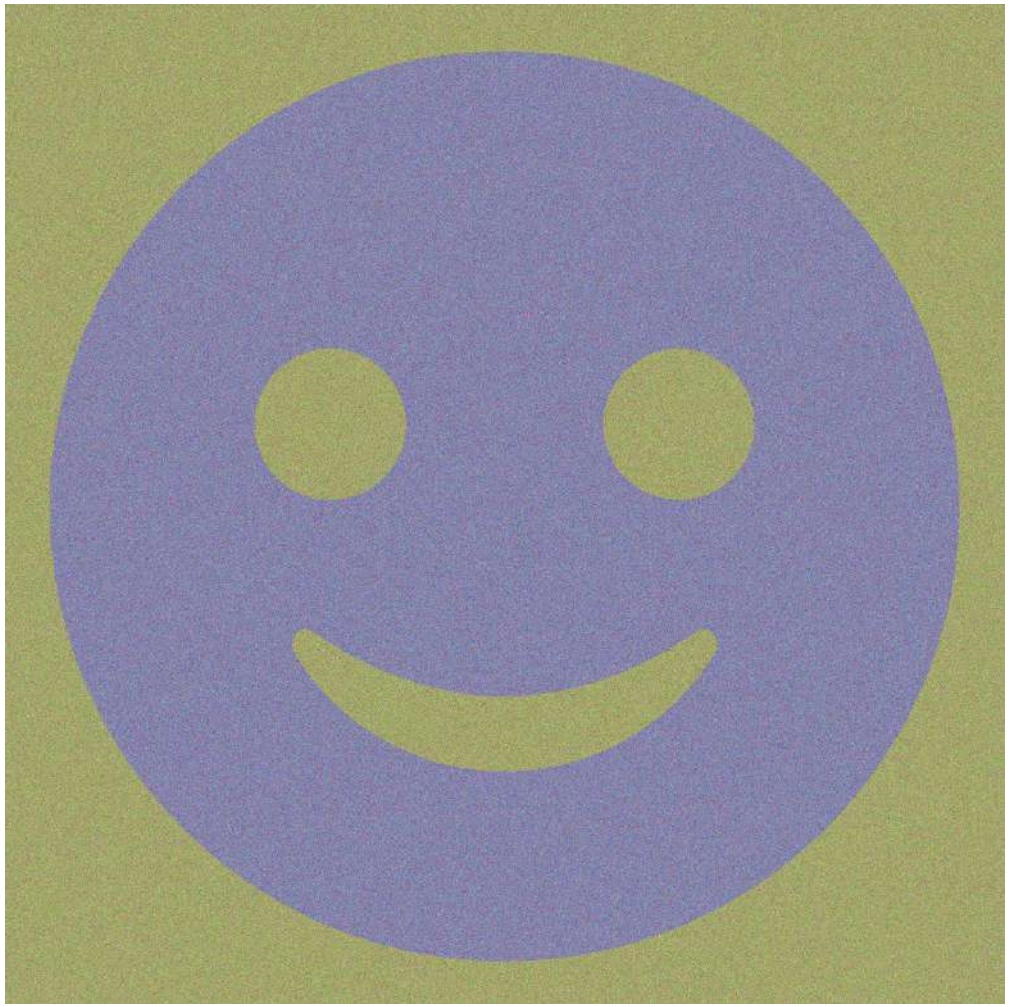
Adrian Sauer

KLEMM'S

Truth Table, Paris Photo, 2025

Truth Table, Spectrum - internationaler Preis für Fotografie der Stiftung Niedersachen, Sprengel Museum Hannover, 2023



Truth Table (2019 - ongoing)

In his work, Adrian Sauer questions the conditions of photography in its modes of creation, functionality, and interpretation. Standing in the tradition of image-analytical photography, he develops his oeuvre in a multifaceted and extremely precise form of expression that encompasses photographic images and objects, graphic spatial bodies, and essayistic text and sound installations. For many years, Adrian Sauer has been exploring the media properties of digital images in a variety of ways. With precise virtuosity, he develops formally reduced, sometimes mysterious works and groups of works that provoke close observation with elegance and, not infrequently, quiet humor. Sauer focuses on the individual components of the imaging process per se: production and reception are considered together. His fundamental interest is in exploring the structures that make an image ‘recognizable’ today.

The special character of his images is determined by the processual nature of their aesthetics. They can be perceived as fluid structures; something that develops from the reality effect of photography through the process of digital manipulation to a painterly effect, placing the emphasis on the phenomena he creates.

“After spending a long time editing photographs with programs such as Adobe Photoshop, I became increasingly aware of how much the clear user interface separates the underlying technology from the user. Eventually, I developed my own program that produces images containing all these colors exactly once.” A. Sauer, 2023

Based on the 8-bit RGB process, exactly 16,777,216 color tones can be displayed in the exposure of digital photographs. In an earlier work by Adrian Sauer with the same title, he combined all these components of the color spectrum as tiny pixel fields into one image. This original image is varied in the continuation and applied in diverse modes of representation, resulting in sometimes diagrammatic representations, sometimes geometric shapes, and sometimes photographic-looking studies. The basic pictorial material of digital photographs is presented as a tool and fundamental element, which in turn lends the end product an aura of post-photography and, in line with Sauer‘s artistic agenda, emphasizes the artificiality of digital images.

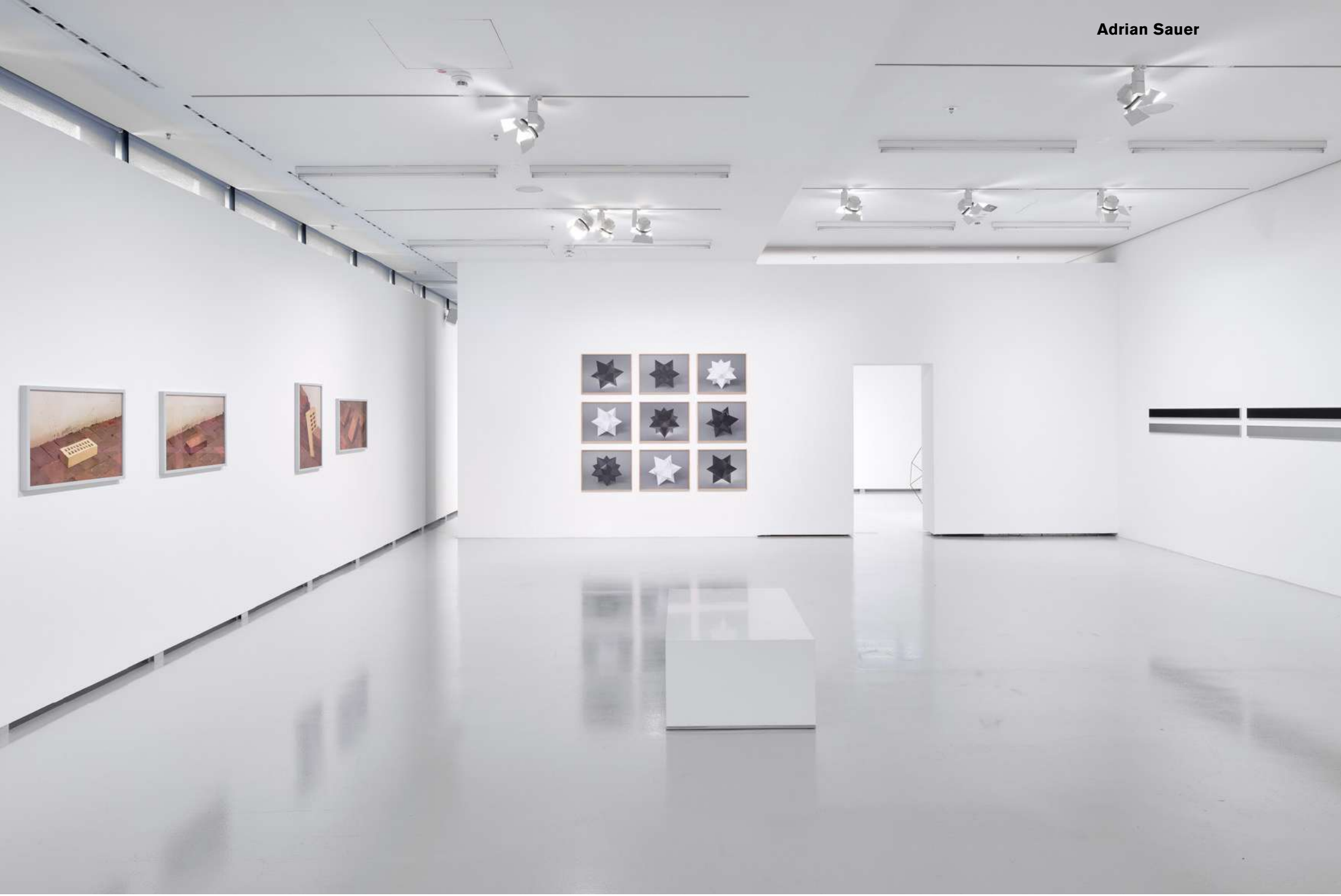
Blauer Smiley, Farbton, Zufall (Truth Table), 2023, digital c-print, 100 × 100 cm

Truth Table, installation view, Art Cologne, 2024, variable sets

Adrian Sauer

Truth Table, Spectrum - internationaler Preis für Fotografie der Stiftung Niedersachen, Sprengel Museum Hannover, 2023

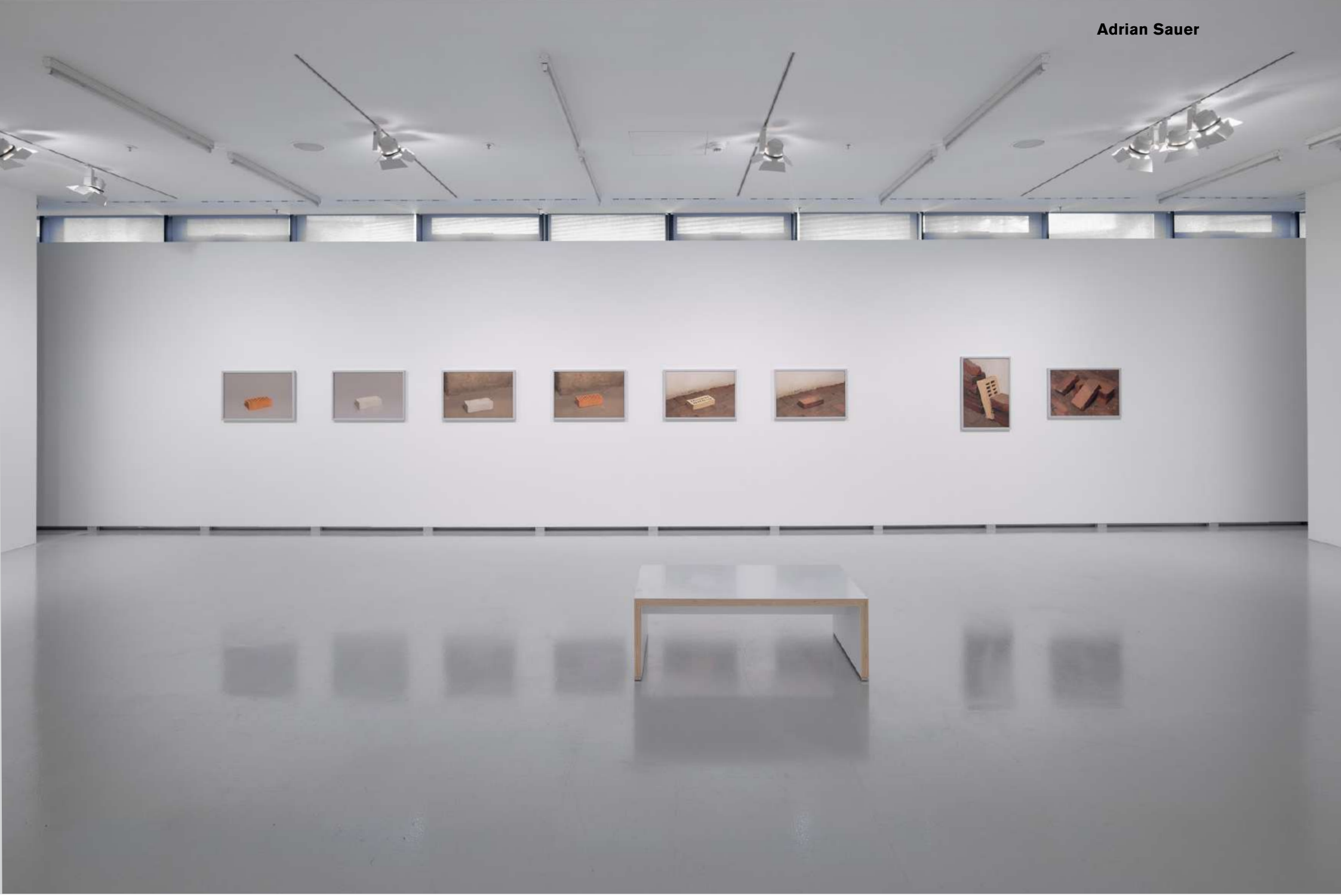
Adrian Sauer



Identitäten und Ideologien, 2021, exhibtion view: Kunststiftung DZ BANK, Frankfurt am Main

Dark and Light Stars – Dark Star Dark Shadow First Point of View, 48.3 cm × 60.5 cm, Digitaler C-Print, 2017, Exhibition view Paris Photo, 2017

Adrian Sauer



Identitäten und Ideologien, 2021, exhibtion view: Kunststiftung DZ BANK, Frankfurt am Main

Wasserstrichziegel, 2012, Dünnformat, gruppiert, Hof, digital C-print (lightjet), 50 × 75 cm, ed. 3 + 1 a.p.

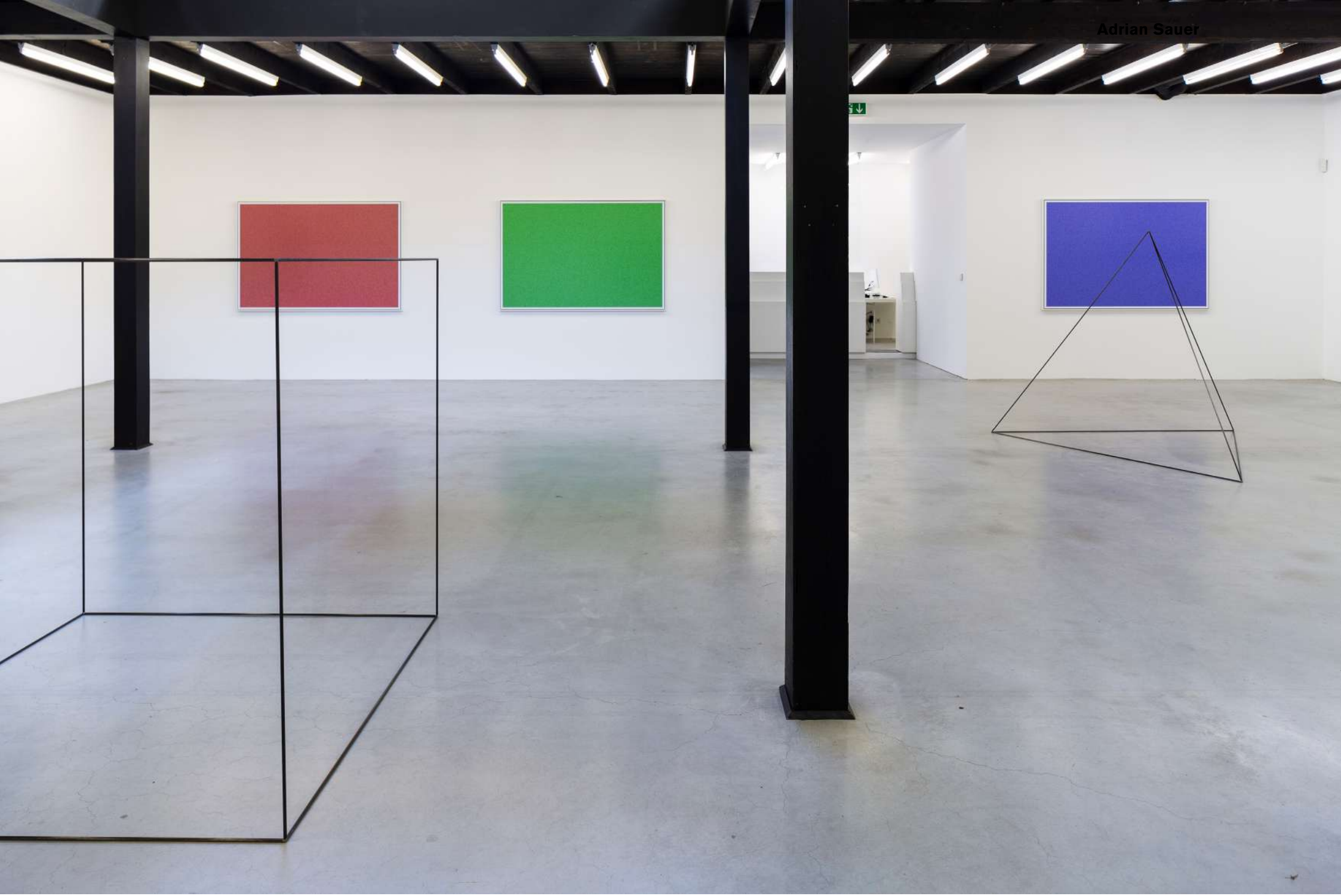
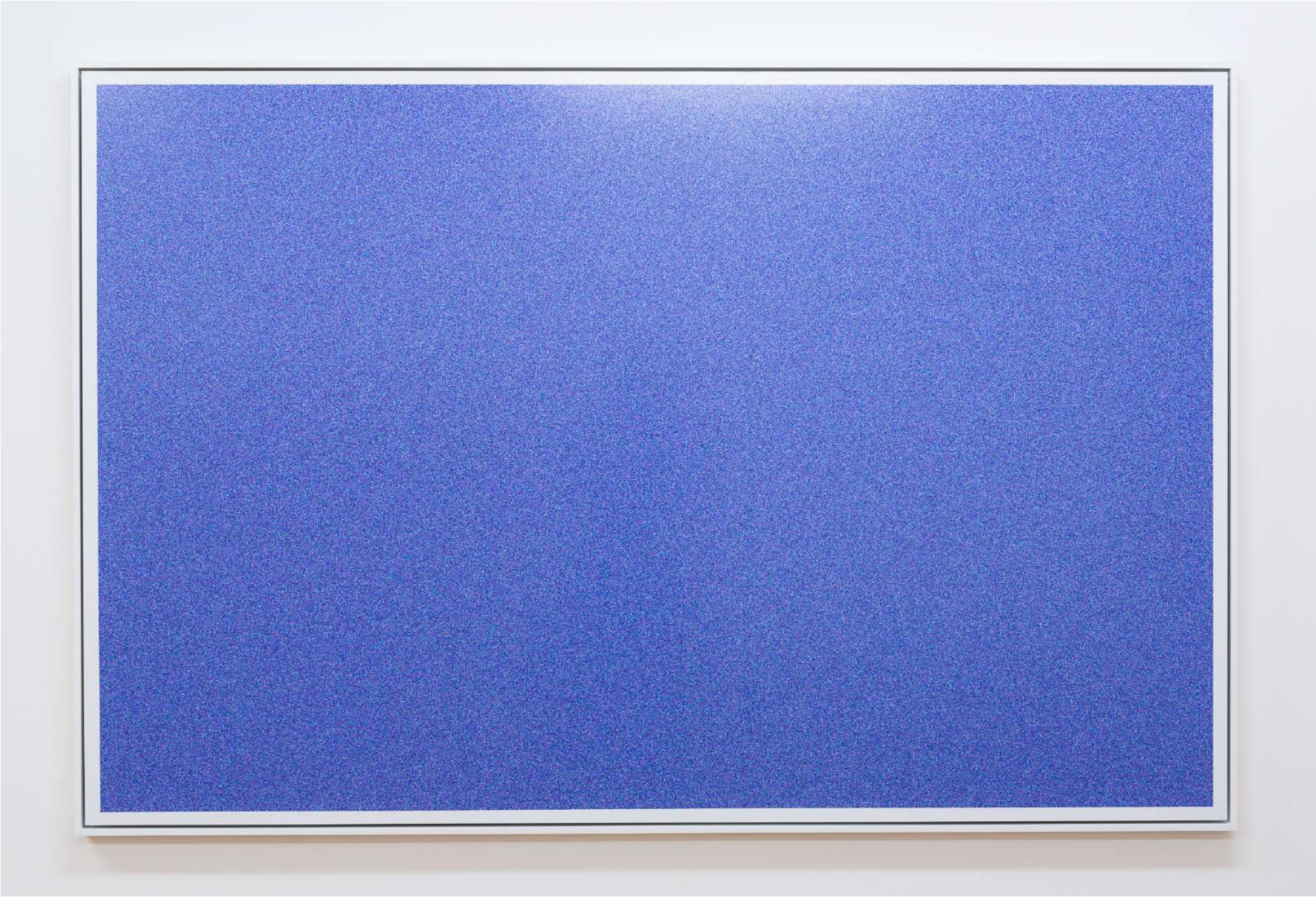
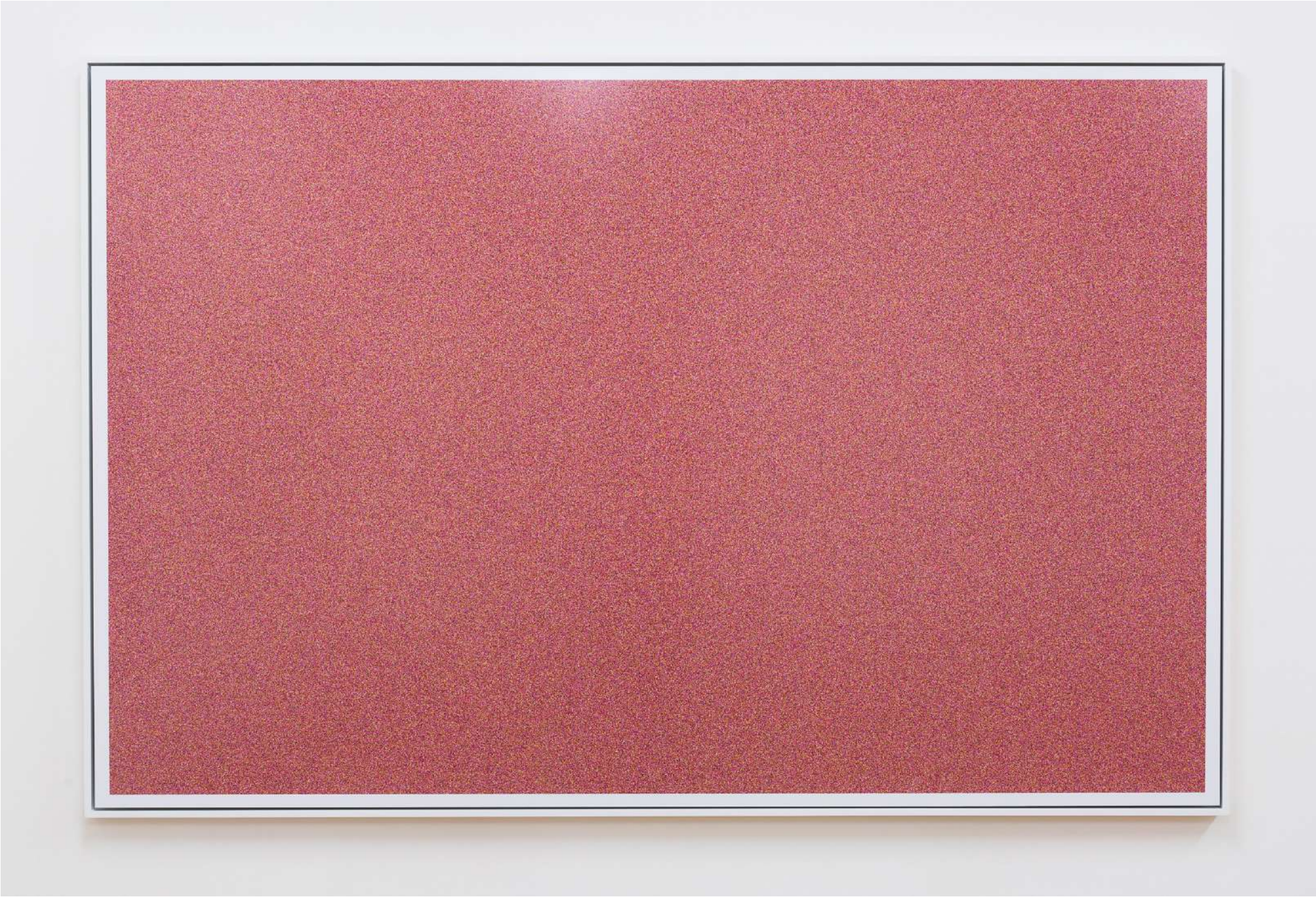


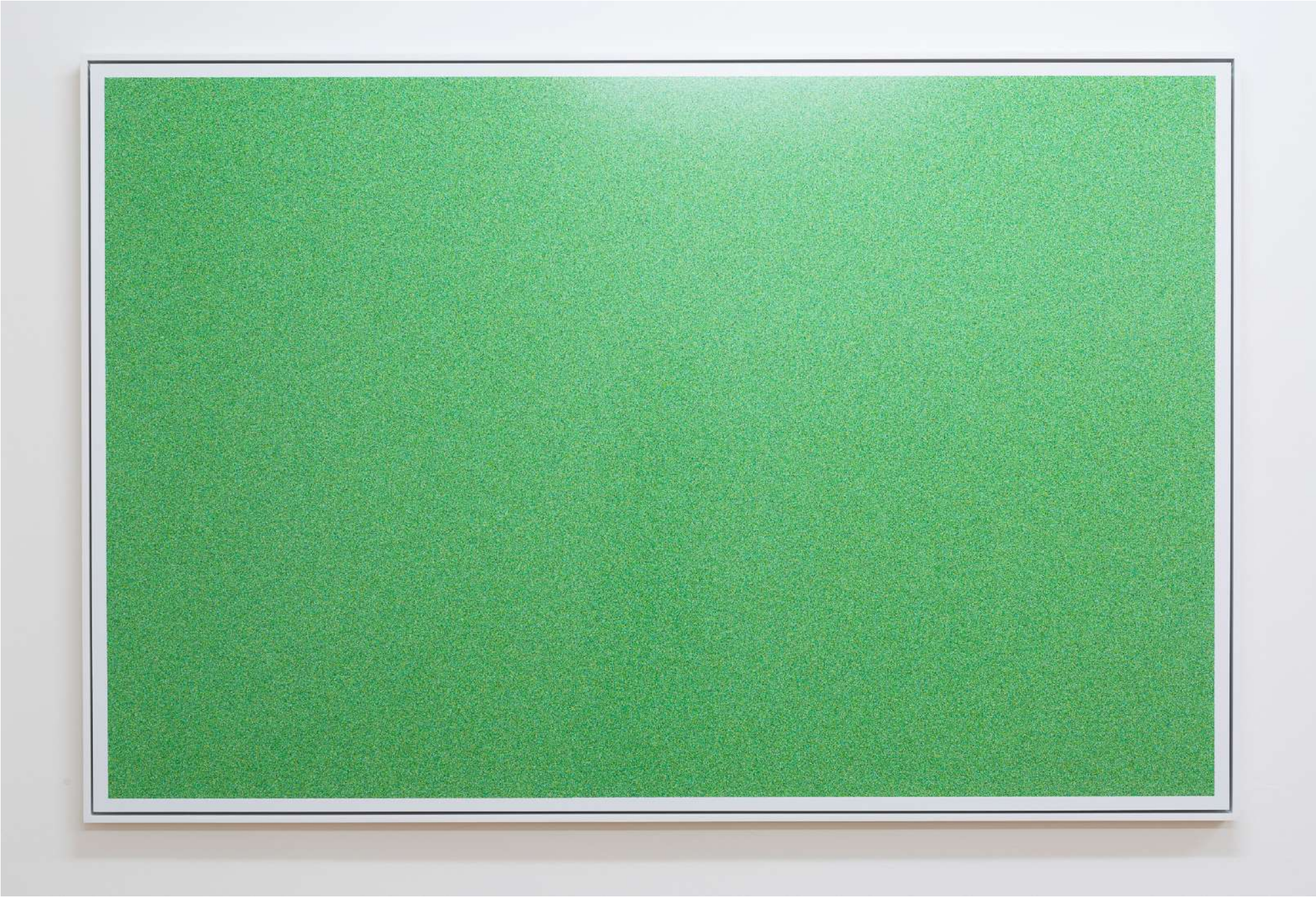
Foto Arbeiten, exhibition view, Oldenburger Kunstverein, Oldenburg, DE, 2020



16.777216 Farben in rot, grün und blau – blau, 2018, 126 cm × 191 cm, digitaler C-Print



16.777216 Farben in rot, grün und blau – rot, 2018, 126 cm × 191 cm, digital c-print



16.777216 Farben in rot, grün und blau – grün, 2018, 126 cm × 191 cm, digital c-print

Spektren, 2019, exhibition view: Museum im Kleinhues-Bau, Kornwestheim, DE

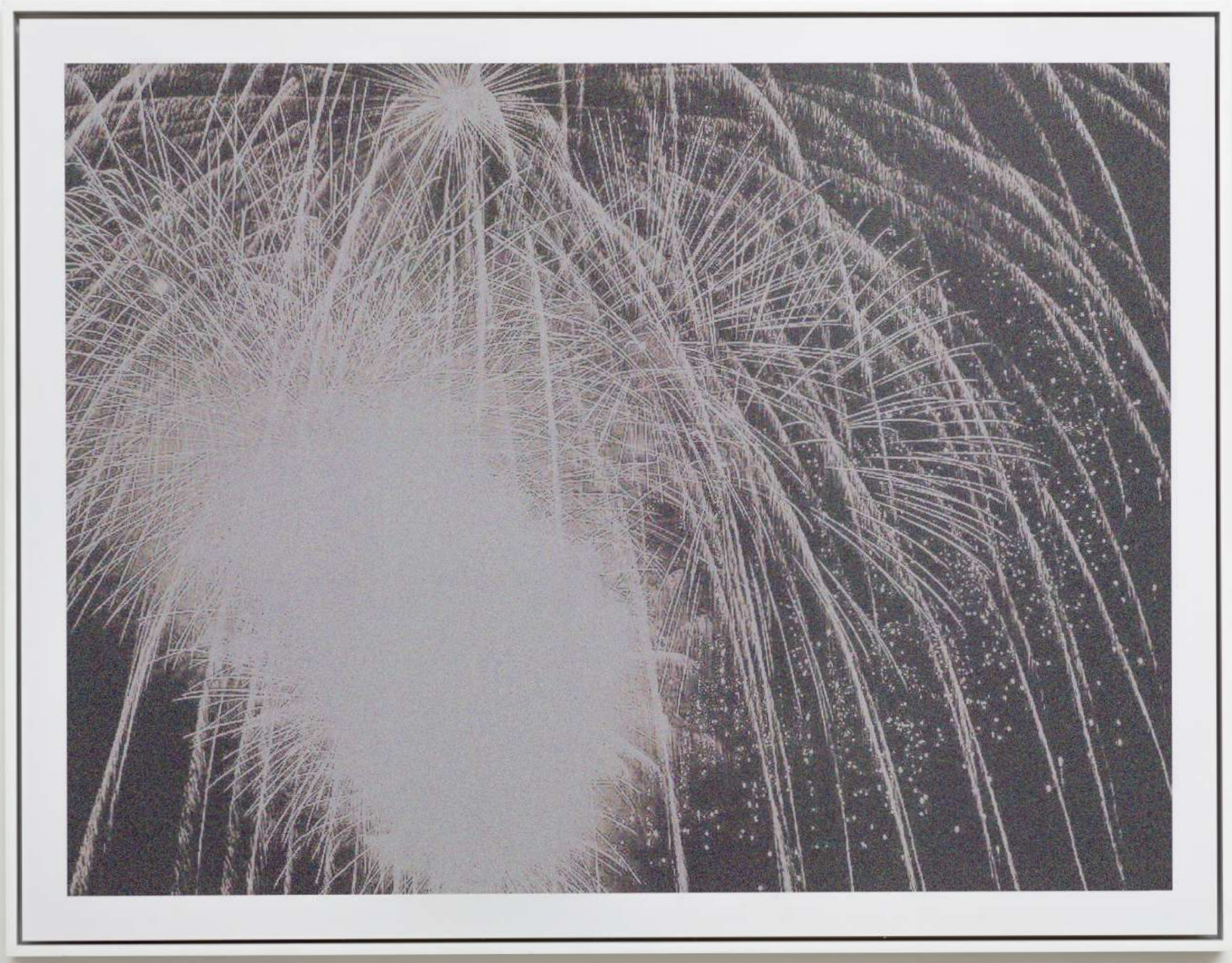
Gradient, 2012, 279 cm × 171 cm, digital c-print

The researcher in the space of calculated images

Adrian Sauer uses the conception of photography as a constituent element. In his work, he reacts to current adjustments in dealing with photography by leading common conceptions of reality and immediacy into the absurd. Photography serves him as a sketchboard for eventually finding a virtual imagery by means of adequate but digitally generated, classified and ordered colors. It belongs to the specific character of photographs that they claim to provide us with an unmediated view of reality. Their materiality for the most part remains invisible behind this transparency. Like language, photographs are changing yet completely familiar instruments of our communication. We “read” photos and use them—from journalistic images to one’s own page on Facebook. Yet in the same way scholars (and literati) dismember language in order to infer how it works based on the smallest elements, the technical image time and again challenges us to sound out the quasi natural representation of the photograph for its media-related content— and this appeals not only to theorists, but to artists as well.

Adrian Sauer does not address verbal language, yet with the new digital world of images he does devote himself to another ever more important field of our communication—and he does it in a way that can be compared to the different methods of linguistics. While he did devote some of his works to the semantic and pragmatic dimension of the use of images—how are images used and read in a specific context — his main interest lies in the “morphology” of the digital image, its “theory of form”: How is it assembled within its smallest parts? How does it work to transfer visible, physical reality into a saved, calculated image? What do the Raster of the new optical instruments provide?
The artistic work of Adrian Sauer as such poses questions about the limits of the image in a time in which camera images increasingly become hybrid constructs, between light measurement and mathematical recalculation. In a provocative way, some of his works at first resemble technical test pictures, and yet these questions are included into the language and tradition of concrete and generative photography.

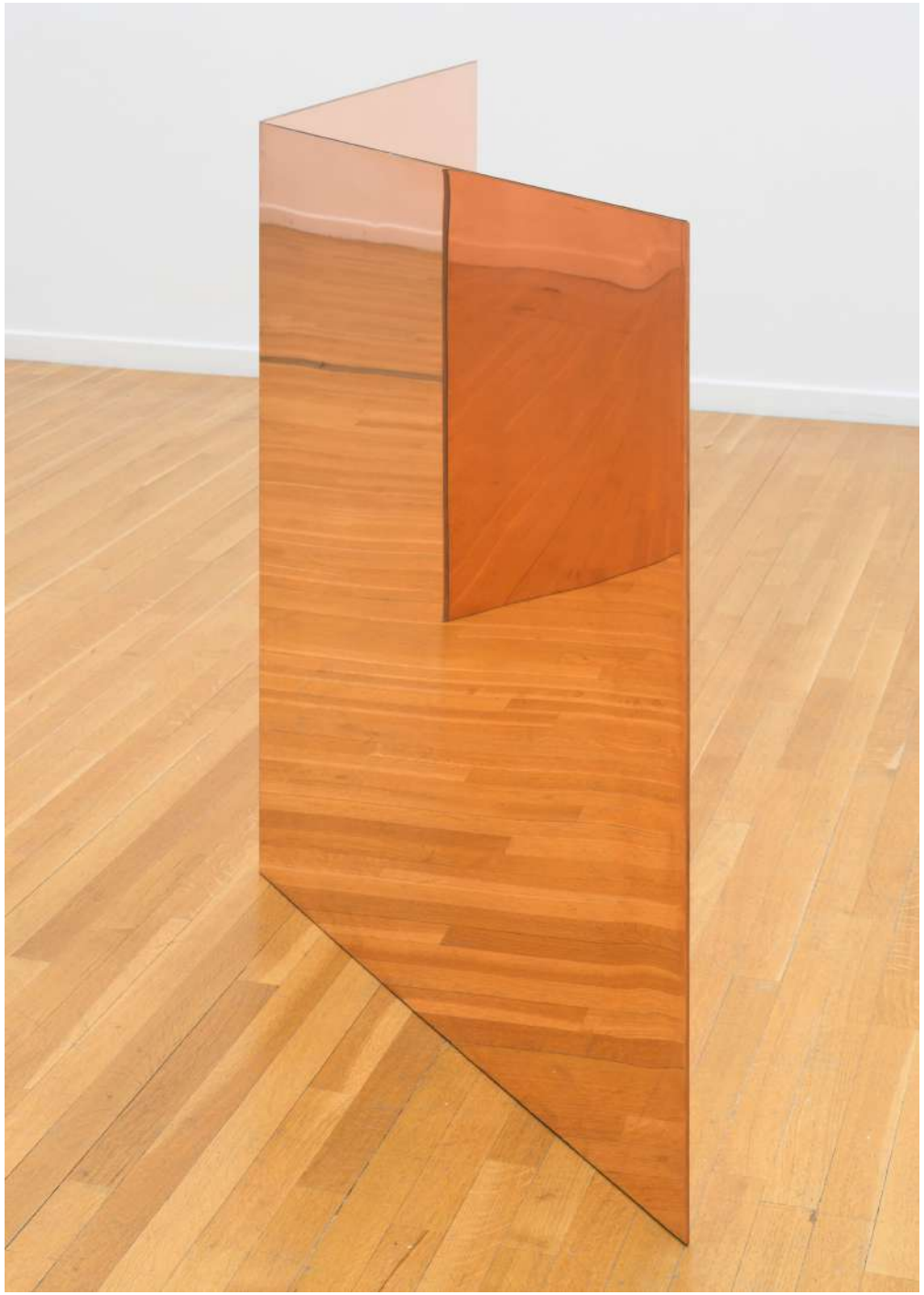
Florian Ebner (Museum Folkwang, Essen, 2012)



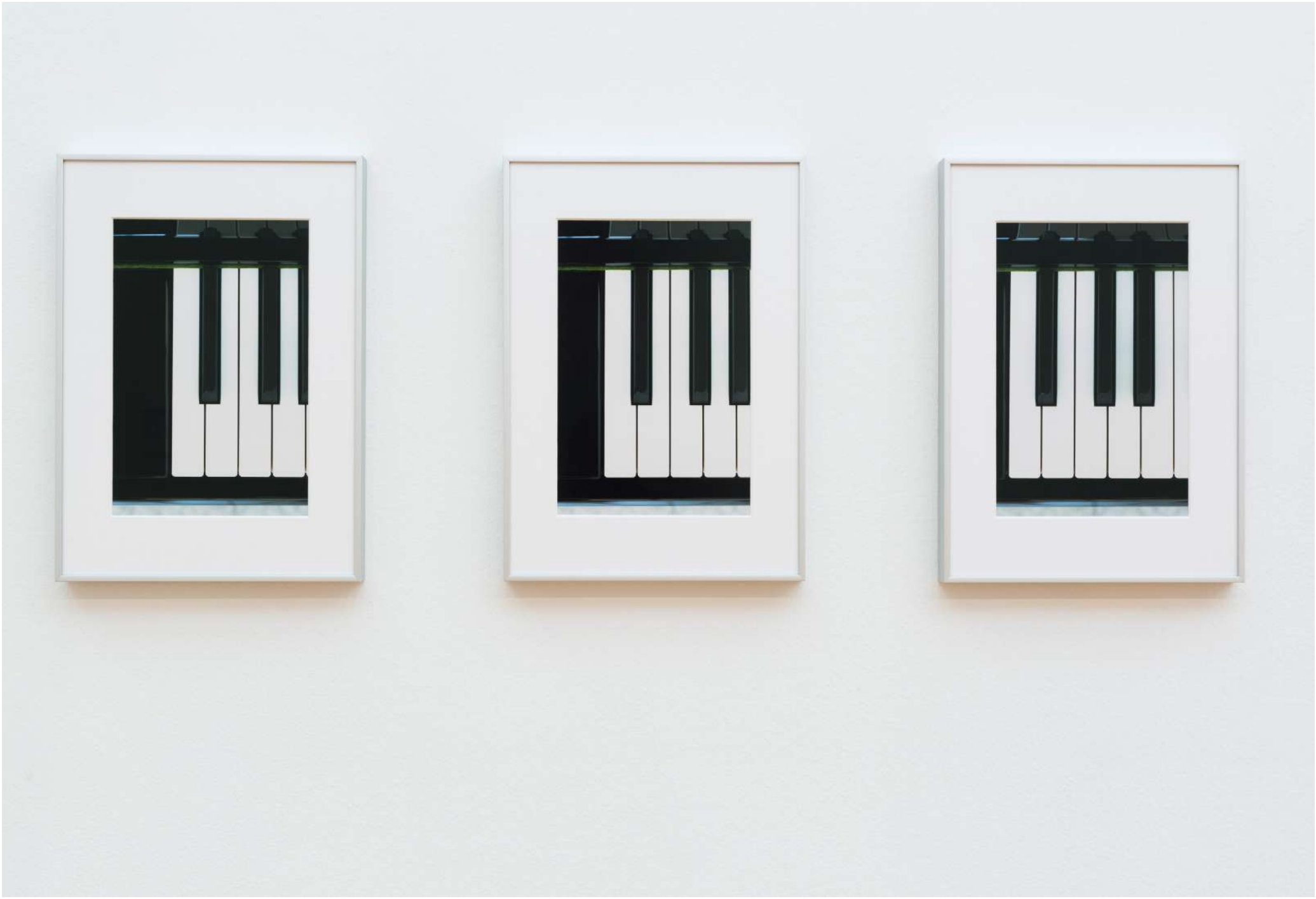
newyears_6_bg_123102, 2011, 100 cm × 130 cm,digital c-print

fourth1bg_070400, 2011, 100 cm × 130 cm, digital c-print

Klavier / Kupferwinkel, 45°, exhibtion view: Keys and Mirrors, Galería Helga de Alvear, Madrid, 2017



Kupferwinkel, 45°, exhibtion view: Galería Helga de Alvear, Madrid, 2017



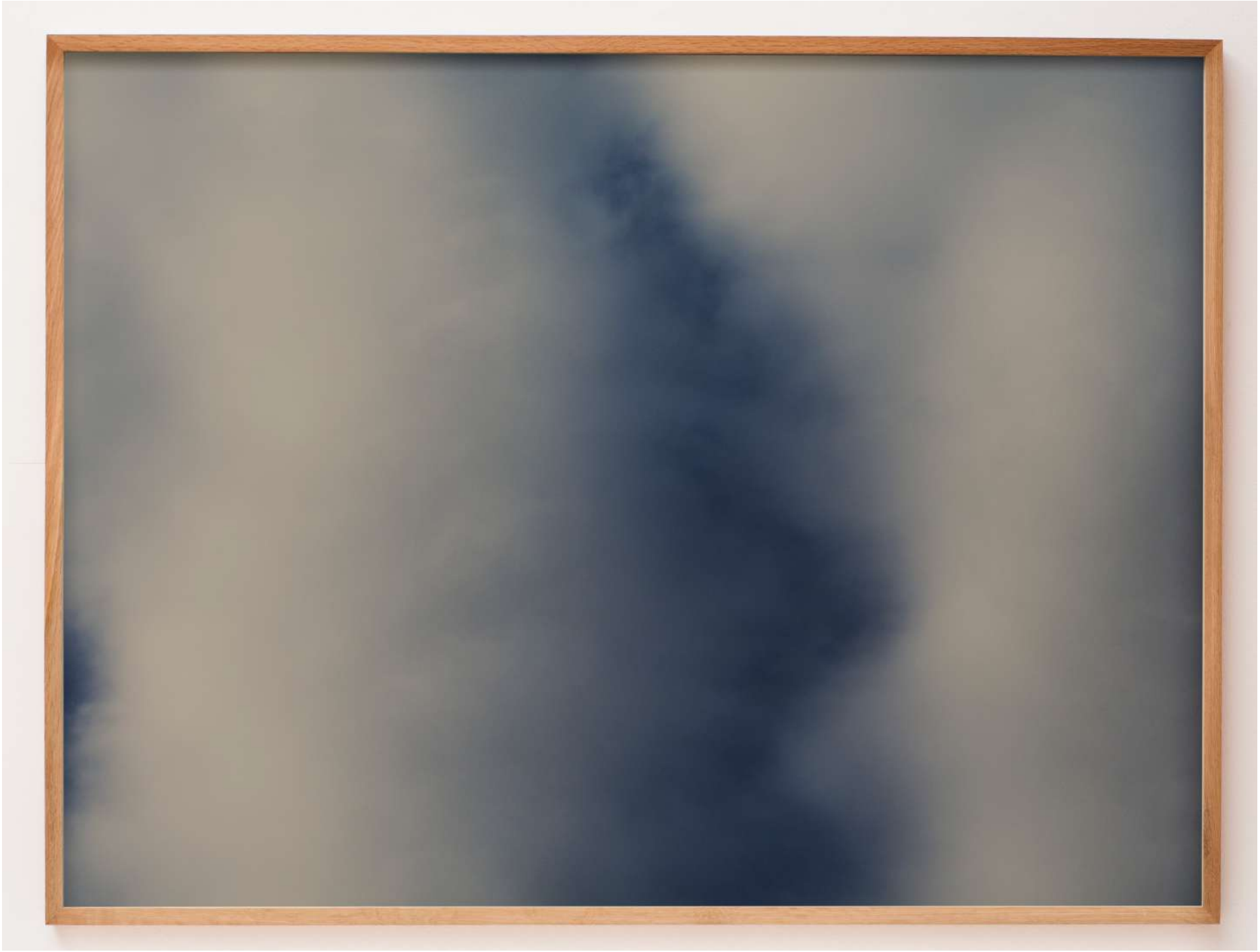
Klavier, Rom, 2017, 23 cm × 15 cm, digital c-print

Glossar, 2017, exhibition view: Farewell Photography

Glossar, 2017, exhibition view: Farewell Photography

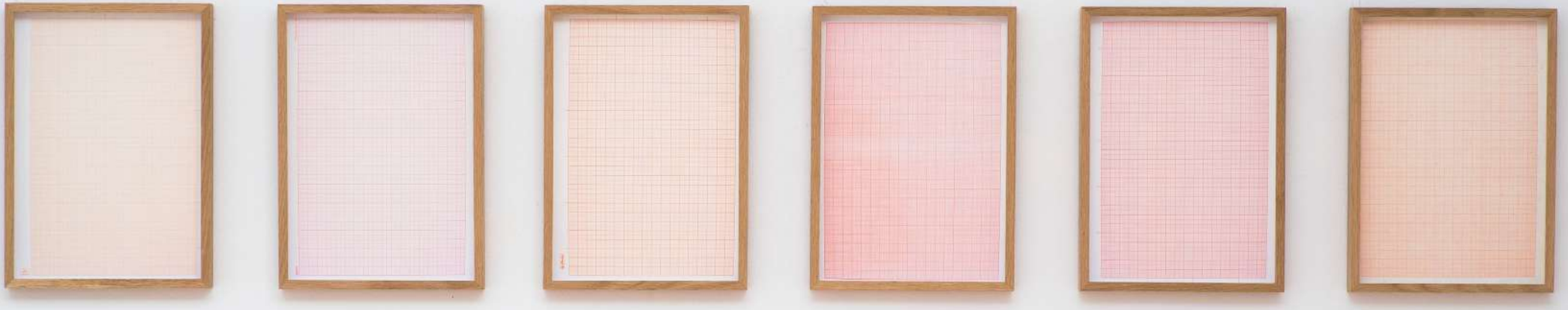
Form und Farbe, exhibition view *Spektren* at Kleihues Museum, Kornwestheim, 2019

Form und Farbe, 01.05.2014 (b), 2014, digital c-print, framed, 122 × 162 cm

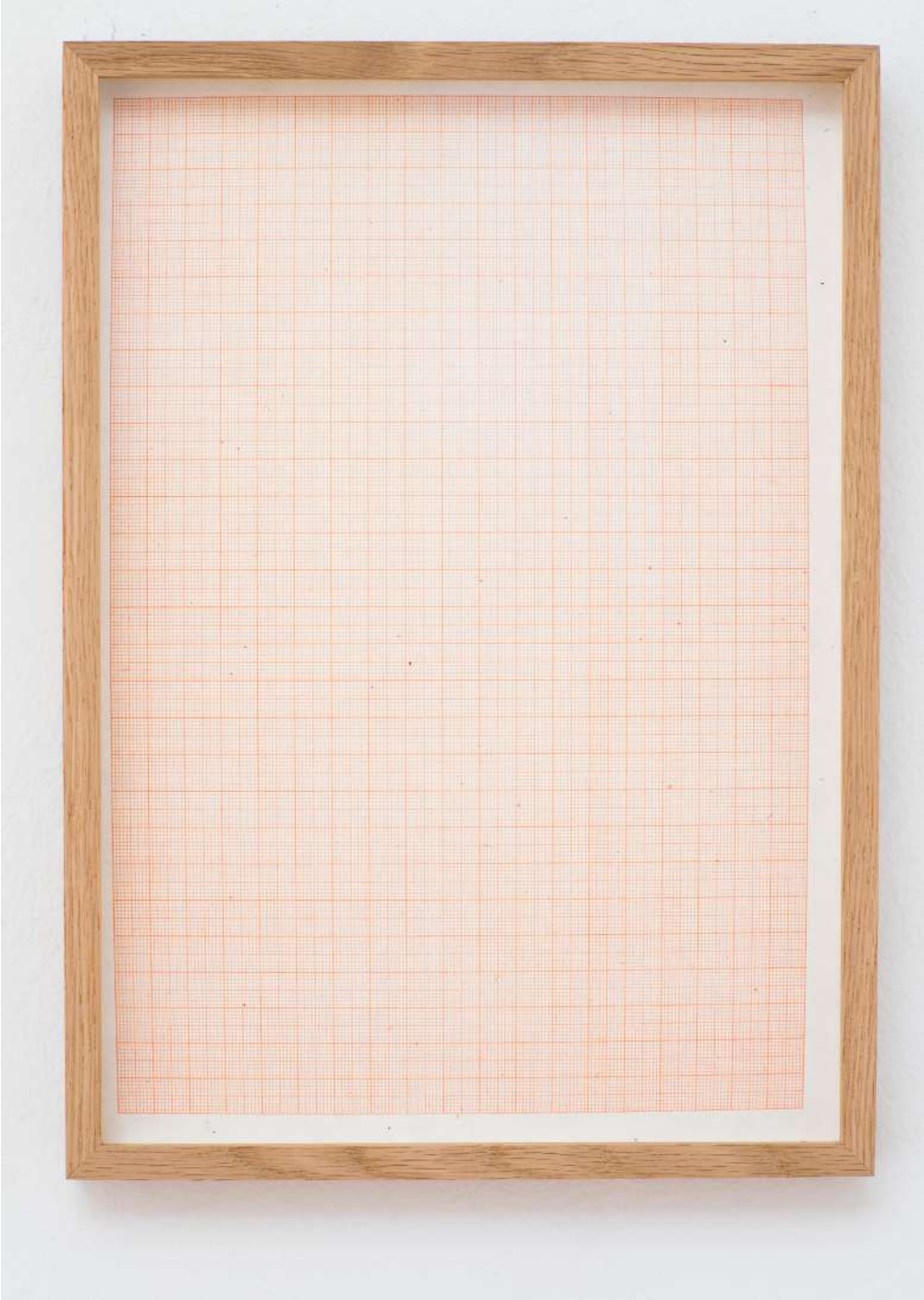


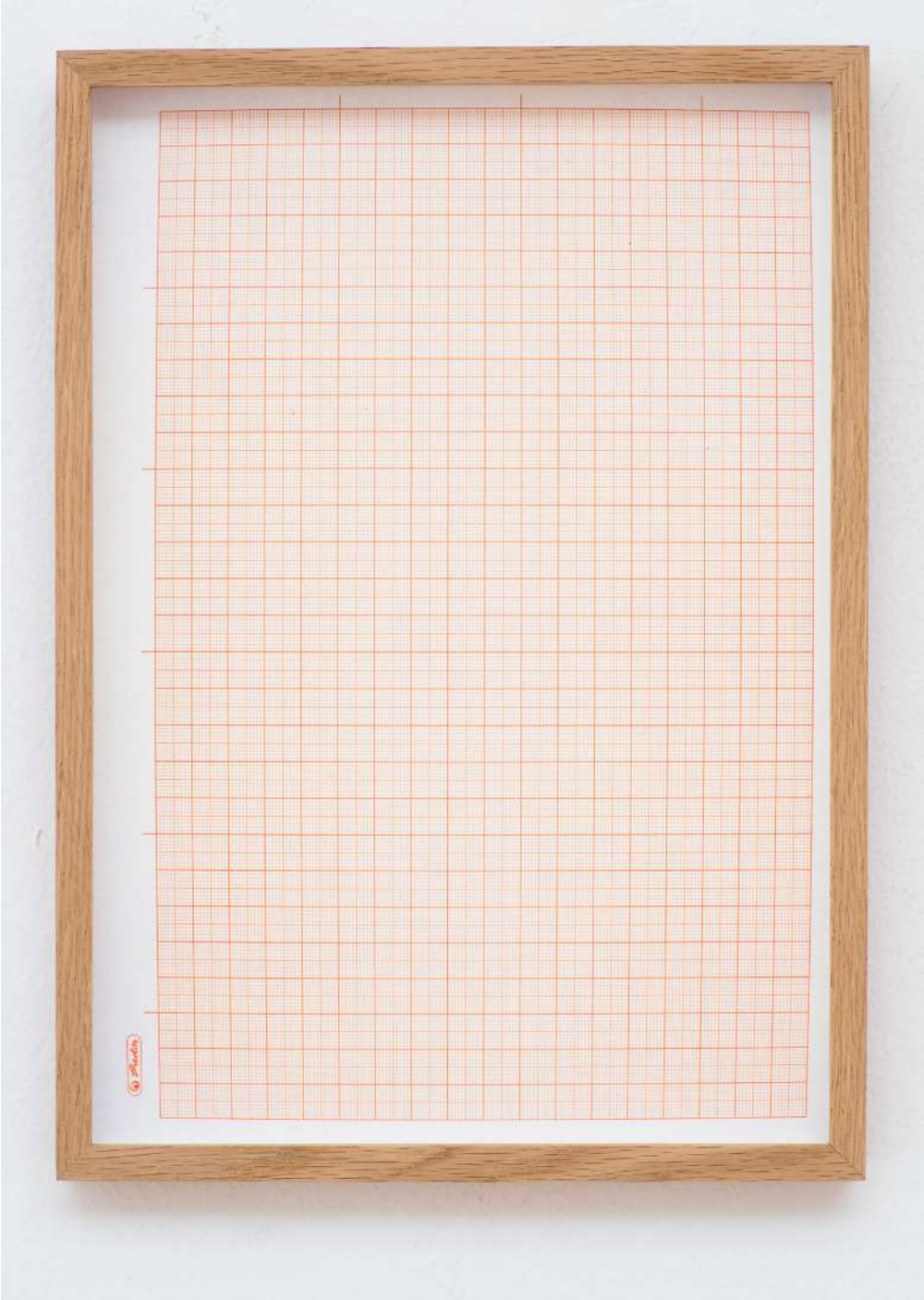
Form und Farbe, 19.03.2014 (a), 2014, digital c-print, framed, 122 × 162 cm

Form und Farbe, Truth Table - Specturm Prize, 2023, exhibtion view: Sprengel Museum, Hannover



6 sheets of graph paper, 2013, photographed with Zeiss Planar T* 50/1.4 on Canon EOS 5D Mk II, archival inkjet-prints, each 29,7 cm × 21 cm





6 sheets of graph paper, 2013, photographed with Zeiss Planar T* 50/1.4 on Canon EOS 5D Mk II, archival inkjet-prints, each 29,7 cm × 21 cm

A—Z (Brockhaus), 2012, installation view, 38 digital c-prints

A-Z (Brockhaus), detail, 2012, from a series of 38 digital c-prints, framed, each 32,5 cm × 45,5 cm

16.777.216 Farben, 2010, 125 cm × 476 cm, digital c-print

16.777.216 Farben (Detail), 2010, 125 cm × 476 cm,digital c

16.777.216 Farben

The conventional method for outputting digital photographs to film is capable of producing 16,777,216 different colors. In fact, the computer is limited to exactly this color space when it is manipulating 8-bit RGB images. The number 16,777,216 results from technical considerations that have evolved from various requirements. In order to blend colors according to the additive color system in the first place, the three primary colors are required: red, green, and blue (RGB). In order to perform calculations, the computer in turn requires numbers that are products of the power of 2, that is, that can be represented according to the binary system. Experiments in the area of the psychology of perception have shown how subtly different colors have to be graduated so that the human eye can no longer discern a difference between the respective neighboring color values. The human eye is deceived into perceiving the graduated transition from white to black in 250 steps. The power of 2 nearest to 250 is 256, or 2^8. Eight-bit means nothing more than 2^8. However, because three colors need to be combined in order to represent the entire spectrum of visible light, each of the 256 gradations are used in the three aforementioned primary colors. If one now wants to use each of the possible combinations between them, one arrives at 256^3. That results in 2^{24} or 16,777,216.

After manipulating photographs using programs such as Adobe Photoshop for an extended period of time, I increasingly noticed how distinct the division is that the straightforward user interface forms between the basic technology and the user.

I finally developed a program that produces images that contain all of these colors exactly once.

Adrian Sauer

Unboxing Photoshop #01 - #12, 2012, 12 digital c-prints, each 30 × 40 cm

Unboxing Photoshop (details: #1, #3, #6 & #10), 2011, from a series of 12 digital c-prints, each 30 × 40 cm

Laptop (videostill), 2011

Laptop, 2011, HD-video, installation view, Klemm‘s Berlin

Hotel, 2006, digital c-print, 120 × 167 cm

Schläger, 2006, digital c-print, 30 × 40 cm

Heuhaufen, 2016, digital c-print, 35 × 46, framed

Karton, 2013, digital c-print, 24 × 32 cm, framed

Modell – #3, 2008, 75 cm × 100 cm, digital c-print, diasec

Modell – #1, 2008, 75 cm × 100 cm, digital c-print, diasec

Biography

1976
Born in Berlin,

1997-2003
HGB Academy of Visual Arts, Leipzig, DE
Meisterschüler at the class of Prof. Timm Rautert

Solo Exhibitions (Selection)

2025
Wand und Boden, Kunstverein Oerlinghausen, DE

2024
Truth Table, Francisco Carolinum, Linz, AU

2023
Truth Table, Sprengel Museum, Hannover, DE

2022
Songs of the Sky, Les Rencontres de la Photographie, Arles, FR
Abstraction Layers, Gallery Weekend 2022, Klemm's, Berlin

2021
Identitäten und Ideologien, RAY Fotografieprojekte Frankfurt/Rhein Main, DZ Bank Kunstsammlung, Frankfurt am Main, DE

2020
Foto Arbeiten, Oldenburger Kunstverein, Oldenburg, DE

2019
Adrian Sauer. Room for Everyone, Paris Photo 2019 with Klemm's, Berlin, FR
Spektren, Museum im Kleinhues-Bau, Kornwestheim, DE

2018
Generikum, Klemm's, Berlin, DE
Adrian Sauer, Pasquart Photoforum, Biel/Bienne, CH

2017
Keys & Mirrors, Helga de Alvear, Madrid, ES

2016
Johannes Lehmenn, bautzner69, Dresden, DE
Adrian Sauer, Freunde aktueller Kunst Zwickau, DE

2014
Looking at the Window, Helga de Alvear, Madrid, ES
Form und Farbe, KLEMM'S, Berlin, DE

2013
Folgendes: Farben, Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg, DE

2012
Adrian Sauer, Fondation Hermes, Geneva, CH
Adrian Sauer at TH13, TH13, Fondation d'enterprise Hermès, Bern, CH

2011
Adrian Sauer: Bilder aus Berechnung, Museum für Photographie Braunschweig, DE

2010
16.777.216 Farben, Klemm's, Berlin, DE (catalog)

2008
Rohbau/Atelier, Klemm's, Berlin, DE (catalog)

Group Exhibitions (Selection)

2026
CTRL.New Functions of images, Les Rencontres de la Photographie, Arles, FR
n+1. Mehr als ein Bild, Kunststiftung DZ Bank, Frankfurt a.M., DE
Umbau - Sammlung Glampe, Galerie Jochen Hempel, Leipzig, DE

2024
Unfolding, Klemm´s, Berlin, DE
Das Buch im Bild, Villa Heike, Berlin, DE
On Flourishing, Klemm's, Berlin, DE
Von hier aus. Eine Bestandsaufnahme. DZ Bank Kunststiftung, Frankfurt am Main, DE
Proof of Concept: Photography — Exhibition, Briefing Room, Brussels, BE

2022
As if everything is forever, Kühlhaus, Berlin, DE

talking to a stranger, Muthesius Kunsthochschule, Kiel, DE
Songs of the Sky, Les Rencontres de la Photographie, Arles, FR

2021
K60 | Hallen #2 - Yes to all, Wilhelm Hallen, Berlin, DE

2020
Dust, Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR
Während alle fotografieren können sich manche mit der Fotografie beschäftigen, Fotohof, Salzburg, AT
Photography to the test of abstraction, FRAC Normandie Rouen, Rouen, FR
naturlich! {sic!}, KLEMM'S, DE
WOLKEN IN DER ZEITGENÖSSISCHEN KUNST – FLÜCHTIG – ZEICHENHAFT – BEDROHLICH, Oldenburger Kunstverein, Oldenburg, DE

2019
Leichter als Luft, bautzner69/Altana Galerie, TU Dresden, DE (cat.)
On the Languages of Photography – A Suggestion, Sanaa Building Folkwang-University Essen, DE(s)
Zentrum, Galerie der Kunststiftung K52, Berlin, DE
Situation #174, Fotomuseum Winterthur, CH
Realitäts Check, Kunstraum Potsdam c/o Waschhaus, Potsdam, DE
Bauhaus #itsalldesign, Designmuseum Danmark, Copenhagen, DK (cat.)
Belichtungen - Fotografische Arbeiten, Städtische Galerie im Park Viersen, Viersen, DE (cat.)

2018
25 Jahre! Gemeinsam Geschichte(n) schreiben, Fotomuseum Winterthur, Winterthur, CH
Deutschland ist keine Insel, Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn (cat), DE
Die Zahl als Chiffre in der Kunst, DZ Bank, Frankfurt am Main, DE
The Bauhaus #itsalldesign, mudac – Museum of Contemporary Design and Applied Arts, Lausanne, CH
The essential perspective. Minimal art from Helga de Avelar collection, Centro de Arte de Alcobendas, Madrid, ES
Kleine Geschichte(n) der Fotografie, Sprengel Museum, Hannover, DE

2017
So weit – So gut, Kunsthalle Erfurt, DE
Farewell Photography, Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie, Wilhelm-Hack-Museum; train station Ludwigshafen Mitte, Ludwigshafen am Rhein, DE
The Bauhaus #itsalldesign, ADAM – Art & Design Atomium Museum Brussels, BE
open minded – Stiftungspreis Fotokunst, Sammlung Klein, Eberdingen-Nussdorf, DE

2016
Big Data goes Art, SAP Headquaters, Walldorf, DE
Fotografie und die Dinge, Kupferstich-Kabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, DE
Alte Meister, Jacky Stranz, Frankfurt am Main, DE
The Bauhaus #itsalldesign, Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn, DE
The Bauhaus #itsalldesign, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, IL
Chip vs. Chemie, DZ Bank, Frankfurt am Main, DE
Thinking in Algorithms, Schueblein + Bak, Zürich, CH
My Abstract World, me Collectors Room, Stiftung Olbricht, Berlin, DE

Der Raum zwischen den Personen muss die Decke tragen, Sammlung Ivo Wessel, Weserburg, Museum für moderne Kunst, Bremen, DE

2015
The Baushaus #itsalldesign, Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, DE
The Human Apparatus, Klemm's, Berlin, DE
Sedimente von Wirklichkeit/Sediments of Reality, GfzK Leipzig, DE
Die Idee der Landschaft, DZ Bank Kunstsammlung, Frankfurt am Main, DE
Counterpoint, Kunsthalle Sparkasse Leipzig, DE

2014
Mis-/Understanding Photography - Werke und Manifeste, Museum Folkwang, Essen, DE; Fotomuseum Winterthur, CH
Eine Klasse für sich – Aktionsraum Fotografie, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kunsthalle im Lipsi-

usbau, Dresden, DE
Denkräume, Schloss Plüschow, DE

2013
CROSS OVER – Fotografie der Wissenschaft + Wissenschaft der Fotografie, Fotomuseum Winterthur, CH (cat)
Source Codes, Klemm's, Berlin, DE
Jetzt hier. Gegenwartungskunst. Aus dem Kunstfonds, Brühlsche Terrasse, Dresden, DE

From Here On. Post Photography in the Age of the Internet and the Mobile Telephone, Arts Santa Monica, Barcelona, ES

2012
Das Atelier, 2025 Kunst und Kultur e.V., Hamburg, DE
Dot.Systems. From Pointilism to Pixelation, Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Ludwigshafen, DE
Der Mensch und seine Objekte – photographic collection, Museum Folkwang, Essen, DE

2011
Zwei Sammler. Thomas Olbricht und Harald Falckenberg, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, DE
From Here On – Les Rencontres de la Photographie, Arles, FR
Antifoto, Kunstraum Düsseldorf, DE
Strenge Aura, Kunstverein Leipzig, DE
Leipzig. Fotographie seit 1839, Museum für Bildende Künste, Leipzig, DE

2010
10 Jahre Kunstverein Glückstadt, Palais für aktuelle Kunst, Glückststadt, DE
Mit Abstand ganz nah, Opelvillen Rüsselheim, DE

2009
Beautiful Illusion, Galerie Maurer, Frankfurt am Main, DE
28. Biennial of Graphic Arts, Ljublijana, SI (cat)
Close the gap, Städtische Galerie und Kunstverein Speyer; Pfaffenhofer Kunstverein; Werkschauhalle, Leipzig, DE
Mit Abstand – ganz nah, Museum der Stadt Ratingen, Kunstmuseum Cottbus, DE

2008
Mit Abstand – ganz nah, Kunstsammlungen der Städtischen Museen Zwickau, DE (cat)
Close the Gap, Stadtgalerie Kiel, DE (cat)
F/Stop – Internationales Fotografiefestival, Leipzig, DE (cat)

Publications

2023
ADRIAN SAUER: TRUTH TABLE; Spector Books, Leipzig / Sprengel Museum, Hannover

2019
ADRIAN SAUER; Kerber Verlag; Berlin

2010
16.777.216 Farben, Lubok Verlag, Leipzig

2008
Rohbau/Atelier, Klemm's, Berlin

Scholarships and Awards

2023
SPECTRUM-Award, international Prize for Photography from the Lower Saxony Foundation

2013
Casa Baldi stipend of the Germany Academy/Villa Massimo, Rome, IT

2007
Working stipend by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Berlin, DE

2006
Project stipend with Heike Geissler, Künstlerhaus Lukas, Ahrenshoop, DE

2004
Scholarship Künstlerhaus Schloss Wiepersdorf, DE