

FRANKFURTER  
KUNSTVEREIN

**EVA & FRANCO MATTES**



**14.07\_10.09.2023**

**FAKE VIEWS**

## PRESS RELEASE

### Fake Views – Eva & Franco Mattes

14.07.2023 – 10.09.2023

Special Guests: Nora Al-Badri, Simon Denny, Do Not Research, Olia Lialina, Jill Magid and Jon Rafman

Press Tour: Thursday, July 13, 2023, at 11 am

Opening: Thursday, July 13, 2023, at 7 pm

The Frankfurter Kunstverein is pleased to present the largest solo exhibition to date of media artists Eva & Franco Mattes, titled *Fake Views*. Using the pseudonym 0100101110101101.org, they have become international pioneers of the net art movement. Since the 1990s they have been exploring the phenomena generated by the internet. The artist duo is known for their ironic appropriation of internet structures and critical examination of the social and political impact of internet culture on our society.

#### The *Fake Views* Exhibition

The title to the exhibition, *Fake Views*, addresses a range of issues. On the one hand, it refers to the phenomenon of fake news: manipulated news that is difficult to control on social networks and often serves commercial and ideological interests. On the other hand, the title *Fake Views* represents a digital practice: manipulated click counts for videos and images that are purchased from dubious providers to increase views and create the impression of public support. These artificially generated views help influencers, companies, conspiracy theorists, and politicians gain greater reach and attention.

The use of fake social media accounts and communications bots as well as deception through manipulated images, fabricated sources and clickbait journalism are widespread methods of organised propaganda and disinformation politics. They are professionally designed and serve existing prejudices, so-called cognitive biases. Through constructed narratives, they steer and distort public opinion.

Eva & Franco Mattes' works employ the means and strategies of a contested attention economy that shape the global public sphere. The artist duo focuses on exposing and rendering visible

data both manipulated and manipulative, as well as the often-invisible digital processes behind them. The artists' themes encompass various areas such as consumption of resources for processing data, unregulated working conditions on the internet, and the construction of absurd identities in social media.

Their conceptual approach acts like a contrast agent applied to internet cultures: it enables them to illuminate the internet and its invisible infrastructure, both technical and human, from within.

### **Exhibition Tour**

The exhibition functions as a cohesive organism in which interconnected parts form a whole network, while each artwork examines a significant aspect of global online culture.

The walk-through begins with the spectacular sculpture *Personal Photographs*. Metal cable ducts and strands create a three-dimensional structure that visualises the ambivalent relationship between private and public data. Hardware and functional infrastructure are deliberately turned outwards here as an artistic act. In this way, they serve both as a design element and an artwork.

Presented next are Eva & Franco Mattes' works *BEFNOED* and *The Bots*. Both video installations confront the exploitative working conditions of online workers, the so-called "cybertariat" (i.e. cyber-proletariat). An increasing number of people working in poor conditions for digital platforms have become an indispensable part of the gig economy that has emerged in recent years. The work *BEFNOED* renders visible workers otherwise anonymous and unseen. Commissioned by the artists as service providers, they perform meaningless, humorous, and even poetic actions in front of the camera.

In the six-part work *The Bots*, witness testimonies from content moderators are presented disguised as make-up tutorials. These moderators are responsible for manually deleting streams of violent, pornographic, and controversial images from social media platforms, exposing themselves to this strain without protection. The evidence is derived from investigative research conducted with witnesses who were interviewed about their work at the Facebook moderation centre in Berlin. The testimonies were interpreted by actors to ensure the witnesses' anonymity.

During the research for *The Bots*, Eva & Franco Mattes gained access to confidential guideline catalogues that serve as evaluation standards for content moderators. These previously undisclosed rules were revealed by the artists in the wall works titled *Abuse Standards Violations*.

As a world premiere, Eva & Franco Mattes present their new video, *Up Next*, which deals with the fate of the Iranian teenager who has become famous on Instagram as Sahar Tabar. The work, a silent video montage of images and press clips, shockingly illustrates how playing with one's own identity online can take on a life of its own and escalate into a highly manipulative media spectacle.

At the end of the exhibition journey, the new work *P2P* is featured. On show is a computer enclosed in a wire cage. On this powerful server can be found the works of **Nora Al-Badri, Simon Denny, Do Not Research, Olya Lialina, Jill Magid, and Jon Rafman**—artists and collectives that are part of Eva & Franco Mattes' network. They were openly invited to create new works for the exhibition at the Frankfurter Kunstverein. The result is an 'exhibition within the exhibition', taking place exclusively within the peer-to-peer server operated by the artists. This makes use of the connectivity and infrastructure of the museum to enable works to be shared. The exhibition celebrates the peer communities created by Eva & Franco Mattes.

Curated by Franziska Nori, the *Fake Views* exhibition is part of a series of exhibitions at the Frankfurter Kunstverein that critically engage with themes of the digital society and democracy. As home to the world's largest internet exchange point, DE-CIX, Frankfurt attracts an increasing number of international data centres to the city. The user data circulating within these centres is managed by private companies and operated in inaccessible high-security buildings, far from public access. Data has meanwhile become the most valuable resource of our time. In terms of data sovereignty, Frankfurt has the opportunity to take a leading role politically. As the example of Barcelona has demonstrated, it is possible to demand democratic control over the collection, storage, use, and processing of data generated by citizens.

The internet is not an abstract space but rather exists concretely as software written by people and as hardware that transforms our cities. Eva & Franco Mattes utilise this materiality for their artworks and shed light on resulting abstract economic, social, and political phenomena.

The Frankfurter Kunstverein cordially invites you to the *Fake Views* exhibition, taking place from July 14, 2023, to September 10, 2023.

The exhibition opening will be held on Thursday, July 13, 2023, at 7 pm. Prior to that, a press tour will take place on the same day at 11 am.

We look forward to your attendance and kindly request that you register beforehand by emailing [presse@fkv.de](mailto:presse@fkv.de). For further information, please visit our website at [www.fkv.de/presse](http://www.fkv.de/presse).

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