

## ART AND TECHNOLOGY

### Addie Wagenknecht: Painting drones and abstract Dickpics

With the US artist Addie Wagenknecht, who lives in Tyrol, the boundaries between virtual and analogue art have long been removed. A portrait

**PORTRAIT** Ivona Jelčić May 14, 2021, 12:00 6 posts



Was last seen in Decentraland: digital painting from the series "Sext".

Gallery King



When Addie Wagenknecht dabs concealer on the shadows around her eyes or puts on a cleansing face mask, it's not about good looks, but good password management. Spoiler: "fluffy1985" is not the solution. But Skincare and Opsec Forever does. This is the name of the YouTube lessons on computer security that Wagenknecht produces in the style of beauty tutorials. Since these are mainly consumed by women, the target group is also defined: women are more often affected by cyberstalking or online bashing, says the artist, whose tips for data encryption and against trolls are as useful as they are humorous.

At Deep Lab, a feminist hacker collective founded by Wagenknecht, which insists on more diversity in the male-dominated tech scene, is about digital female self-assertion for advanced

users. Open source technologies, robotics and surveillance systems are topics that Wagenknecht deals with both as a researcher and as an artist.

## **On- and offline**

The fact that the drones she has reprogrammed into action painters sometimes also fly through an old wooden barn is due to the fact that the American, born in 1981, who is regularly represented with her work in international exhibitions, moved to New York more than ten years ago Tyrol where she lives with her family in the countryside.

The virtual world is her second home, although she has little to do with such distinctions. The boundaries have long been blurred, and in everyday life we are constantly switching from online to offline, she says. In art, for Wagenknecht there is "no difference between digital and analog work. The question is rather which medium is the right one for which content."

In the case of the series *Sext*, it is pixels: Wagenknecht translates so-called dick pics, i.e. penis pictures that were sent to her, into abstract digital paintings. Works from the series were recently shown in the exhibition *The Artist Is Online*, for which the German gallery owner Johann König set up a branch on the Decentraland platform and jumped on the NFT bandwagon.

Wagenknecht observes with the serenity of a blockchain veteran that the traditional art world is also hectically rushing to the topic of crypto art. "NFTs have been around for a few years, blockchains for a decade, and I've been dealing with both for a long time. Now the basic understanding and interest in the subject is increasing, but we are only at the very beginning of a development that will change the art world permanently." she thinks.

The pandemic, which has paralyzed the traditional art business, museums, galleries and exhibition halls and made travel impossible, has made it clear "that other models and economic cycles are also needed". Blockchain, says Wagenknecht, "helps artists to become more independent, they no longer need a gallery as a representative, but take control of how they present their work and how they sell it".

## **Convinced hacktivist**

The current hype about NFTs was of course triggered by one of those million dollar deals that are the measure of all things on the classic art market: It involves the sale of an NFT work of art by the American artist Beeple for the equivalent of 69 million dollars in March. For Wagenknecht, it is not the record price that is interesting, but rather the question of where the new world of crypto art will develop.

The committed hacktivist believes that the researchers, developers and artists involved have that in their hands. "Sure: There are people who make big money in art and there are people who make big money in technology. And there will also be people who will capitalize on art and technology. But these systems are being set up, are just being developed, and the task now is to find ways and means to positively change and adapt them. "

## **Pistol as a flower vase**

When it comes to their own art, new technologies play an important role both as a working material and as a theme. It is also about how society deals with such technologies. For example, when Wagenknecht deforms the first 3D-modeled handgun, which was programmed as open source code and whose instructions are available online for free download, into innocent flower vases. (Ivona Jelčić, May 14, 2021)