

bitforms gallery

Alchemical

Casey Reas and Jan St. Werner

January 8–February 14, 2021

Gallery Hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 11 AM–6 PM

Online exhibition: newart.city/show/alchemical

bitforms gallery is pleased to introduce *Alchemical*, a collaborative exhibition by Casey Reas and Jan St. Werner. *Alchemical* presents the artists' suite of videos alongside a selection of prints by Casey Reas. The online component of this exhibition is presented in collaboration with New Art City.

Untitled Film Stills are a series of prints that trace Reas' exploration of generative adversarial networks (GAN) as image-making instruments. This empirical procedure more closely resembles alchemy than the artist's usual practice of software art. Reas and technical lead Hye Min Cho trained GANs with specific films selected for their visual and emotional environments. The artist extracted impressions from consequent material, thereby positioning GANs as an apparatus of his visual language. *Untitled Film Stills* are selections from the unique and labored procedure of modeling, generating, and editing.

As the *Untitled Film Stills* evolved over a year of production, Reas began animating images that formed the video series *Untitled 1–5*. This cyclical procedure required GAN models to be repeatedly trained to produce a range of images the artist could choreograph with cinematic transitions. Works within this series signal toward subject matter through titles such as *Untitled 4 (Two Dead!)* or *Untitled 1 (No. Nothing.)*. Reas' directed movement is instilled with uncanny gestures made manifest through the sentient electroacoustic sounds of Jan St. Werner.

Werner's compositions augment the transmutation of imagery in and out of recognition by adapting computer-generated sounds with granular synthesis, a technique that transforms acoustic events into microscopic grains to be arranged and modulated freely. This process allows certain auditory signals to be obscured while others may manifest suddenly. The final culmination of visuals and sound mimics a discernible lexicon of film while establishing a new, multi-sensory expression of cinema.

Alchemical delights in the curious combination of machine and human perception. The works synthesize image comprehension through an incantation of sound and motion. Werner and Reas employ a critical process of mediation in relation to machine learning that honors the processes of transformation and combination over generative output.

Thank you to Meyer Sound and Sound Associates for their generous contributions that make it possible to provide a spatial audio experience of Jan St. Werner's compositions in the exhibition space.

Casey Reas' work includes software, prints, and installations, and he balances solo work in the studio with varied collaborations. He has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions at museums and galleries in the United States, Europe, and Asia, and his work is in a range of private and public collections, including the Centre Georges Pompidou, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Reas is a professor at the University of California, Los Angeles. In 2001, he and Ben Fry initiated Processing, an open-source programming language and environment for the visual arts.

Jan St. Werner is a Berlin-based artist and composer best known as one half of the electronic duo Mouse on Mars. As part of Cologne's A-Musik collective, St. Werner released recordings both as a solo artist and with collaborators, including Markus Popp and Rosa Barba. He released *Blaze Colour Burn* for the Fiepblatter Catalogue on Chicago's Thrill Jockey Records. He was artistic director for Dutch Institute for Electronic Music STEIM. He is now a professor for Interactive Art and Dynamic Acoustic Research at the Academy of Fine Arts Nuremberg.

Founded in 2001, bitforms gallery represents established, mid-career, and emerging artists critically engaged with new technologies. Spanning the rich history of media art through its current developments, the gallery's program offers an incisive perspective on the fields of digital, internet, time-based, and new media art forms. For press inquiries, please contact info@bitforms.art or call (212) 366-6939.