

# *katrin korfmann*

---

## **At a Future Time**

Nicole Loeser

“The duration of an event conceals a duration of history from which the event has arisen.”  
*Gunnar Schmidt 2003*

With a concentrated instantaneousness, her distant gaze upon a public place joins with the eye of the viewer, privately reflecting upon his or her own ideas and memories.

Katrin Korfmann’s attention focuses on the seemingly ordinary. Her decidedly neutral point of view suggests a high degree of objectivity and at the same time leads toward a fictive world. Observing situations of everyday life through a video or still-camera, Korfmann adjoins complete frames as if they were fragments, assembling them to comprise one completed image, often presented in a light-box. And through this experimental process, she casts off her sources’ original contexts and associations to build an illusion of movement and expanded setting. Based on a concept of photography, her works are comparable to a moment of *déjà vu*. In her creative discourse she deals with the issues of posing versus acting, observing versus being the object of another’s attention. In so doing, she frequently captures seemingly incongruous situations within her images, where lack of control leads to surprise. Indeed, she chooses her concept—but not the actual protagonists of her works.

Since 2000, Korfmann has made installations for public spaces in the form of monochrome color planes (White Wall 2000, Amsterdam/Netherlands; Pink Wall 2002, Turin/Italy; Blue Octagon 2004, San Sebastian/Spain). While the unique physical makeup, subjective color and varied background surface of each location result in a unique ambience, the true environment of any given location remains invisible. Knowledge and context disappear, and only the experience of time in a fabricated space remains. For her work, it doesn’t matter if the environment is explored consciously or unconsciously. The relationship between space and surface, and between event and representation, are creatively questioned.

The use of cameras encourages the notion that Korfmann’s interventions in public places be viewed in the context of a theater stage. By the time passengers have entered her installations they are already part of the performance. Korfmann additionally

manipulates the observable experience through the terms of aperture and setting. In some works she offers full and complete access into her installations (Public Cube Schiphol 2003), while in other cases, she limits viewers to a peep-hole vantage point (White Wall 2000). But the observer nearly always serves in some capacity as her work's subject. Whether positioned outside or within the frame, the viewer becomes indispensable for the successful operation of the show. The interaction of elements from architecture and staging, in combination with the spontaneous participation of passers-by, represents the symbolic result that Korfmann seeks to document.

The artist's earlier works re-produced environments already known for their dramatic nature. Locations with an air of social importance such as sport arenas or public monuments attracted the artist because of their intrinsic dynamism (Timed, different light boxes, 2001-2008). First by means of a traditional camera and then digital reassembly, the sequence of an event is structured in linear terms, (Blue 02 almost 1 minute, 2007; Grey, 10 min 50 sec, 2007). Korfmann employs a grid as a stylistic element within her composition. The large works produced in such a fashion are presented in light boxes, making reference to film projections.

Korfmann is likewise compelled by spaces involving transit, including rail stations and airports, but also escalators and elevators. Such locales can be experienced in different ways, and in each case they reveal moments of intimacy that the artist seems to be looking for.

While Korfmann's initial photographs investigate events within the public sphere, her works that follow instead explore situations of time and space. Apart from architecture, the chronology of an event becomes an important issue. In her photographic work there is never a focus on the moment but instead on a certain plurality and the possible meeting of several people in one place. Other photos suggest an inversion of this principle, where the artist once more returns to the instantaneousness of an accidental situation.

Initially, Korfmann composed pictures with little photographic intervention to a great compositional effect. Now her images offer a similar visual impact, yet they are conversely developed from dozens of individual details spliced together. To aid in this process, the artist uses digital image processing and intervenes directly in the picture. In these works Korfmann systematically alters the perspective, shifting the view from frontal to aerial vantage points. The effect is both temporal and spatial, and through her images, viewers have the opportunity to witness contrasting notions of both brevity and duration. Works like *Waiting for Julia* (3 x 10 min), 2008 or *Waiting for Atousa* (1h) 2009 refer to a time-span that questions the idea of a singular moment. Time freezes, as it were, and so the "genuineness" of the moment will never be truly valid. This idea is nowhere more evident than when the artist photographs guests from above, as they move into her field of view—in twos and threes—on the red carpet below. Figures accrue within the frame of the lens with consecutive exposures and are ultimately spliced together, though side-by-side instead of atop one other. It is here that we also see Korfmann navigating a well-conceived choreography and imagining the dramatic effect.

The work titled, *Fast Forward, Checkpoint Charlie* (1,8h), 2009 likewise produces a sense of artifice as the artist manipulates composition still more playfully. Each local area of the image is clearly recognizable and so seems logical in and of itself. But here Korfmann varies exposure time in addition to vantage point, warping perceptions of movement and inactivity. Sequentially stitching together these numerous and inconsistent representations, Korfmann induces the magic moment, so to speak, merging the various lapses of time into one instant. The viewer observes a passing motorcycle in full focus next to pedestrians blurred, and thereby becomes the subject of Korfmann's deception. And the surer one is in recognizing the image, the more successful the artist's pictorial deception.

Katrin Korfmann's pictures are fascinating not only for their compelling aesthetics and composition, but also for an illusory simultaneity and spatial distortion that makes up these seemingly complex worlds.

Translation: Greg Murr

2009