

# Wall Street International



## Warren Neidich

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Warren Neidich, installation view. Courtesy of Priska Pasquer

*Artistic interventions create new connections in the world as well as in the neural plastic brain.  
This is the power of Art.*

*(Warren Neidich)*

Digital connectivity has combined with social media to shape our everyday lives; they have also led to fundamental changes in the creative fields of art, aesthetics, and perception.

In his artistic practice, Warren Neidich (\*1958, New York), author, art theoretician, and interdisciplinary post-conceptual artist, concerns himself with the ways in which these conditions have altered our habits of perception and conception. His exhibition *Neuromacht: Noise and the Possibility of a Future* at Priska Pasquer in Cologne, Germany, presents installations, sculptures and performance including various media like neon, photography, video, noise, and painting. He combines his studies in art, neuroscience, medicine, and architecture to question technology's role in "sculpting the brain" as a force with the potential for repression as well as emancipation.

*Pizzagate* (2017) is a large-scale neon sculpture shaped like the iCloud logo and diagrammatically configured as a network. *Pizzagate* has been created to address the events relating to the conspiracy theory of the same name and its consequences during the 2016 American presidential election campaign. The "fake news" that was deliberately spread about an alleged child pornography ring located in a Washington D.C. pizzeria apparently frequented by Hillary Clinton and members of her inner circle not only shows the manipulability of online audiences and the potential for distorted information being taken for facts, but, also, how false perceptions and memories (pseudo-threats) can form in the human brain despite no threat existing in reality, as fake news is engineered to be more phatic and attention-engaging than "real news". Neidich's works pose the following question, "Might the added interest such conspiracy theories manifested as fake news produces, for instance, in the rate of clicks (click-bait), have material consequences for the physical brain?"

*The Infinite Replay of One's Own Self Destruction, #1 and #2* (2014) consist of broken speakers that emit a cacophony of noise. The two noise installations reconfigure institutional designed space according to a new compositional platform built from the process of destruction and displays the effects of the disruption of normally organized sensibility. Neidich creates a dialectical tension between the conditions of an algorithmically-induced technological subsumption in which future chance and risk have been decreased, and a cultural environment of disordered and estranged noisy sensations where the possibility of renewed perceptions are revealed. This work reaches back on one hand to the ideas of chaos and disharmony of the German romantic philosophers like Novalis and Schlegel and on the other to the auto-destructive art of Gustav Metzger.

In his improvisational performative work *Scoring the Tweet(s)* (2017), he uses a cut and paste method first devised in Surrealism and later in the works of William Burroughs, to alter and rearrange the one hundred and ninety-five tweets of Donald Trump that mention fake news to create a graphic score. This score will be installed for its performance at PRISKAPASQUER in the evening of May 12, 2018.

In *Double Vision - Louse Point* (1997-2000), a series of photographs were made with apparatuses of neuro-ophthalmology that are used in the assessment of squint, which are then superimposed over the photographic camera lens producing what Neidich calls a "hybrid dialectic" in which two parallel historical, material trajectories are intertwined on the surface of the resulting colour photographs. Optical flares bounce off their shared space creating a kind of visual noise. Taking scientific findings about the sense of sight into account, Neidich establishes links to artistic topics by emphasizing the line of the horizon, or locating the shots at a famous meeting point for abstract expressionist artists in East Hampton.



Works of art history also become reference points in the *Wrong Rainbow Paintings* (2012-14), which are based on historic landscape paintings such as those in which the artist purposefully misrepresents the colours of the rainbow. Optical phenomena like light and colour provide a starting point, but are subordinated to the artist's vision, which produces an alternative system of relations than does the scientific method.

*Double Sausage Tango* (2018) is based on an artificial neural network that causes a switch from a blue flaccid sausage to an erect red one. The two sausages are connected by hidden intermediate links, which are formed from found neon. Hidden links in artificial neural networks is where the hidden processing occurs. These pieces of found neon were not designed for this purpose. Rather they become a solution first through the process of trial and error as the artist assembles the sculpture and later when the viewer attempts to make sense of it through metaphor and narrative. In its presentation the artwork is built out of found objects and chance encounters and concerns the construction of an artificial intelligence based on the concept of a *Homo poeticus* rather than a *Homo symbolicus*.

Warren Neidich's investigations are largely "neuroaesthetic", a term he coined in 1995, for his early lectures at the School of Visual Arts, New York, and which he used often in his *Journal of Neuroaesthetics*. Neuroaesthetics is a field of artistic research, in which sensation, perception, and cognition are explored using the techniques, critiques, apparatuses, methods, and histories of artistic production. Neuroaesthetics deterritorialises cognitive neuroscience, unmasking its uncertainties as a means for opening it up to new truths, as well as presenting the brain as a "becoming brain" open to change. It assumes that the architecture of the brain is subject to adjustments and changes, with some first occurring in the environment and surroundings that art practices create, and which then restructure the brain. This, then, is the power of art. Neuroaesthetics celebrates the brain's plasticity, and the power of culture to modify it. His latest publication, *Neuromacht* (published by Merve, Berlin, 2017), provides the title and the basis for this exhibition as he negotiates this concept suggesting that art has neuromodulatory power, and the emancipatory capacity to present a counter-model to global capitalism. We have become acutely aware, through the recent news about artificial intelligence (AI), artificial neural networks, machine-to-machine learning, and brain-computer interfaces, that capitalism is becoming more and more entangled with cognitive neuroscience.



1. Warren Neidich, installation view. Courtesy of Priska Pasquer
2. Warren Neidich, installation view. Courtesy of Priska Pasquer
3. Warren Neidich, installation view. Courtesy of Priska Pasquer