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ART FID [F]originals – Authenticity as consensual hallucination

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RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) tags are part of a technological system that in the very near future will replace the barcode system and will play an enormous role in logistics, theft prevention and surveillance of individuals. In Germany, this technology is being developed by various companies and research institutes in Dortmund.

RFID tags are passive radio transmitters, which upon receiving a minor wireless energy impulse are sending back the information stored on their chip. Today, this information can be read already at a distance of several hundred meters – without the process getting noticed. In addition, with its unique identification numbering system, this technology will allow for a precise identification of every object on a global scale. Both of these elements – unnoticed reading and the unique identification potential – significantly distinguish this technology from existing barcode systems.

RFID currently is considered to be „the solution to all problems of logistics“. By assigning individual identification numbers to every object RFID allows for a perfect tracking of goods production and distribution chains – and thus for completely new dimensions of data mining. If one considers the potential use of RFID technology on and in humans – e.g. in passports or health insurance cards equipped with RFID chips on which are stored biometrical data, or RFID tags of such kind implanted under the skin – then new forms of ubiquitous control become imaginable.

ART FID

In the installation conceived especially for the PHOENIX Halle, UBERMORGEN.COM deals with RFID technology and scrutinizes the promises of the „beautiful new world“ of logistics. How authentic or true is the information saved on RFID tags? How can one distinguish an original from a fake?

The central element of the installation is the stylized *ART FID Pixel Conveyor Belt* (ART FID stands for Art Frequency Identification) – an interactive sculpture. The pixels (10 x 10 x 10 cm) on the conveyor belt – which are equipped with real RFID tags – can be manipulated by the users and assembled into various pictures in different resolutions. Besides the big wall painting right from the entrance, there are six large-

format abstract digital prints on canvas, the so-called *ART FID Paintings*. The *[F]original ART FID Seal* is positioned centrally on the front wall and resembles a pseudo-state coat of arms (210 x 210 cm). It symbolizes a new power. The *ART FID Paintings* (100 x 100 cm) show five different motives: RFID tags in a human hand, in cows, satellites and other objects.

[F]originals

UBERMORGEN.COM has coined the term „[F]originals“. „[F]originals“ designate any „original“ documents or legal papers that in the narrow sense of the word are not originals any more, i.e. such documents which have been created „by the machine“ (in German: „maschinell erstellt“) and which are „valid without signature“. „[F]original“ is a neologism from „to forge“ and „original“. In the end, according to UBERMORGEN.COM, such „[f]original“ documents are nothing more than Pixels on a screen and ink on paper. [F]originals claim authenticity but at closer inspection turn out to be nothing more than a „consensual hallucination“ (William Gibson).

The presentation at PHOENIX Halle Dortmund is the first solo show of the Swiss-Austrian artists' duo in Germany. In the mid-1990s, the members of UBERMORGEN.COM were co-founders of the radical Swiss net art group etoy which became famous in 1999/2000 for its spectacular action toywar.com.

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