



Opening February 27 from 7 pm

# Nik Nowak Torque

Until April 11, 2015  
Wed-Sat 12-6 pm

**Cruise&Callas**

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# Torque: The Moment of Turning

In his first exhibition at Cruise & Callas, Nik Nowak positions the viewer within the reverberating aftermath of 'the event': the intensive forces or traumatic instants that have functioned as transformational pivot points—a *turning moment*—across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Renowned for his large-scale mobile sound sculptures (e.g. *Panzer*, 2011) and sonic installations (e.g. *Echo*, 2014), the series of works that comprise **Torque: The Moment of Turning** form a palpable continuum with his sound practice yet mark a more intimate interrogation of recurrent themes no less visually and affectively arresting.

As part of a generation of post-Cold War German artists, Nowak directly confronts the physical vestiges of this history and the wider hauntology of a vertiginous and non-representable past that continues to act—coexistent and insistent with the present and the future—without itself physically existing; having no being in itself but “mark[ing] a relation to what is *no longer* or *not yet*” (Hägglund, 2008:82). Simultaneously engendering ontological questions whilst unyoking the viewer from the artifice of a linear temporal progression in favour of achronological durations, layered temporalities and the virtual, **Torque** ‘epidermalizes’ history and memory.

Varied surfaces, of folded interiority-exteriority, are subjected to the *turning moment* of ‘violence’, generated by the vehicular metal caterpillar tracks of *Panzer* (2011). Creating dynamic vortical whorls and welts, that appear to capture the sensation of intermovemental states, trauma is registered in the form of abrasions, inscriptions, scars in an attempt to represent the unrepresentable. Nowak’s *Panzer Dubplate* series (2012-2015) explore the relationscape of the topographical, the corporeal and psychical, attesting to a highly communicable architecture of trauma literally folded in the landscape, the nation, the body, the Unconscious. His intensive process of meticulously layering, dubbing and palimpsest-versioning of history in his collages, and then rupturing, scarring, gouging, and ‘exfoliating’ these layered skins to reveal the vestiges of former presences and emergent future-histories, encapsulates the twinned problematic of remembering (uncovering, marking, presence) and forgetting (silence, deletion, absence).

The diptych *Sphärenkrieg* (1942/2013) and *Lili Marleen* (2013), first unhinges us from our present to insert us into the stark monochromatic reality of the aftermath of war. Stretching to the horizon we are confronted with a spectral scene of a scarred, terrorised topography, the gas masks, boots and other military clothing left behind raising disconcerting questions of obvious absence and ‘what happened here?’ We cannot know how long after ‘the event’ or with what intention this photograph was taken, yet out of this ruination of the future, Nowak abstracts and transforms the detritus of this past into an imaginary landscape of (melancholic) oceanic longing—for intimacy, for normality—the mythopoesis of the war-time song *Lili Marleen* unfurling watery tendrils to ‘transport the souls of the dead’.



DELETHE Visitenkarte, 2014  
paper with QR code and steel abrasion  
5,5 x 8,5 cm



Dubplate 2 (reworked), 2014  
lacquer on MDF  
200 x 200 cm

Through the series *DELETHE Visitenkarten* (2014) Nowak turns around this moment of conveyance in death, our own self-haunting and ontological categorisation in the age of an acented, non-hierarchical Internet and the endless virtual trace. In the iteration here of the on-going *DELETHE* project (2012 - ), QR cards are marked with what appears as pencil-like inscriptions: meshwork of arterial lines and dynamical rotations in varying states of perceptibility. But look closer. Created from the data footprint of unwitting viewers to Nowak’s quasi-anechoic installation at *Echo* (Berlinische Galerie, 2014), the surface-skin of the cards inadvertently served as intermediary carriers of information—‘dataveillance’—between the gridded metal floor and the footfall of the viewer, capturing that to which we give little thought: the traces of ourselves we leave behind. Abstracting the phenomenon, Nowak alludes to how freely, widely and unquestioningly we disseminate our personal data in a ‘society of control’ (Deleuze, 1992); how deeply imbricated we are across a web of networked databases exploitable by third parties (as Nowak himself demonstrates here) employing them pre-emptively to engineer our desires in anticipation of marketing them back to us; or, equally sinisterly, to extend our being virtually as the logical hyper-capitalist endpoint of Nikolai Gogol’s *Dead Souls* (1842). The *DELETHE Visitenkarten* problematize the need for a new conception of ontology in the virtual age where there is, no longer, any conception of there being a *no longer*: how to delete a lifetime of data-footprint to stymy the proliferation of our identity once we are physically dead. Yet, can there be a concept of death, finitude, if—in the virtual—we do not cease to exist?

Jessica E. Edwards  
(London, February 2015)



Volumenberechnung, 2012  
digital print  
46 x 34,5 cm

Title:  
Dubplate 8 (Torque), 2015  
lacquer on aluminium  
85 x 85 cm