

Immersive Images.

About the Partition and the Participation of Cutouts

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Reflecting on immersion means discussing a threshold that is being crossed. Usually, immersion describes a step of the viewer into the image, i. e. the passage from the real space of the viewer into the image space. A decisive shift would be the traditional demand for emersion, as the old Pachero put it: “The image should stand out from the frame” (Foucault 1966: 9). More precisely, that frame seems to cast the border between real space and image space in material and, whether slenderly or exuberantly, to repel a connection between the two. Hence, on the one hand, there is the traditional desire to negate that frame and, on the other hand, there is the insistence on maintaining a separation. In the wake of reactivating virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), the concept of immersion is once again becoming popular (Grau 2001). For a differentiated approach on immersion, we have to distinguish between a mental step and a physical step into the image. In current discussions, the active part of the viewer in the act of immersion is emphasized (Grabbe, Rupert-Kruse, Schmitz 2018). For the mental step on the one hand, immersion into the image means that the viewer feels particularly attracted by the presence of an image. However, this merely concerns an effect, so that the frame of the image, as well as everything around it, is blanked out. With that in mind, we could say: Every image, even those with frames, are capable of provoking an immersion. For the physical step on the other hand, immersion is a matter of aligning the perception of an image object to the perception of a real object. This rather technically caused immersion into the image comes to an extreme through a complete imprisonment of the gaze. In this case, it is impossible to see the frame, even if one turns the head back and forth or one moves physically (Wiesing 2006: 183). Classic examples for this scenario are the panorama, the stereoscope, the CAVE or VR. Immersion is thus placed between the blanked frame and the fact of not being able to see it. The latter may serve as a sensitive difference between VR and AR: In VR, the frame does not come into view because the image is *allover*, but in AR, the frame is masked. In other words, the image object is blended realistically into the environment so that the image border is far too thin and permeable to be easily detected.

Although the term of immersive images is used for all of the examples above, in the literal sense it only applies to images that immerse into the something, e.g. the real environment. AR does not create a complete illusionary space in which the viewers find themselves after putting on the glasses, instead it fixes digital images, texts and pieces of information within real space. AR is therefore less about the immersion of the viewers into the image than it is about immersive images. In art history, the typical immersive image is called *trompe-l'œil* (Günzel 2012: 48). If their immersion is successful, *trompe-l'œils* are not recognisable as paintings,

they rather appear as part of the everyday environment. It is important to note at the outset, that in many exhibitions and reproductive representations of *trompe-l'œils*, pictures are ripped out of their constitutive context, thereby making this effect hard to see. When we talk about this immersive image, we are dealing with images that dive into the infinite depths of our reality. Paintings traditionally create a world of their own, however, the programme of immersive images seeks to blend one world with another. Therefore, immersion in relation to images is constantly under suspicion of abolishing the iconic difference (Boehm 2005: 210), which in conclusion implies a crisis of the image (Wiener 2010: 244). Without a difference there is no altered experience, no discretion and, in the extreme, no image. Algirdas-Julien Greimas (1984: 638) already cut to the heart of this challenge: “This object will remain insufficiently defined, even in terms of its material manifestation, as long as it is not closed in on, delimited, and separated from that which it is not. This is the old problem of framework-format, or in the terms of semiology, the closure of the object”. When it comes to immersive images, their preliminary description demands a more precise specification of the relationship between image and context. In order to investigate this relationship, a subcategory of *trompe-l'œils* will be analysed here: the *cutout*. Simply put, it is a procedure in which the image frame has been cut off. A terminology that is often heard in connection with the frameless images of AR. Since a border is at stake with immersive images, it is worth to consider various framing concepts, which will be introduced in the first section of this article. As we can say in advance, with the immersive images only a rigid and well-established frame concept has been replaced, not the entire difference. By means of art historical alternatives, it shall be shown that the intersection of different frame concepts allows a more adequate description and reception of immersive images. In the second part, a comparison of cutouts from the contemporary art and AR scene will be made in order to pursue what kind of relationship the viewers have to these images and what further shifts are taking place due to the newer technology. When immersive images enter reality, this does not only change the viewer's relationship to these images, but also their relationship to reality. In short, the following is about the impact of immersive images on our reality.

1. *Cutouts between a “contemplative area” and a “fragment of the infinite”*

The term frame has a twofold meaning: it refers to that part which encloses the picture inwardly and, at the same time, to the framing context, i.e. what surrounds the picture externally. In their traditional function, frames operate at this border between the inside and the outside, whether they are architectural frames, cartouches, plinths or ordinary wooden and metal frames (Körner & Möseneder 2010). At this border between the inside and the outside, frames can perform various functions, a diversity which is often suppressed by the dominant rectangular frame that isolates the image as such from its surroundings. In his fundamental text on the non-mimetic parts of the image, that is, mainly the image vehicle and the frame, Meyer Schapiro (1972) has listed various alternatives of framing. Looking at these alternative concepts, the affiliation of the frame oscillates between the space of the image and the space of the viewer. Thereby, he emphasises the conventional status of the rectangular frame, which is located in the space of the

viewer and encloses a field that contains the space of the image. Hence, in reference to Alberti's all-too-prominent window metaphor, Anne Friedberg (2006: 35) draws attention to the fact that what is meant by the open window is not so much about what can be seen through the window, but about the opening of the rectangular frame itself: "In sum, Alberti's metaphoric 'window' was a framing device for the geometries of his perspective formula". One consequence of it is as follows: a "window on the world" is not necessarily meant, rather a frame enclosing a world.

In alternative concepts the frame moves step by step into the space of the image. As a first step, the technique of cutting, Schapiro refers to, could be mentioned. In this technique, figures are only partially visible in the foreground, as if one were only half-seeing someone through a door or behind a counter. The rectangular frame or format occupies a double function in this case: it is a border and a line, that is, a compositional element and therefore part of the image space. Victor I. Stoichita (1993: 24) also addresses this cut to differentiate between Alberti's window and Bamboccio's window. The latter is characterised by proximity rather than distance. It seems like a cut-out fragment of reality. Precisely because the border coincides with a line in the image. In the following, the suspicion is pivotal that the framing concept of immersive images is to be located between the classical frame of painting and a fragment of reality. The latter is usually associated with photography. This medium transition is necessary in order to be able to examine more precisely what is negotiated as a fragment of reality.

Philip Dubois' (1983: 174) descriptions are particularly useful for this investigation: firstly, because he defines photography as a double (temporal and spatial) cut and secondly, in contrast to the frame of painting. With reference to André Bazin he defines the frame as follows: Since the canvas is filled as a limited format from the beginning, there is no opening to the outside. The format is a limited field, which is filled up with content. Therefore, the frame enables us to experience the world of the painting as limited, the orientation within the frame is according to Bazin *centripetal*, which means that it is directed inwards towards the microcosm of the painting. A painting presents a whole and self-contained space that is adapted to the format of the canvas from the very beginning. In contrast, photography acts by cutting its space out of the infinite continuum of the real world, a *coupe spatiale* (Ivi 1983: 175). The cut of the photograph separates a zone of the real, a "fragment of the infinite" and excludes the associated surroundings. The excluded surroundings (the off), however, always remain connected to the section, even if they are no longer visible. What has been sliced off is forever banished from visibility, while what is in the image space is locked into it.

The comparison shows that the question of the frame concerns the orientation between the space of the viewer and the space of the image. Therefore, the centripetal orientation ensures the enclosure of the image world. The section, in turn, maintains the centripetal orientation, but at the same time it is surrounded by a centrifugal force. Subsequently, the relationship to the original context is never abandoned completely. The cutout¹ as a procedure is originally a particular type of painting in which a distinct space is filled. With photography however it has in common that it is a fragment from a larger context. Every cut has two sides, one that is cut away and one that is cut out. The cut, and this is the hypothesis, separates as much as it connects. This double function is to be deepened in the following as the complex of partition and participation. In contrast to photogra-

phy, the cutout is placed back into a context for its exhibition. In the next part the consequences of the intertwining of section and frame will be examined. Consequently, the investigation will focus on both the enclosing and permeability of the framing in cutouts.

1.1 *Cutouts as reciprocal communication between image and context*

The *trompe-l'œil* generally questions the frame in a very concrete way, since it aims to unsettle the border between image and reality. For this purpose, the *trompe-l'œil* is used to develop various concepts and procedures that counteract the border status of the frame. In some cases, the surrounding environment of the image is continued beyond the frame into the image (which makes the *trompe-l'œil* a highly site specific image). In others, a frame is painted onto the image in order to shift the border only minimally but very effectively, and in some cases the frame is being cut out (Fig. 1). In his very well-known study on meta-painting, Stoichita (1993: 42) describes the still life and, in the extreme, the *trompe-l'œil* as a border that has become the image. What was usually outside the picture, the frame, now enters the picture. Thus, a communication between the space of the viewer and the space in the picture is established (Ivi 1993: 22). For Stoichita, the communication takes place between the frame as an image object and the frame that is part of the physical world. In the cutout, however, these two boundaries fall into one, i.e., they superimpose each other.

Thus, the cutout is a sub-category of the *trompe-l'œil*. It relinquishes the rectangle of the ordinary frame to subsequently adopt the shape of the object it depicts². Cutouts or *chantournés* are characterised by the fact that the contour of the image vehicle follows that of the motif. Therefore, the real shape of the object is add-



Fig. 1 - Cornelius Norbertus Gijsbrechts, *Cutout Trompe-l'œil (Easel with Fruit Piece)*, 226x123 cm, Oil on panel, ca. 1670, ©Kopenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst.

ed to the true-to-life painting technique, leading some authors to describe this as the greatest possible imitation of reality (Schwertfeger 2004: 45). To examine the intertwining of frame and section, we will look at two images that are just on the verge of stepping into the space of the viewer and do not appear as a mere illusion.

René Magritte, who precisely and constantly confronts the challenge of framing in his work³, painted in 1937 the picture *La Représentation* (Fig. 2): A female lower body in square format. It is reported that Magritte was unsatisfied with the surrounding background, whereupon he separated the figure from the ground⁴. Yet not to release the body afterwards, but instead to enclose it anew by an adjusted frame. Hence, the cutout originates from a larger context, even if this is not the continuous space of our everyday experience. In the painting, frame and section encounter each other in conflictual concentration. He calls it a “surprising object”. Due to the cut, the combination of body and shaped frame tends towards an object rather than towards a picture. The cut separating arms and legs from the body is confirmed by a thick frame. Although it is clearly a frame, its function as a border partially relaxes under the pressure of the cut and allies itself with the motif to attain a haptic physicality: On the one hand, the objectification of a body that is robbed of its ability to act with its arms and legs, and on the other hand, a frame that adopts the characteristics of a body. Finally, the roundness of the frame and its light reflections reinforces the physical curvature of the chiaroscuro. The thin line between the frame and the contour is not so much a threshold as it rather is a membrane that is permeable on both sides. With the shaped frame, still recognisable as such, the body comes closer to the viewer. A reciprocal communication is created between frame, object, body and image that already begins to shift the border. Magritte’s intervention is so intense because he firstly reveals the cut as cut as the fragmented body will never suggest a deceptive completeness, and secondly, because it connects the section with the frame.



Fig. 2 - René Magritte, *La Représentation*, 48.8x44.5 cm (framed: 53.7x49.5x4.3 cm), Oil on canvas laid on plywood, 1937, ©Scottish National Gallery Of Modern Art.

What is argued here does not entirely deny the cutouts framing function as a border. Instead, a movement from the frame to the section is presented along the edge of the cutout. What remains of the frame is what André Bazin calls a microcosm. But since contour and border are congruent, respectively the difference between the two has been cut off, a gap is left in the microcosm which opens up a centrifugal movement. The image seems to be cut out of its larger context, even if this were not the case. The “fragment of the infinite” is intensified in the cutout by compressing the surrounding space to the thin line of the contour, thereby looking for a substitute. In this way, it challenges the viewers to perceive the physical surroundings (in our example, the frame itself) as the lost background, i.e. as a part of the picture⁵. With regard to Stoichita, an inversion takes place here: the frame continues the image into the space of the viewer. The image is thus present as a represented and a haptic physicality. If one looks more closely at the photograph of the painting, it is noticeable that the frame on the left casts a shadow which is projected onto the body of the image. On the right side of the painting the image object casts a dark shadow on an uncertain ground. Since the frame has the same shape as the image body, the shadow of the frame seems to adapt to the image object. Between these two lines, between shadow and shading, the cutout is oriented both centripetally and centrifugally.

In AR, the connection between an image object and a physical object is a consequence of the technology, which consists precisely by recognising objects in space in order to adjust the image projection to these objects. AR applications make frequent use of cutout representations, for which there are two comprehensible reasons: Firstly, two-dimensional images can be easily cut out on the computer and equally easily converted into AR. Therefore, existing photographic material can be used instead of having to create a new 3D animation. Depth is thereby not excluded, for instance, flat layers from Photoshop are translated directly into three-dimensional spacing with AR. Secondly, cutting off an image background creates a void. Subsequently that void could be replaced by the actual surroundings. That circumstance suits the core concern of AR – to register images into the real surroundings. The application *VictoryXR Victor the Torso* for example, refers to a real (plastic) torso (Fig. 3). The augmentation consists in cutting open a



Fig. 3 - Victor the torso, an AR experience for educational use by VictoryXR, ©VictoryXR.

part of the body (which acts as a substitute ground), to open up the skin to background information that would otherwise not have been visible. Since the image relates to the body this information is positioned in situ – in their topographical and organic correlation. The sliced skin opens like two French windows to reveal what would actually be seen through. In this example, the partition of the cutout is extended by a depth dimension. This is not a unique case, rather a technique that can be observed with increasing frequency; the “semi-transparent” screen of AR is used to convert objects into also semi-transparent ones⁶. The image cuts into the visible context in order to fill the resulting void with a previously non-visible context.

At this point it is interesting to return to Schapiro’s frame analysis. The “frame is sometimes an irregular form that follows the outlines of the object. It is no longer a pre-existing feature of the image-vehicle or ground but an added one that depends on the contents of the image” Schapiro (1972: 12). As outlined above, the frame of painting can be described as a pre-existing format that is subsequently filled. In Magritte’s shaped frame, this causal relationship is reversed. The “independence and energy of the sign are asserted in the detours forced upon the frame by the image” Schapiro (*Ibid*). Magritte now shows how this force, however, operates reciprocally. The image pulls the frame into the image by deforming it. Since what was cut off before, the original background can be reoccupied anew by the closest surroundings. The framing context, however, is no less irregular and articulated than the sign. As such it participates in the image, or as Schapiro would say, it intrudes into the sign (*Ivi* 1972: 9). In the two examples examined, an affiliation of frame and image, object and image cannot be ignored, even if the causal relationship has been reversed. Although there is an intensive exchange between image and frame (context), the potential of the cutout has not yet been fully developed. Since the difference between an accustomed *trompe-l’œil* and the *trompe-l’œil* cutout consists in its mobility.

1.2 About the paradox of cutouts or mobility and site-specificity

The highest possible imitation of reality indicates the desire to vivify the image, which is traditionally associated with movement. Yet, Magritte’s body loses the very movement that is a condition for the perception of the living. With the arms and legs it is cut off straight away. Therefore, it must be argued why mobility is nevertheless an essential aspect of the *trompe-l’œil* cutout. *Trompe-l’œils* are usually limited to depicting lifeless objects in order to avoid the lack of movement in painting (Singer 2002: 42). But the cut seems to have so much potency that it enables the *trompe-l’œil* to depict figures.

The suggestion of life is sometimes so clever that one would hardly be surprised to find, a moment later, these people or animals in another place. It was certainly a tempting task to try to liberate these images from their dependence on the decor and to make them mingle with the world of the living (Wilhelm 1959: 296).

The weakened border and the cut-off background cause a peculiar conclusion – the image becomes highly mobile for the place of its exhibition and flexible in the way of exhibition. Consequently, the paintings seem to adopt the habitual mobility of the things and the people they depict. Leaning against the wall like Cornelius

Gijsbrecht's *The Reverse of a Framed Painting*, lying on the floor like Samuel van Hoogstraaten's painted slippers, and hanging in the air like his *trompe-l'œil* herring (Schwertfeger 2004: 45). Without a frame, the picture begins to move and detach from the wall. In Wilhelm's thought experiment, the movement of the figures, which is not possible in the medium of painting though, is replaced by the movement of the image vehicle. They seem alive because they appear at one time here and at another time there. The lack of context caused by the cut is filled by the actual exhibition location. This makes these paintings as site-specific as they are mobile, since they can appropriate any setting as a background or framing context. In the contrast of lively movement and the mobility of the image vehicle, the effect of the cutouts unfolds. *The partition of the image through the cut supports the participation of the image within its surroundings.*

However, it should be noted again that the border is permeable on both sides. Finally, the depicted lower body becomes an object just as the frame becomes a body. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1798: 45-46), for example, once refers to the cutout in his text *Über Wahrheit und Wahrscheinlichkeit der Kunstwerken. Ein Gespräch* to distinguish between a work of nature and a work of art. More precisely, the occasion is a complaint by a spectator. He is disgusted by painted cutout figures placed among the spectators in the theatre because they look as if they were taking part in what is going on below. The real audience feels offended by the fake one. The artist's lawyer now argues against the deception that the figures were mixing with the world of the living. On the contrary, the cutouts would expand the frame of the stage and thus the space of the artificial. They show in full presence that the theatre is a work of art that follows its own rules, that it is a world of its own and that it does not merely imitate the reality of a natural work. Hence, on the one hand, cutouts appropriate the physical surroundings as their background, and on the other hand, superimpose it with the cut-off ground of their artificiality. Goethe's text relates the reciprocal communication between image and context to the crucial part played by the viewer: *The participation of the images within the world is at the same time the partition of the real surroundings through a splitted reception.*

2. Cutouts and the splitted Attention of the viewers

The concept of partition encompasses both the separation and the sharing of something. On the one hand, a border that separates and connects at the same time, and on the other, a viewer who must split up the reception. Thereby, and this is the focus of the concluding chapter, the question is how the splitted reception affects the public space in which everyone participates. The cutout begins with the act of partition, which continues through to reception. In the following, specific cutouts placed within public space will be analysed. In relation to AR, there are often discussions about the limitless possibilities of the "new" technology. One aspect of this concerns the placement of digital elements in a specific location. Artists, for example Jeff Koons, stress the use of AR to place artworks anywhere, even in previously inaccessible locations – "it could be on the moon"⁷. The border function of cutouts between partition and participation is accompanied in AR by the crossing of borders. A artwork created by Mark Skwarek helps to identify this border crossing more precisely.

He organised the activist movement *#arOCCUPYWALLSTREET* as an AR demonstration in October 2011. The reason for the use of AR was a border, namely the restriction to demonstrate directly on the terrain of the Wall Street. Consequently, the protest was not allowed to take place there and was relegated to Zucotti Park. The Wall Street area was therefore cordoned off and constantly supervised. With AR however, according to the artist, it was still possible to transport the protest into the heart of the financial district despite the restrictions. To make this happen, Mark Skwarek launched *Protest_AR* together with an open call (Fig. 4). In addition to AR artworks, he also asked for photos of demonstrators worldwide holding their protest signs. From the submitted photographs, he cuts out the figures and calculated these as a demonstrating group into the coordinates of the Wall Street. In this way, photos of demonstrators from all over the world were projected via AR into the restricted zone. If we pointed our smartphone screen at the empty zone at the edge of the cordoned-off area, a mass of cutout figures appeared there, enlivening the street⁸. Skwarek argues that with AR, the protest could cross the border of the forbidden zone. This argument goes beyond this single example and emerges as a pattern in various AR operations. *Movers and Shakers NYC*,⁹ which was founded by Glenn Cantave, augment the public space by digital monument sculptures which the government has refused to realise. The group *Manifest.AR* has organised the exhibition *We Are in Mo-MA*¹⁰ via AR without being asked, thus bypassing the walls of the highly curated institution. Exclusive areas, juried exhibitions, inaccessible places, cordoned-off zones or artworks in public space that require permission for installation are the initial point for AR interventions, since with this technology the restrictions lose their conventional validity. The zones themselves form a kind of frame that has an exclusionary function via the barrier. AR is now expected to have the potential to cross or open these borders. For this, more than one border is involved.



Fig. 4 - Mark Skwarek, *#arOWS*, protestAR, 2011, AR application for registering cutouts into the Wall Street Area (with sounds) © by Mark Skwarek.

To investigate the specificity of AR cutouts in more detail, an analogue cutout will be juxtaposed with the AR demonstration: the cutout *Chance (Darinka, Vivien, Anne)* by Alex Katz from 1990, in particular the installation from 2019 (Fig. 5). Both are placed in public space and yet play on the border between private and public. At first glance, they could hardly appear more different: Here is a pleasurablely unconcerned water play and there is a protest as image content. Contrary to this is the reception of the protest action or rather the application, which is often dismissed as harmless despite real participation (the participants actually sent in the photos, even those who otherwise would not have been able to take part¹¹), because the participants are present as images and not in flesh. The reception and labelling as harmless is thus opposed to the aggressive crossing of borders. The assumption now is that this intermediate reception between aggressive and harmless, is related to the cutout and its border function between opening and closing moments, between participation and partition.

Alex Katz' cutouts are not only based on a *trompe-l'œil* illusion making them suitable for the study of both the partition and the participation of image and context. Moreover, they offer a profound base to provide criteria for the investigation of AR. The artist's cutouts are based on an analogous origin anecdote to that of Magritte. In 1959, the relation of figure and ground in a painting "didn't work" for Katz, so he cut out the figure and mounted it on the wall (Ratcliff 2003: 10). Apparently it was Robert Rauschenberg who encouraged Katz to leave the figure this way, whereupon he affixed it to wood and then later made cutouts to painted aluminum panels (Grothe 2012: 7). The mobility of these images is also evident in the fact that Katz, as with the first cutout, displays them against the wall as well as free-standing in the room. His first cutout was thus detached from its original ground setting, and the others, too, as Carter Ratcliff notes, are determined by their placelessness (Ratcliff 2003: 11) – forced to assert themselves in relation to



Fig. 5 - Alex Katz, *Chance (Darinka, Vivien, Anne)*, 182.9x121.9 cm, 188x91.4 cm, 177.8x116.8 cm, Oil on aluminium, 1990 ©Alex Katz and Galerie Thaddeus Ropac.

their current surroundings. In this series of works, three main conflicts appear. The first conflict is that between abstraction and illusionistic representation; this affects Katz's painting as a whole oeuvre and also plays precisely into the challenge of cutouts (Felix 2003: 6). His figures operate on the threshold between obviously painted and illusionistic representation. In this context, the shaped edge of the paintings reinforces the illusionistic content without diminishing the painted as such. What makes the cutouts so captivating for the viewers is their dual status as what they represent and as representation, namely being recognized as both, person and image.

The second conflict is caused by the competing light situations. Carter Ratcliff (2003: 27) points out that Katz' cutouts are placed in the same space as the viewers', however at the same time the figures are illuminated in a different light. "The object is perceived here and now, yet it belongs to another time and place". This can be separated by the concepts of *location light* and *image light*¹². This differentiation also originally coincides with the mobility of the image vehicles. In the 14th century, a fresco had to align its image light with the location light, as Cennino Cennini wrote around 1390. Contrasting to Cennini, Alberti in 1435 claimed an independent image light for the mobile panel painting and not random illumination constraint. So that the image "wherever it may be" maintains the coherence of light and shadow that is appropriate to it (Siebenhüner 1935: 28). Thereby the opening of the image, which exists in the fresco towards the space of the viewers, is sealed. As a result, a conflict is created between the site-specific placement and the mobility of the cutout. Wilhelm finally argues from the mobility of the cutouts: since they are movable, the image light of the figures can be adjusted to the local light in order to increase the immersion of these images (Wilhelm 1959: 296). Katz' cutouts finally want to be both site-specific, appropriating the site of exhibition as their context, and highly mobile, i. e. at the same time being independent of their specific location.

The final third conflict is between a two-dimensional representation and a three-dimensional object. Thus, the cutouts by Alex Katz are repeatedly described in terms between sculpture and painting. Albeit two-dimensional, they are free-standing figures which, due to their thickness, allow the viewer a certain degree of movement. These three conflict situations are now supposed to mediate between the two works of art in order to work out their conciliative potential. The first two conflicts concern the partition of the site. As Katz says, "The interesting thing for me in these works [cutouts] was mainly to play with the scale and the perceived distance and let it create an irritating illusion" (Silvis 2018: 182). With the irritating illusion, Katz transfers the idea of painterly foreshortening to the perception of real space, whereby what is actually closer appears further away due to the reduced scale or vice versa¹³. He superimposes the space of painting onto the real space. The two conflicts of image light and location light, image space and space of the viewers, thus merge into a conflict of two spatialities and two locations. Katz plays out this conflict in *Chance*, especially since he exhibits the cutout in a gallery art space (sometimes wall-mounted, sometimes free-standing) as well as in public spaces such as the Jardin des Tuileries in Paris in 2019. In addition to the competition of varying location light conditions and constant image light, as well as the larger-than-life size of the figures, the art historical subject of "the bathers" as a cutout juxtaposes culture and leisure time. When the bathers mingle with the viewers in the art space, they become participants in a lei-

sure activity. In the park, on the other hand, the figures can certainly be deceptive as bathers, they immersively dive into the fountain, but there, as passers-by, we are also viewers, through the “cold light” of the gallery under which the bathers freeze¹⁴. This circumstance is supported by the park’s dual function as a place of leisure and a sculpture park. If one takes *Chance*’s deceptive potential seriously, the figures open up a leisure area of pleasurable entertainment. They seduce to deception and, as sirens, invite us to participate in idleness. If we acknowledge the conflicting light situation, however, we are forced to reflect seriously and detachedly on the partition. The cutout splits the place of its exhibition and demands a different reception modes from the viewers. It is the viewer’s task, as in Goethe’s theatre, to include the communication between image and context in the reception. The two split readings, work of art and work of nature, are superimposed and therefore enable a reflection on the place in between.

The conflict between image light and location light is also present in the work of Skwarek, but is shifted towards photography. The photographs submitted are taken by protesters worldwide, including those who are unable to participate in the demonstration on site, since the all-too-far distance. As outlined above, the photo cuts away the referential space, i.e. the protesters actual and continuous environment. Furthermore, the photographic space is thereby reduced to the figure, retaining only the indexical light conditions on skin, sign and clothing. In the case of the protesters from everywhere, this means that a multitude of different image lights and perspectives are cut out and embedded in the again continuous space of the Wall Street. By the multitude of lighting conditions and perspectives it is evident that these figures cannot evoke a consistent space. Thus, the site-specific conflict here is not between leisure and culture, but rather between many places where presence is possible and a cordoned-off, empty place of restriction. The partition of the cutout results in the simultaneous participation of public places and a cordoned-off zone at the same coordinate. At this point, the participation many places in one is crucial, as they partition the here of the empty zone. Beyond the difference between photography and painting, the connectivity to the internet has an additional effect. The limited empty zone is superimposed by the “unlimited” space of the internet, in which the restrictions are not valid¹⁵. Using AR, it is possible to bundle global and digital engagement not only at a web address, but at a physical address. Hereby the difference between the open and the limited zone becomes perceivable. In this example, the task of the viewer seems to be less about applying two different readings to one place but rather about reading different spaces with different properties that superimpose each other.

Finally, the third conflict in Katz’ cutouts is the one between two-dimensional and three-dimensional space. With the flat cutouts, Katz deliberately focuses on the dichotomy of front and back (Ratcliff 2003: 13). The interplay between front and back splits the continuous space; quite often the front appears mirror-inverted again on the back, or, as in some cutouts that include several figures, Katz shows only one person twice frontal and the other once from the front and once from the back. In relation to the subject matter addressed in this article, however, it is more decisive that Katz accentuates the two-dimensionality of the images by using cuts to insert frame references into the cutouts. The three bathers have also been exhibited as individual figures. Each of them carries a beach ball in their hands, which is cut at one side. Placed next to each other, the cuts and the plinth create a frameline, even if it is mostly an imaginary one. Katz thus combines the

frame of the painting with the sculpture's pedestal frame (Wiener 2010: 135). Hence, the paintings have despite the large interruptions a clear demarcation to the exterior, which prevent the painting from ultimately participating in its environment. In contrast to the cuts, the lower edge functions as a connective frame element, since it is identified with the surface of the water and literally promotes immersion. If the ball crosses the border, however, it will always end up in the image space and never in the water. Along with immersion effects, Katz exploits the conflicts in order to simultaneously maintain a separation. By supplementing the expected movement, the viewers simultaneously have to complete the frame of the image.

Looking at the two images next to each other, it is noticeable how, in the case of AR, the cuts are also drawn from the edges of the small smartphone-screen, as in Bamboccio's window. As the smartphone can be moved, the cuts thereby shift. Therefore, it is a matter of a moving frame and a fixed image, which edges are constantly redefined. However, since the moving small frame is intertwined with the viewer's personal gaze, this section not only delimits the image, but also separates a private view within a public space. The public space, as what everyone sees, is partitioned by the AR cutouts. A "private" area, where image figures and direct context are able to participate together by looking through a technological interface, contrasts with the public but empty space that everyone can see¹⁶. The partition of the cut unites the connectivity of the collectively "free" space of the internet with the exclusionary real space of the Wall Street exclusively in the private view on one's own screen. Since the frame of the smartphone is mobile like the viewer, it can be transported wherever the viewer can get to (and so can the images). Everyone carries their own frame around in which the images may appear. Once the frame is directed at a place, there are only the rules that apply within it. And this difference between private and public view is inscribed in the AR cutout. The AR cutouts by Skwarek draw attention to a border, a restricted zone, and at the same time it respects this border by demarcating the personal gaze from the public one. This separation leads us back to the game between the front and the back of Katz cutouts. In an organised flash mob, the protesters doubled the border. A number of protesters positioned themselves along the barrier with tablets in hand. This meant that all passers-by could now see the cutout figures walking across the empty area, keeping the guards in the cordoned-off zone excluded – only being able to see the dark backs of the tablets (Geroimenko 2018: 17). From the inside one saw an empty black wall consisting of many screens and from the outside one saw an empty space filled with a mass of AR-cutouts. Rather than erasing the border between image and context, it tends to be multiplied. For this, the viewers have to identify the different borders that are brought into play, especially when they are superimposed. It is not about claiming the AR demonstration as effective as a real one, nor that an AR exhibition at the MoMa is equivalent to a regular one. The masked border of AR between image and context opens up the possibility, at least in these works, of drawing attention to real but less visible borders. Instead of being simply made available online, AR allows images to be transported and placed in physical locations. While images online can be shared with everyone, the AR-images only appear to those who point the screen at the defined area. In a private section, one transports the images to a public place via a mobile frame. Cutouts in general can partition a place depending on the reception-mode of the viewers, they can be considered as what

they represent or drawing attention to the difference as images. Labelling their participation as harmless is based on the one-sided reception of the cutouts as not really present, just as the condemnation as an aggressive act regards the images only as actual events. The different borders that superimpose each other in the cutout provoke a simple reading, however, the superimposition can also take place in the reception mode by passing through the different layers and work out how they operate among themselves.

Conclusion

At the beginning we asked what impact the immersive images might have on reality. Assuming that frame procedures are not only used to separate image and context, the task was to find a frame concept that could describe these images in order to work out their efficacy. Immersive images are neither able to have a clear frame that separates the inside from the outside, nor is their total immersion possible, which would make them disappear as such. Therefore, it was suggested to think of the immersive images between frame and section via the cutout. The images thus certainly refer to a world of their own, their own space and time, which is portable and through which they differ from their surroundings. But in contrast to traditional painting, which has no opening, cutouts compensate their lack of a cut-away surrounding by appropriating the place of their exhibition as a background. Thereby, they transfer the partition from the production process into a partition within the place of their exhibition. Finally, the framing concept between partition and participation demands a multilayered reception between what these images represent and the representation itself. The split in space allows the images to participate in the place of their exhibition and at the same time enables the place to participate in the image's being. Thus, they are not seamlessly immersed in the world, as they always drag their difference with them. Subsequently it was the aim of these considerations to show how immersive images, such as the cutouts, operate between opening and enclosing moments.

In the comparative analysis of concrete cutouts, both analogue and digital, different layers of reception could be worked out. Alex Katz introduces subtle differences that feed the game between partition and participation. The figures get closer to the viewers by forming a face that performs something specific they can engage with, however, through their light situation, their appearance as being painted and the subtle cuts, they always slow down the viewers steps whenever they get too close. Thereby, the frame references act as silent interruptions of the immersive movement. The cutouts participate with the surrounding space and the viewers, but also carry their own context against which the current environment has to grind. In AR, the connectivity to the surrounding space and to the viewers is extended by the connectivity to the internet and simultaneously limited by the partitioning to a private gaze. The transgressive potential of the immersive images presented here is tightly entangled with their partition. Far from the all-too-often invoked extremes of complete immersion, the immersive images operate between the superimposed borders, places and modes of reception – this is the complexity and the challenge of immersive images, however at the same time it is their reconciling potential.

- 1 The cutout as a marginal figure in art history is related to the shaped canvas, both attack the rectangular shape of the frame. Provisionally, it could be noted that the shape of the cutout follows the depicted object, while the shaped canvas signifies a self-sufficient shape. Perhaps this would be a question of beginning: does the shape follow the border of the subject matter or does the content follow the shape of the border?
- 2 There are also *trompe-l'œil* cutouts that are rectangular, but the reason for this is the rectangular shape of the motifs, such as pictures, pinboards or frames (sic).
- 3 For example, in his text on mimesis and mimicry, Bernhard Siegert has elaborated Magritte's deconstruction of the window metaphor in *La condition humaine* in 1933. Cf. Siegert 2005: 125.
- 4 Vgl. <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/8582/la-repr%C3%A9sentation-representation>.
- 5 For this reason, José y Gasset emphasises that the frame should not allow any association of things. Instead, in order to optimally fulfil the function of separation, the frame must neither resemble the world of actual things nor participate in the image (Ortega y Gasset 1938, 78: 68).
- 6 See also my article on this transparent effect: <https://www.bu.edu/sequitur/2020/07/17/the-occupation-of-the-natural-by-the-unnatural-about-the-operation-of-the-superimposition-in-augmented-reality-and-trompe-loeil/>.
- 7 See therefore the presentation video of Jeff Koons AR cooperation with snapchat. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5z9-JLIuis> (at 1:08 min)
- 8 Once Skwarek also cuts a mass of demonstrators out of a video and transports the scene directly in front of the NYSE.
- 9 <https://www.moversandshakersnyc.com/our-work> and also https://www.ted.com/talks/glenn_cantave_how_augmented_reality_is_changing_activism/transcript.
- 10 <https://johncraigfreeman.wordpress.com/manifestar-an-augmented-reality-manifesto/>.
- 11 Cf. the article of Kowalska: <https://medium.com/crossing-domains/augmented-reality-activism-3e801b8cbd67>.
- 12 In his book *Über das Licht in der Malerei*, Schöne distinguishes between location light and image light, who also mentions the comparison below (Schöne 1954: 88).
- 13 Only due to this foreshortening is it possible for life-size figures to appear at all on the smartphone's handy screen.
- 14 Cf. <https://www.monopol-magazin.de/alex-katz-paris> – „Außenskulptur von Alex Katz. Und in Paris frieren die Badenden”.
- 15 This also concerns the debate about who controls the ARCloud. So, again, a question of access and permission.
- 16 Cf. Greenfield 2017: 83. For Greenfield, this is the destruction of public space, however, in my opinion, this disregards the fact that public space is read through different grids even without AR.