

Johannes Franzen's photographs are based on hexadecimal data files: With them, the artist coordinated the (picto-)spatial allocation of the colors. Unlike his earlier works, where chance was allowed to play a dominant role, this series was created through the continuing adjustment between that which exists on the digital level ("per se") and that which can be perceived optically. This mode of production alone has inscribed a perceptive analytical dimension on these most recent works. There is a hairline crack, which undermines the visible in its entirety and which Franzen brings to dance: he aims for nothing less than totality, a clearly identifiable red thread in his photographic work. By moving from the diachronic to the synchronic level, however, Franzen has turned attention to the structural conditions of human perception.

Titled "4096² Colors," the series points out the 16,777,216 different values which constitute the digitally depictable color range. Because each picture contains each of these color values exactly once, the viewer is confronted with the comprehensive inventory of the possibility of optical perception. A thoroughly paradoxical process is initiated: You see all the colors, but what do you see? Everything? Or more than that?

Looking at the plane in its entirety, one notes color paths created by the combination of small squares of different shades. Almost intuitively, one steps forward to explore the interplay more closely. It turns out that the grid pattern of the color planes is repeated in the individual dots. At first it seems as if all the micro-units were the same; as soon as the eye "warms up," however, a certain discriminatory power sets in, recognizing individual shades even in the color paths within the micro-units.

Obviously, the artist aims less at the phenomenological analysis of color than at a precise differentiation between visual recognition, optical perception, and their processing through our perceptive faculties. The viewer is confronted with the paradox of visually perceiving totality, recognizing its single elements just as well, yet being unable to work out a clear picture. This inability to yield a definite image is also reflected in the fact that the totality of the colors can appear in very many different ways indeed.