"I DO NOT BELIEVE IN THE GENIUS
who concocts masterpieces alone in a garret"

Alexander Troitzsch, curator of art@work, interviews Tamara Janes, the artist behind art@work #010. This year's ti&m special is titled "Design thinking meets programming".

IMAGE: LORENZO BONATI

Alexander Troitzsch: What do you, as an artist, associate with the term "design thinking"?

Tamara Janes: Design thinking is not very widespread in art practice. What I see there is more of a leadership approach: an individual generates his or her own ideas and drives these forward, as a kind of engine with a vision. But the friction created by discussions with others is very important to relativize, challenge and shape ideas. I do not believe in the lone genius who concocts masterpieces alone in a garret.

art@work often receives applications from artist duos. Is this a trend that goes in the opposite direction?

A duo certainly has the advantage that the required friction is built in. But even in a digitalized world it is difficult to find a partner who you are not only in tune with but can also make an exciting statement with. It also depends on the kind of art. Performance artists have to collaborate. Photography is overwhelmingly reduced to the image of a one-man show, to the person who presses the shutter release. That can feel lonely.

You have recently gone freelance. That must have been a difficult decision?

I made a conscious decision to put myself out there so that I could focus more on myself and on what I have to say, on the vision, as it were, that comes from inside of me. Last year I launched my studio in Bern, and 2015 is a test for me to see how it really feels.

How do you see your collaboration with "clients"?

Completely new works emerge from discussions with buyers, gallerists and viewers. That is important and valuable. It takes a certain openness and the desire to put yourself out there. Stewing in your own juices is probably easier, but it doesn't take you further. Another aspect is the understanding of the works. There are two factions: those who think it is important to engage with the viewer and those who con-

Tamara Janes
is a freelance artist in Bern. She studied photography at Zurich University of the Arts and then at the School of Visual Arts in New York. She has exhibited her room portraits, which she alienates with digital image searches, at Jungkunst 14 and at Plat(t)form 15. Last year she won the vfg association of creative photographers' prize for young talent with her associative dream interpretation series.

sciously exclude this from their work. For me personally, it is important that my art communicates.

What do you as an artist associate with the term digitalization?

The term "digital art" to me sounds rather antiquated, like a hangover from the 1990s. Working with the digital is a matter of course in art today and is part of the canon of art. Besides that, as a photographer, I associate the term strongly with technology. I use the digital as both an associative filer and a technical filter, as a kind of tool, like a sculptor uses a special chisel. But digital also means: everywhere, quick, available, connectable. Rochus Lussi has said that this makes us directly public. That is a view that I share. But with art there is also the

element that you can choose what you make the focus of attention, whether you celebrate yourself as an art personality or "hide" behind your own work. That is an advantage.

At the same time, analog is coming in again. What do you see as the value of analog?

With the digital, you always have an immediate answer; you see everything immediately. With analog, the role of chance returns, which is something I value enormously in my work. I can also see a great fascination with analog amongst "digital natives".

You use Google image search for your work. What is it about it that appeals to you?

On one hand, it is the arbitrary nature of the content. On the other, it is the directness, the speed and hence the immediacy. You can also sense an inner aesthetic in the way the same thing keeps reappearing, and this aesthetic is something that you can't escape. It is also interesting that all the images come from us as users: they are a digital mirror for people. And finally, the results are highly topical, so they can be seen as documents that record a moment in time. I also use other image archives in my work, for example images from auction sites. There, photos are entirely subordinated to the purpose and are not taken by trained photographers. That is inspiring because they are unpredictable. Analog archives such as the New York Public Library's picture collection are something really special. Their employees store photographs of every kind from any source in these archives, sorted by key words (canaries, canalization, etc.). That creates a very special mix, and for me it's an excuse to go to New York again. A really cool relic in today's digital world.

What magical digital tool would you like to have yourself? And what tool would you like the world to have?

The visual "dream recorder". But … do I really want to know everything that I dream? It would need a good digital filter (*laughs*). For the world at this moment in time, I can only wish for a peacemaker. That goes well beyond art. ←