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Cora Pongracz  
*8 erweiterte portraits*  
30.08.25–25.01.26

EN

*In dialogue with:*  
Seiichi Furuya  
Deva Schubert  
Marietta Mavrokordatou  
DAVRA  
Paul Niedermayer  
Claudia de la Torre

Kunstverein Schwerin und Vorpommern  
für Mecklenburg in Schwerin

# Cora Pongracz

## *8 erweiterte portraits*

### with: Paul Niedermayer

## 07.12.25–25.01.26

The third dialogical presentation expands Cora Pongracz's series and exhibition of the same name, *8 erweiterte portraits*, with works by artist Paul Niedermayer, whose practice ties in with Pongracz's media-reflexive approach and places questions of image production itself at the heart of her aesthetic strategy. While Pongracz's 56-part series *8 erweiterte portraits*, 1974, takes up the established photographic genre of portrait photography in order to literally stretch its conventional parameters through dialogical positing, Niedermayer, with her series *Wildlife*, 2025, builds on the equally codified photographic genre of wildlife photography – already implied in the title. Both artistic positions thus operate at the interface between photographic tradition and its critical revision.

The thirteen photographs from Niedermayer's series *Wildlife*, 2025, which repeatedly inscribe themselves into the empty spaces and interstices of the exhibition architecture dedicated to Pongracz, deliberately operate in the liminal space between established logical frameworks. They subvert the premises of classic wildlife photography – such as the observation of animals in their natural habitat or the obligation to documentary authenticity – through deliberate staging, digital interventions, and a choreographed tension between control and chance, symbolism and depletion. The ostensibly 'wild animals' – ladybugs actually bred for pest control – are removed from their no longer existing ecological context. Although the use of micro and macro lenses, long exposures, sequential flashes, photographic reproduction techniques, and digital manipulations creates a degree of abstraction that clearly reveals the photographs as constructions, unnatural environments – such as table top edges or reflective glass surfaces – can still be discerned. The photographic interest thereby shifts from the naturalist object and its documentary value to the human and medial construction that produces the images.

Coincidence and symbolism – as two of the central questions in photographic theory – are manifested in the choice of subject, the ladybug, in the visually similar image motif of the dice, and in the movement and light gradients. Rather than being eliminated, they are allowed and even provoked as image-generating factors. This results in pictorial perspectives that not only transcend the limits of human perception, but also fundamentally question the indexical, i.e., representational, function of photography: beetles appear multiple times in exactly the same position; angles of view overlap; shadows appear beyond physical

realities; reflections open up imaginary spaces. In this way, the ladybugs appear less as zoological subjects and more as elements of a complex interplay of signs that intertwines indexical and symbolic dimensions.

A juxtaposition reveals that Pongracz's and Niedermayer's works share an epistemological interest in photography: as a medium that not only produces images, but is also influenced by modes of perception, symbolic ordering, and cultural coding, as well as generating these. Pongracz expands the portrait by focusing on the constitution of the subject in the photographic moment – as a dialogical process; Niedermayer appropriates techniques of wildlife photography and plays with notions of the symbolic in this context. Both artists thus address the conditions of photographic image creation – equipment, setting, gaze regime, authorial authority, genre rules – as an integral part of the image and expand upon them. This creates a dialogical space that reveals not only photography, but also questions of representation as historically grown systems that are both unstable and in constant need of renegotiation.

Translation:  
Emma Roy

