

BRIGITTE KOWANZ

21 July – 29 August 2020

The cornerstones of **BRIGITTE KOWANZ's** work are the representation of light, its use to create space and its informative content. Her oeuvre comprises no strictly separated groups of works; rather, over the years she has frequently reverted to earlier light sources, techniques, forms and formulations and developed them further. The works *Morse Alphabet* and *Connect the Dots* are examples of this practice.

Morse Alphabet (1998) harks back to her early work. Each of the 26 black-painted neon tubes arranged in a circle shows a letter of the Morse code. Ever since the 1990s, the artist has been fascinated by the fact that all the letters of the alphabet, as well as the numbers 0 to 9, can be represented using only long and short signals. The Morse code, as an early binary form of communication, is the basis for the digital age.

The title *Connect the Dots* is a quote from Apple-founder Steve Jobs' Commencement address at Stanford University in 2005. According to Jobs, on the way to finding what you love – whether in your professional or your private life – you will pass various points/events, which can be connected only in retrospect: “[...] you can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backward. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something – your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. Because believing that the dots will connect down the road will give you the confidence to follow your heart even when it leads you off the well-worn path... and that will make all the difference.” *Connect the Dots* (2018) refers formally to the early work *Morse Alphabet*: the gaps in the strawberry-red lacquer on the 14 vertical, serially arranged LED acrylic glass tubes represent, in Morse code, each of the letters of the title of the work.

The works *Fall of the Wall 09.11.1989* and *WWW 12.03.1989 06.08.1991* also use the Morse code to refer to relevant historic events: the fall of the wall between East and West Berlin, and the presentation of the World Wide Web at the CERN Institute in 1989, then in 1991 the first announcement of WWW software on the Internet. Formally, the works are reminiscent of cables. Using gold thread, **BRIGITTE KOWANZ** defines the line in a tactile drawing process; it is then fixed, digitalised and reproduced as a neon tube, under which lies, like a shadow, an aluminium strip containing the data of the two events, in Morse code. The work *WWW* was the *magnum opus* in the Austrian pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017, where it was installed on a large scale. We are showing here for the first time a condensed, modified version.

The two wall objects *Contemplation* and *Inspiration* consist of mirrors and neon tubes coated with various colours. The circular neon inscriptions in the vitrines trace the artist's handwriting, previously digitalised. Both the light of the writing and the viewer are mirrored repeatedly in a convex mirror in the centre of the rear wall of the works, opening up an endless virtual space. The dynamism consists in the constant alteration: the viewer stands before a scenery that is never conclusively apprehensible. These works are analogies to our everyday exposure to video screens, in which we immerse ourselves and enter apparently infinite data spaces.

Salzburg, July 2020

Katja Mittendorfer and Adrian Kowanz

