



Carsten Nicolai
tele
23.03.–03.09.2018

PRESS KIT

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BERLINISCHE GALERIE

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Berlin, 21 March 2018

Carsten Nicolai

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Press Conference: 21.03., 11 am, Opening: 22.03. 7 pm



Works by Carsten Nicolai (*1965 in Karl-Marx-Stadt, now Chemnitz) oscillate around the interfaces between art and science. He often explores sensory impressions and their (media-based) translation, with transmitters and receivers, classification systems and their breakpoints. Nicolai investigates intangible phenomena that give rise to fundamental questions about human consciousness – such as how much of what we perceive exists beyond our perceptions and to what extent it is constructed by the neural networks in our brains.

Inspired by themes usually associated with neurobiology and other natural sciences, which relate to the study of micro- and macrosystems, his objects and installations result from a process of distillation and reduction. He created the light installation *tele* for the first exhibition space in the Berlinische Galerie. It alludes to a peculiar property of quantum entanglement.

The phenomenon whereby two quantum systems that are widely separate in space share the same condition was described by Albert Einstein as “spukhafte Fernwirkung”: the two particles are so interconnected that any change in one has a direct, instantaneous effect on the state of the other, as if there were some telepathic link between them.

Carsten Nicolai, tele, 2018
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Bonn 2018, Courtesy Galerie EIGEN + ART
Leipzig/Berlin und Pace Gallery
Foto: Julija Stankeviciene

The two mirror sculptures nearly three metres high, which resemble an Archimedean solid split in two, appear to communicate in equally eerie ways: laser beams flow back and forth between them, and as they hit the photocells they trigger new impulses which constantly replenish the beams. Nicolai builds here on a long-standing interest in self-perpetuating systems which, once they have been designed and set in motion, function without the need for any further intervention by the artist.



Although light is immaterial, these laser beams dominate and define the exhibition space. Because electromagnetic waves spread at the speed of light, they are perceived by the human eye as continuous, straight rays, and this lends them a sculptural quality. The mirrors make it look as though the rays carry on into infinity, hinting at another universe, an autonomous system created by the artist. Our ability to see the laser beams varies according to where we stand. Besides, changing perspectives on the sculpted mirrors generate a plethora of images. Nicolai's intervention *tele* makes us think about how we perceive: "You have to first perceive perception in order to speak of perception at all." (Heinz von Foerster, 1989)

Carsten Nicolai has been accustomed to interdisciplinary working and thinking ever since he studied landscape architecture in Dresden. His course combined specialist knowledge from ecology, mathematics, biology, forest management, communication theory, and town and country planning. He grew up and acquired his early views of art in Chemnitz. The creative atmosphere in the city, where there was no art college or musical conservatory, was the product of autodidactic approaches applied in all kinds of contexts.

Carsten Nicolai began by painting, until a creative crisis in the mid-1990s made him realize that he missed not having a time dimension in his visual works. It was around then that he began experimenting with high frequencies and the ability of the human ear to perceive them. This introduced him to sound as a material which – rather like the light in *tele* – is able to transport space and time. His interest in sound has continued, and not merely in his art: he is also active as a musician under the pseudonym *alva noto* and with his own music label. Carsten Nicolai operates across established boundaries between disciplines. Despite his interest in scientific phenomena and issues, it is the ephemerality, process and speculation that fascinate him, rather than the conclusions. This results in alternative models and semiotic systems for thinking about things we cannot describe and for comprehending reality.

Programme and Education

An interview with the artist: Carsten Nicolai talks to Prof. Siegfried Zielinski, Rector of Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design, on **Wednesday, 9 May 2018, 7 pm.**

The education and communication programme to accompany the installation by Carsten Nicolai is aimed at school students and at the deaf and hard of hearing. The project day *Contact with the Universe* for secondary school classes from ISCED 2 level upwards (in partnership with Jugend im Museum; register by email to info@jugend-im-museum.de) is an opportunity to experiment with different forms of human communication. The principal question is how communication processes inform our ideas about reality. At **4 pm on Saturday, 5 May 2018** there will be an **art dialogue** in German Sign Language with the artist and art educator Veronika Kranzpiller about the installation by Carsten Nicolai.

Ausstellung und Katalog werden ermöglicht durch den Hauptstadtkulturfonds.



#CarstenNicolaiBG #berlinischegalerie



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BIOGRAPHY CARSTEN NICOLAI

Carsten Nicolai (* 1965 in Karl-Marx-Stadt, today Chemnitz) lives and works in Berlin. Inspired by scientific reference systems, Nicolai explores mathematical patterns such as grids and codes, error and random structures, as well as the phenomenon of self-organization. In doing so, he continually breaks down the boundaries between various artistic genres.

After his participation in documenta X (1997) and the 49th and 50th Venice Biennales (2001 and 2003), his works have been presented in national and international exhibitions in renowned museums and galleries. Comprehensive solo exhibitions have taken place at the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt am Main (anti reflex, 2005), the Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin (synchron, 2005), the CAC, Vilnius, Lithuania (pioneer, 2011), and the Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz (unitape, 2015).

Carsten Nicolai's works are included in important private and public collections. He is currently represented by Galerie EIGEN + ART Leipzig/Berlin, Pace Gallery, Ibid Gallery London/Los Angeles, and Galleria Lorcan O'Neill Roma. Nicolai has received numerous awards and grants, among them: Giga Hertz Prize (2012, with Ryoji Ikeda); Villa Massimo, Rome (2007); Zurich Art Prize (2007); Villa Aurora, Los Angeles (2003); Prix Ars Electronica (2000 and 2001, with Marko Peljhan); Grand Prize Japan Media Arts Festival (2014).



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EXHIBITION TEXT

Carsten Nicolai (*1965) has been intrigued by perception processes for many years. His work brings to life the visual and acoustic mechanisms underlying our sensory impressions. The installation *tele*, created especially for the Berlinische Galerie, was inspired by a peculiar property of quantum entanglement. "Spukhafte Fernwirkung" ["Spooky action at a distance"] is how Albert Einstein described the phenomenon whereby two quantum systems a long way apart in space share the same state: two particles are so interconnected with each other that any change in one has a direct, instantaneous effect on the state of the other, as if there were a telepathic link between them.

tele consists of two mirror structures in contact with each other via laser beams. The beams strike photocells that send out impulses to retrigger the beams. This sets up a kind of feedback system linking the two objects through the lasers to establish "communication".



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PRESS IMAGES



Carsten Nicolai, tele, 2018
© Carsten Nicolai und
VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018
Courtesy Galerie EIGEN + ART
Leipzig/Berlin und Pace Gallery
Foto: Julija Stankeviciene



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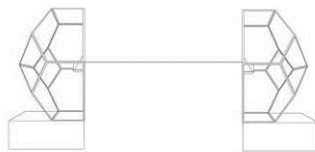
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Carsten Nicolai, 2015
Foto: Andrey Bold



Carsten Nicolai, tele, 2018
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