

“The Power of Imagination is the Real Medium That I Use”

Jorinde Voigt in conversation with Stephanie Damianitsch

Stephanie Damianitsch

When people discuss your work, they always talk about the medium of drawing. But it is obviously not that simple to define the status of your works. They use geometric and expressive linear markings but also always incorporate handwritten notes and numbers, and they are described variously as projection surfaces, visualized thought models, scientific experimental designs, notations, scores and diagrams. So I would like to begin our conversation by talking about your thoughts on drawing, going back to 2002 and 2003, when you turned away from the medium of photography and created your first notations, such as the series *Notations Florida* (ill. p. X) and *Indonesia* (ill. p. X). What caused you to turn your attention to the medium of drawing?

Jorinde Voigt

Initially I was primarily interested in the photographic image. But on a trip through Florida I became aware that I cannot free myself from the perspective that is inherent to the photographic image. It was out of aversion to this perspectivism that I decided to put the camera aside, and I asked myself how, in a short amount of time and independent of technique and its associated restrictions, I could describe situations. And I decided to make notes of only two things: what it was about the thing I wanted to photograph that interested me, and my reasons for taking the picture. I had white paper and a pen with me and started to position things on the paper in the form of crosses, or to mark directions of movement – for example those of white limousines (ill. p. X) – in the form of arrows. I still took stock of situations, but the difference was that I no longer pressed the shutter but rather took notes. In this way, pictures emerged that could no longer be classified as perspectival; rather, they reflected the juxtaposition and the simultaneity of what I experienced – comparable to an aerial view. And not least, with these notations I wanted to make visible what is behind things. This stands in contrast to the photographic image, where I always had the feeling that the represented image surface actually obstructed my view of the really important things, of the processes that cause something to look the way it does. I always ask myself what the conditions are of what is visible to me, what is the invisible back side of what I perceive, which is absolutely decisive for comprehending the situation.

At the same time I observed that I could deal with these kinds of pictures in a completely different manner. I was able not only to capture situations but also to describe sequences of actions or notate above my graphic markings “repeat every hour,” so I suddenly had an instrument available for choreographing the events as well. By implementing all the elements I was familiar with from classical-music scores, I was finally able to both describe and play with attitudes. This musical factor that found its way into my work in this manner allowed me to make everything I perceived a component of this notation process. This was also linked to the discovery of what dimensions in our imagination it was possible to access through markings on a piece of paper. When I first discovered this spectrum of possibilities, to which new aspects were added almost every day, it became clear that I had discovered something that would occupy me for the rest of my life. So the power of imagination is the real medium that I use.

SD

You translate your perceptions into sparsely set graphic markings and develop a specific system of characters with which you order, structure and not least also orchestrate impressions, in order to use this notation – comparable to the musical notation of a score – to open up an imaginative space in the “Now” of the drawing?

JV

Yes, and I think that “score” is a much better term for describing my work than “drawing,” provided that one does not think of this word only in its musical context. Like my works, scores – as markings alluding to the realization of specific concepts – are basically instructions for the imagination. While some of my drawings are specifically related to music, I extend this concept of the score – the idea of an imagined or intended sonority – to all other areas of life and perception. Like the photographic image, language also fails to adequately describe how I perceive the world. So it has always been my concern to establish a notation system oriented toward the musical score, one that represents an extension of the image or the terms, in order to find my way to a very personal communication about my particular experience.

SD

You describe your works as instructions for the imagination. This formulation would seem to allow conclusions to be drawn with regard to their performance-related characteristics. I’m

thinking here, for example, of the picture element **2 people kissing**, which not only appears in many of your works but was also staged as a performance in 2006. Like the drawings it was derived from instructions based on the Fibonacci sequence, and these instructions stipulated the frequency and duration of kisses between eight different couples kissing for a total of 54 minutes.

JV

From the very beginning my works have had a performance and action element. I reduced perceived situations not only to their characteristic components but also to minimal sequences of actions in order to thoroughly examine them. From this evolved, for example, the performance *2 people kissing*, which was staged at the Contemporary Art Centre Vilnius (ill. p. X). But I organized other happenings as well, such as the one with a white and a black Toyota that moved through the city according to a score I created (ill. p. X), playing the most popular pop song of the week. Basically, these scores, these thought models – for which I consciously used very simple elements familiar from pop culture or, in the case of the kiss, ones that are typically human – are a playful way to address the question of what reality is and what imagination is, and how the two levels connect. I always realized these actions only to the extent that they could be experienced, and then formulated the further imagination process in my drawings. The depiction of the element **2 people kissing**, from the drawing series of the same name and from the same year (ill. p. X), thus follows a score that – just like the performance – is a translation of the Fibonacci sequence. This interested me because of my involvement with plants, whose outward appearance is subject to a constant transformation process. The combination of growth processes and the kiss as a characteristically human act then led to the sequences of actions in *2 people kissing*, which in the imagination are a model that can continue to be written indefinitely. If not for the limitations of the paper format, it would at some point – also conceived as a happening – wrap itself around the earth. Every kiss that one sees or experiences could potentially be part of this infinitely conceived sequence, even if the score behind it is concealed.

SD

At the same time, your works recall the imagery of the scores of the avant-garde composer John Cage, which often consist only of instructions for the musicians, who can then freely interpret the piece within this framework. With these scores, Cage exerted a significant influence on the performances of the Fluxus movement, which were based on so-called event scores, and on representatives of Conceptual art. Did Cage influence your work as well?

JV

I am certainly familiar with John Cage, and the decision to generate these kinds of sequences of actions, these kinds of instructions – whether real or imagined – is naturally also related to my exploration of the art of the 1960s, because these graphic scores, these pages with individual instructions, fascinated me greatly. But at the same time it is important to me to emphasize that I do not see John Cage or the representatives of Conceptual art as role models; rather, everything that fascinates me finds its way into my work. So I don't want to let myself be pigeonholed into a certain genre or tradition: I see my work solely as an act of questioning. This questioning always comes directly from my life, ultimately from the very human question: What is it that surrounds me here? For this reason I see my works less as drawings and more as thought models or experimental arrangements. In my current works – in which I incorporate pictorial, abstract forms – I don't orient myself toward painting either. I am concerned with finding expression for atmospheres, for – and I don't mean this in an esoteric sense – energies. These, as well, are phenomena that surround us every day. The question is how to notate these things without using words, as they are, after all, experiences that cannot be expressed in words. To make these aspects communicable I utilize lines, colors, shapes and materials, but I view the result as text, even though it comes across as very pictorial.

Depending on the subject and my current expressive possibilities, this is either purely a writing process that evolves from the score, one that combines the real with the fictive – which in this combination I consider to be the most “real” – or it is inquiries into perception that can be described pictorially. The performative character, however, makes itself felt in all my works; it is the action of creating the artwork itself. I don't see performance as “staging” but rather as an operative factor in the sense of “realization.” Every work I create is really my actual life, which I deal with on this specific “level of action.” Nearly all questions of my life are addressed on this “shifted” level; this is my way of coming to terms with them.

SD

In your search for an operative form of drawing, you use basic principles of mathematical algorithms to subject visible, audible and tangible everyday phenomena – such as **temperature patterns, acoustic impulses**, the flight paths of an **eagle**, etc. – to a specific organizational system. But contrary to the supposed logic of algorithms, growth in your works frequently does not proceed in a constant, continuous manner. In a way, order is joined by chaos. Why is this?

JV

My work method is a long chain of focuses on a topic and has a great deal to do with the sorting of impressions and with the attempt to deal with them. The algorithmic growth sequences help me in this regard, as they stipulate a specific series of numbers that – in the example of the element **2 people kissing**– alternately determine the duration of each kiss and the interval until the next action, meaning the next duration of the kiss. The number sequence also stipulates how the number of minutes of the kiss corresponds to the new number of couples. However, one mustn't forget that although one knows with these algorithm-based works what results in what, what points to what, and what number follows in the next step, the specific notation always remains a free, spontaneous decision. There is no right or wrong here, just a spectrum of an infinite number of possibilities, from which I always select the one that spontaneously occurs to me. The algorithm allows an infinite amount of room for these spontaneous decisions. So the distance stipulated by the algorithm, the duration, does not correspond to a distance in millimeters on a grid drawn with a ruler; rather, I note it with a hand-drawn line that on paper can proceed upwards or downwards, or make a bend and thus potentially produce three-dimensionality or depth. This spontaneity naturally contains a great deal of expression, because the moment you are in at the time makes itself felt in the work, either consciously or unconsciously. This spontaneity also ultimately connects the algorithm with the chance element, with chaos. I regard chance and chaos as a freedom, one that is part of the algorithm and articulated on a nonverbal algorithmic level. It is important that – aside from my supplementary handwritten comments regarding distance and duration – the entire algorithm is perceptible only on this nonverbal, visual level.

SD

With regard to these handwritten notes on distance and duration, I would I like to talk about time and space as parameters in your drawings. You always identify these elements very concretely, thus clearly pinpointing – be it with a note about coordinates or indications of geographical directions – the depicted series of actions. In a way you spread out a spatiotemporal grid in which the individual actions unfold.

JV

There is always a kind of system of coordinates, but – similar to the spontaneous treatment of the algorithms – it is freely composed. The same sheet of paper often has indications pointing in different spatial directions. Even the notated sequence of movements is more like a request to think the same thing several times and in various versions and to regard the position of the

observers as rotational. I see every theme as something moving, just as I myself move in my exploration of this theme. For me this means there is never one single true and valid perspective of something; rather, the aspects that stand side by side and on equal footing on the paper or in the process of a series in this open system of coordinates always become visible only through the process of variation.

SD

Within this framework, how would you define the “space” of your drawings?

JV

As a space between me and the world, as a space in which one must negotiate everything: the perception of others and the stimulations coming from outside as well as inner emotions and thoughts. It is the space for experiencing the world and yourself. So it ultimately is not so important whether the things dealt with in the works come from within me or from outside. In the end this all remains the same space. The space resembles what one experiences when one listens to music, or maybe it is even the same thing. When I notate such specific factors as sequences of movements or geographical details, I think it is the right thing to do because, after all, these are all parameters that have an effect on you when you experience something. Even if you are in a very introspective state, exterior factors affect you. It is exactly the way it is in real life: when you are sitting at a particular place and thinking, then it is a concrete place; you hear sounds, look in a particular direction; you are affected by gravity just as you are by the weather; the atmosphere of the place you have just come from is just as present as what you are thinking about at the moment. Although your thoughts themselves can certainly be directed toward things in the future. All of this occurs in a very natural way simultaneously and is subject to constant change. My latest works – examinations of wing depictions down through the history of art, which gives me the chance to explore more thoroughly the theme of flying, which has long fascinated me – ultimately traverse the historical element as well, which now can be viewed as an axis in the space of my works. Similar to the performance of a historic piece of music, various forms are brought into the present and examined from a contemporary perspective.

SD

Does this mean that the space of your drawings is actually subject to changes and expansion?

JV

Even if the matrix that describes the space and its parameters appears in all of my works, looking back on my works I would nevertheless say that a development can be traced from the constructed to the exemplary, from the imaginative space to the experiential space. Largely because of my recent integration of colors and pictorial forms into my works, I have the impression that aspects can now be expressed in concrete terms that used to be only “named” by means of handwritten notes in order to make them imaginable.

SD

You refer here to another key characteristic of your works in which handwritten notes frequently represent the only connection to reality: their alternation between text and image.

JV

As to the relationship between text and image, in my works as well as in terms of space, shifts and changes in emphasis can certainly be observed. I think that in my early works there was an equilibrium between the pictorial element – in the sense of abstract, visually perceptible structures of characters – and the language element, in the form of handwritten matrix descriptions. Now an imbalance has set in, with the result that the written matrix is declining. I now have the impression that many things are diminished when they stand as a word next to a form, which I regard as an equally valid medium of communication. An unintended competition arises, and communication then happens on two levels simultaneously. For the present I have retained my language matrix because it helps me to focus on things, but I think that over time I could give this up as well, but only when I have succeeded in finding an ideal form for the translation of terms into pictures. For what I see as crucial is that much more is possible in the power of imagination than in the time-based, real “Now.” Things can be described with a much greater degree of complexity with text and directions than through their translation into visual forms and objects, such as into a literally spinning hill with a certain materiality in the space. This is similar to the performance of a piece of music: a particular performance in terms of a fixed form or object happens only once, but in principle, every other conceivable performance is latently present in the score as well. This is for me the essence of the freedom of the script, which I see as key.

SD

You say that in your opinion, there is a danger in translating thoughts and observations into a space not in the form of a score but as objects. Nonetheless, your works include a number of installations. How are these works to be “read”?

JV

My installations are of equal value to my other works and should also be read as such. I disconnect individual aspects in the form of an examination as movement, as a presence in the space. In my 2010 installation *Grammar* (ill. p. X), for example, I explored in this way the subject of rotation, which was also a central theme for me at the time, while also attempting to run through the entire possibility space of language from A to Z using the word “love.” Analogous to the 64 options that the German language offers, I inscribed a total of 64 airplane propellers – here, of course, one finds a parallel to my exploration of flying – with all the positive and negative conjugation forms of the verb “to love,” such as “I love you – I love you not.” I intentionally did not stipulate the rotation speed of the propellers. This resulted in aspects that cannot be described in a drawing, such as the fact that the writing becomes illegible when the propellers turn extremely fast. The blurry boundaries of the effect that things lose their legibility can be examined with much greater precision when they are presented in a concrete manner in a three-dimensional space.

SD

Could one conclude from this that the installations represent points in your work process where new aspects and new thoughts emerge – such as the theme of rotation in *Grammar*, the interest in the interaction with the viewers in the 2009 works *MI* and *MII* (ill. p. X), your exploration of color in the installations of the 2009/2010 group *Botanic Code* (ill. p. X) – or where your inquiries take on a new emphasis?

JV

My notations are devoted primarily to imagined things; they are scores. With the translation of specific aspects and inquiries into real space, using movement as well, I attempt to gain knowledge, to run through possibilities. In this respect, my installations are usually also milestones; nevertheless, they stand alone and should not be misinterpreted as a commentary on the rest of my works. They are always based on the examination of a phenomenon, but then they end up revealing many new aspects that I never would have thought of before.

SD

I would like to talk about the subject of color, which was mentioned in connection with the installations of the group *Botanic Code*. In series such as the 2008 *STATE/Random* (ill. p. X) and the 2009 *Symphonic Area* (ill. p. X) you sometimes use red ink to emphasize certain

elements or to charge them with associations, such as the **electric current** line or the element **beat**. In *Botanic Code*, however, the entire color spectrum plays a crucial role, ultimately finding its way into your drawings as well. Can you briefly describe why color suddenly took on such a significant role in your work?

JV

The urge to work more with color resulted from the fact that color is a crucial parameter in the perception of reality, one I could neglect in my earlier works, which were more devoted to the construction of possibility spaces. It was in the works of the series *Superdestination* (ill. p. X), which I began working on in 2009, that for the first time I tried to capture what I perceived with the greatest degree of spontaneity, using the corresponding color and form in creating lines. But color appears not only as line but also as an outline or as a two-dimensional form, which led to my work with silhouettes. Eventually I expanded my analysis of color to include the perception of spaces, the view of gardens – such as with the works of *Botanic Code* – and the way I study paintings.

SD

As you mentioned, beginning in 2011 the integration of collaged color surfaces into your works led you to a system that coupled form and color and at the same time made them accessible. Could this orientation toward form also be seen as a reflection of the beginnings of your study of Chinese and Japanese culture?

JV

My study of Chinese and subsequently Japanese art started when I saw an exhibition of Chinese album leaves. These pictures showed me how color and form can be incredibly precise text. How the subtleties of what is painted, each pattern of a blanket on which people are sitting, represent an information code about what the people are thinking and doing, while each color provides detailed information about the atmosphere. This equality of the different levels spoke in favor of my form of communication as well, in which I regard color, form, line and text as all being equally valid conveyors of information. In this way I began to study these cultures more closely. With regard to Chinese painting, this articulates itself in the form of an analysis of things I perceive, which I arrange according to color. On the other hand, in the 2012 *Japanese Erotic Art* (ill. p. X) I translated my fascination with Japanese shungas into a matrix extending over the 64-sheet series, ordering the individual sheets vertically, one below the other. Thus the series – as a parallel to the Japanese writing system – is a kind of text, which consolidates my perception of all shungas.

SD

You subsequently also made use of this methodology in your reading of philosophical and literary texts, such as *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, by Roland Barthes, Arthur Schopenhauer's *Die Kunst, glücklich zu sein*, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*, and Niklas Luhmann's *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*. What motivated you to translate the act of reading into drawings? What criteria did you apply in selecting the appropriate texts?

JV

My interest in translating my reading of philosophical and literary texts into drawings is rooted in the development of my work from the level of imagination to the exploration of perception and on to the reflection on experience, because philosophical texts are also always reports of specific experiences of coming to terms with the world. It is very interesting to see how other people have devoted themselves to certain problems and questions, and what explanations, interpretations and approaches they have found. I am also always interested in the circumstances that led to these people's thoughts, because the texts are, of course, always a reflection of their times. The selection of the texts always has to do with my specific life situation and thus almost automatically runs parallel to my artistic explorations. But this is not a mirror-image relationship, as evidenced by my study of Arthur Schopenhauer's rules for life, *Die Kunst, glücklich zu sein*, which I received as a gift. I found the proclamation of the desire to talk about what happiness is, which confronts the reader in the very title of the book, to be at once provocative and absurd. "The art of being happy" – where is the art in this, and what is art, anyway? This confrontation was sufficient to make me decide that I was interested in what happens inside me while reading. But during the reading process I am not as concerned with emotions as with what inner images the text evokes. Reading these texts conjures up visions and images that I then try to capture in my work. With Niklas Luhmann as well – a prominent thinker in systems theory who wrote in a very detailed manner about love, albeit pithily and with a certain humor – merely the way he formulates his thoughts produced an onslaught of pictures in my imagination that demanded an extremely animated form of expression. My drawings therefore reflect the alignment of my experiences with the texts just as much as they do my mental pictures of what I am reading. One shouldn't misunderstand this as an illustration of the text; it is actually the notation of the reading process and the inner pictures that it evokes. Sometimes for pages at a time the text does not evoke any images at all; other times half of a sentence or an interesting thought constellation is enough to trigger the creation of an entire series.

SD

On a formal level it can be observed that in the course of your study of philosophical texts, leaf gold and leaf silver suddenly found their way into your works. These precious metals have numerous connotations – one is reminded, for example, of the use of gold in icon paintings. Are you aware of the potential for these kinds of associations? What was behind your decision to integrate precious metals into the surface of your works?

JV

I began working with gold in 2012, during my analysis of Arthur Schopenhauer's *Die Kunst, glücklich zu sein* (ill. p. X). The reason for this was not the connotations associated with this metal but rather the search for an adequate material for translating philosophical subject matter under the broad topic of happiness. What I liked about leaf gold was that it took on a different look depending on how the light fell on it or the angle of view, so that it was not restricted to a certain appearance. Because of this, the form that one determines and fills with gold takes on the character of a delineation marking for something that can never be conclusively fixed or declared. I see the changeability and non-determinability of this reflective surface as the ideal vehicle for expressing idealistic and philosophical aspects.

SD

Why did you then use leaf copper and leaf white gold in your 2014 series *Incommunicability* (ill. p. X), in which the focus is more on the study of the human body?

JV

In this case I chose copper because it is an extremely conductive material. The choice of material here was related to considerations familiar to me from my study of the works of Joseph Beuys. At the same time, copper has a hue that comes very close to skin color and has an incredible warmth. Copper also corrodes very strongly. It changes appearance, turning green or black, depending on what conditions it is subject to. I intentionally did not seal the copper surfaces, because this aspect of copper, in particular, should be regarded as part of the work that focuses on the human body – which is equally subject to a high degree of changeability.

SD

What brought about your artistic exploration of your own body? These kinds of issues are not generally associated with your work.

JV

The *Incommunicability* series resulted on the one hand from my analysis of Niklas Luhmann's *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*, and on the other it is related to a dramatic experience in my own life. The series is based on the fundamental question of what remains when one omits everything. Regardless of what happens, the contact to the space remains. You always sense where you are touching the ground. This realization was the starting point for this series, which reflects the contact points of my body on the paper while I was working. Many positions of my body are depicted next to each other and overlap each other, because I constantly reflect on the relation to the previous position as well. This is shown by the lines, which always connect two positions, two prints, with each other, the result being a kind of relation mesh. *Incommunicability* is thus also a work about relations, about references – a subject that I have been exploring intensively from the very beginning, particularly in my works between 2000 and 2008, which are constructed in a dual manner or address principles that are based on duality. A relation for me is the connection to a counterpart, like the relationships between people, but coming to terms with a subject, a text or a space also requires a counterpart. In order to point out this dual aspect I utilized not only copper but also white gold, because it offers the greatest contrast to copper.

SD

While the subject of relations represents a continuous driving force in your works, when one considers the *Incommunicability* series, developments within your work are also evident. When one compares *Incommunicability* with, for example, the 2009 series *Declination of 8* (ill. p. X), where you already were using the notation of positions on the paper to represent the basis of your reflections on perception, this makes the transformation from the imaginative space to the experiential space, which you mentioned earlier, comprehensible.

JV

Yes, absolutely. The comparison points up this change. In the *Declination of 8* series there are 18 positions that are precisely measured out and distributed evenly over the sheet of paper, and from these positions I imagined the perception of the space, the various angles of vision. In the *Incommunicability* series the positions were assumed spontaneously on the paper; they were not generated in the imagination but rather are silhouettes of the contact points of my body with the space. The drawings of the *Declination of 8* series are completely constructed. They are based on actual measured proportions, but not on actually assumed positions. My goal was to imagine the perception, the movement from the perspective of one position, and

every additional mark, every additional marking is the unfolding of all possibilities in the context of this one concrete task. All variations are played through and all possibilities juxtaposed with each other one time in this set pattern, in which everything changes, increases or decreases by one centimeter. This process characterized many of my early works, in which I addressed a single subject and attempted to unfold its spectrum of possibilities. In the *Declination of 8* series it was the element of **viewing angles**, while in the 2006 series *Untitled 1 to 14* it was the **temperature pattern** (ill. p. X). Here, I wrote out across eleven sheets of paper the temperature, always falling by one degree, from the earth's surface into outer space.

SD

While your early works focused on the construction of possibility fields and imaginative spaces, in your more recent series you turn your attention toward things you have specifically experienced. The juxtaposition of your 2009 series *Symphonic Area* (ill. p. X) with the 2012 work *Ludwig van Beethoven Sonatas 1–32* (ill. p. X) offers a good basis for comparison in this regard.

JV

The *Symphonic Area* series could really be described as a meta-score made up of basic elements of music such as **melody**, **caesura** (break) and **beat**. Each sheet of paper in the series has a dual structure, consists of two systems that expand and contract in a mirror-inverted manner but not homogeneously, and is based on a strictly numerical score that in a counted sequence precisely determines how many **melodies**, **caesuras**, **beats**, etc. appear on each sheet and how they are related to each other. This is therefore a completely composed meta-system. For example, above every melody, depicted by curved line, there is a note that this can be any conceivable melody.

SD

With this meta-system you open an imaginative space that allows the viewers to envision their own personal piece of music.

JV

Yes, exactly. But in the *Ludwig van Beethoven Sonatas 1–32* series, which, of course, refers to specific musical works, the object was much more to extract the emotional spectrum that is ingrained in Beethoven's score. The basis for this was all the attitudes and tempos, all the instructions regarding intonation and dynamics that Beethoven provided so the pieces could

be played properly. Each sheet of paper is defined by an axis between two **internal centers**. The **internal centers** serve as markers to indicate what is happening internally as one listens to a particular piece. Each of my spontaneously drawn lines is connected with this axis as well as with one of Beethoven's directions describing ideas, attitudes and emotional states. So what one sees as a drawing, as a structure, names the space between that which is unnamable, which is felt, and the nameable attitude. Every line follows the trail from the point where the attitude is not yet nameable, not yet differentiated, to the point where it becomes nameable. And then, of course, the simultaneousness and the overlapping of these dynamics reveal themselves. Basically, if one reads the drawings as a score, all intersections of lines on this axis result in new emotional states in diverse variants that can also be described as animated. Even as a child I found Beethoven fascinating, not only because his music evoked pictures inside me, but also because I always felt that it was scanning my soul. In my opinion he was a master in describing and generating a kind of musical space, which I orient my drawings toward as well. After all, the score, the drawing, does nothing but make this space accessible. It is a textualization, a description of atmospheres, of experiences, of inner worlds.

SD

I would like to talk about the subject of emotion, which you just mentioned. In contrast to the often scientific aesthetic of your works, emotions seem to play an important role in them, and not only in *Ludwig van Beethoven Sonatas 1–32*. When you define the element **pop song** as a storage element for individual and collective emotionality, when you devote yourself to the emotional act of kissing with **2 people kissing**, when you study Chinese paintings or Japanese shungas that depict the sexual act, or when you analyze texts like *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* or *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*, the question arises as to what role emotion plays in your works.

JV

No one is free from emotions. So I view emotions as central parameters of my analyses, since every idea or perception is influenced by personal feelings. In this sense, the emotional level in my works has always been present. Looking back, however, I would say that there is an increased freedom in the way I deal with this emotional factor in my works, and that more and more I immerse myself in this subject matter. And this, in turn, can be seen as running parallel to the shift in my interest from imagination to concrete experience. In my early works – and this applies to the previously mentioned element **pop song** that I developed in 2006 (ill. p. X) – I still described emotionality from a very distanced point of view as an apparatus. But my

inquiries in this regard have now become more specific, such as in the *Ludwig van Beethoven Sonatas 1–32* series, or in the related *Emotional Spectrum* (ill. p. X), which I created between 2012 and 2013 and is based on the study of a list of all emotion-related expressions in English. The term “emotion” has now become even too vague for me. What I am really interested in is the inner experience, attitudes, feelings, intuitions and innumerable other factors that I see as all merging fluidly into one other.

SD

I would like to take up this theme of “inner experience” and conclude by talking about the reception of your works in terms of their aesthetic. In your works it is striking that, by openly laying out their matrix and thus your procedure as well, you also issue an explicit invitation to viewers to “read” your works. Parallel to this, your works are also fascinating for their aesthetic clarity. How do you perceive this fact, as well as the potential tension between these two dimensions?

JV

For me, both dimensions are relevant, and I think it is important that the reception of my works allows for different possibilities, since it obviously varies from person to person how one approaches the works, how one gains a sense of whether the image has any appeal, whether one can relate to the work or not. Even if the starting point of my themes is of a private nature, I think that my work also raises fundamental human questions. Showing my works in public is merely the desire to enter into a dialogue about them. From this perspective, the fact that my works allow for multiple ways for one to relate to them corresponds to their structure as a comprehensive offer to the viewers to engage in communication.