



*Marina Pinsky: it's the images that are worth repeating*  
Conceptual Fine Arts, July 2020  
(author: Julia Mullié)  
1/6

## CONCEPTUAL FINE ARTS

Everyone who saw Marina Pinsky's solo exhibition *Dyed Channel* at Kunsthalle Basel in 2016 will think of her work when taking medicines. For this exhibition she developed *Pharmakon* (2014-2015), a series of gigantic pill strips of 2,5 by 1 meter. The resin sculptures of pill strips contain ceramic pills made from "terra sigillata", an ancient medicinal clay that has been embossed with a reference to the clay's origin. Pinsky embossed them with a contemporary reference to medicine's origin: contours of the architecture of pharmaceutical companies in Basel. The clean, modernist buildings on the pills contrast with the photos on the back of the strips depicting photos of an abandoned pharmaceutical company in Brussels where Pinsky took photos. Pills refer to a daily routine, but also to the dependence created by the pharmaceutical system which, despite Pinsky's depiction of parts of maps, is by no means transparent.



Marina Pinsky, *Dyed Channel*, Kunsthalle Basel, 2016. Installation shot. Images courtesy of the artist and Kunsthalle Basel. Photos by Philipp Hänger, Hugard & Vanoverschelde.

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2/6

For each exhibition Pinsky delves into the specific local history. Because of her fascination for the relationship between place and time and the specificity of this combination, architecture is an often recurring element in her work. In Basel this was reflected in the floor plans of pharmaceutical companies, for her first solo exhibition at 303 Gallery in New York it was the Wyckoff House, one of the oldest surviving buildings built in New York by the Dutch in the seventeenth century. However, a large part of the house that still stands today was built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Pinsky made an ingenious model consisting of ceramic and styrofoam, the parts of which are held together with a lashing strap. Paradoxically, the model is incredibly detailed, but does not match the actual house one-on-one. It is these kinds of contradictions with which Pinsky urges you to look at her work at a different pace.



Installation view with the Wyckoff House Model: Marina Pinsky, 303 Gallery, New York, February 22 - March 31, 2018.  
Courtesy 303 Gallery, New York.

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3/6

For her current exhibition *Four Color Theorem* at CLEARING in Brussels, Pinsky again developed scale models, but now deriving more directly from photography. By fusing physical and virtual images, Pinsky creates a new kind of reality in which an image can be experienced rather than viewed. Before you see the scale models, you first run into seven aluminum disks. On the outside is a photo of Theodor Scheimpflug's perspective-correcting early aerial surveillance camera, invented in 1897. On the back are photos taken with that camera, which in turn were photographed by Marina Pinsky. Scheimpflug's camera can be seen as the technological precursor to the camera's that Google uses in its satellites and to create 'street view'. The bronze scale models in the exhibition are based on images from Google Maps and combined with Pinsky's personal experiences of living in the neighborhoods that are depicted in the sculptures: Koekelberg in Brussels and Hansaviertel in Berlin. Both neighborhoods are divided into fragments and presented in the same style, so that they are more or less the same, while the actual architecture is very different. Pinsky emphasizes how the images on Google Maps ensure that every city looks more or less the same.



Marina Pinsky, *Truck with wall drawing* at *Four Color Theorem*, CLEARING, 2020. Installation shot. © Eden Krsmanovic / Courtesy of the artist and CLEARING New York, Brussels

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4/6

There is an interesting link between Pinsky's approach and the ideas of philosopher Vilém Flusser (1920-1991). He considered the creation and widespread implementation of new technologies to affect almost all areas of human existence, and therefore he believed it is essential to deal critically with the technical image and the device that generates such images. According to Flusser, it is not the information shown in the technical image that is the message, but the technical image itself. This expresses the technical, political, social and industrial context in which an image has been created.



Marina Pinsky, *No Title*, 2011, Archival Inkjet Print. Courtesy of the artist.

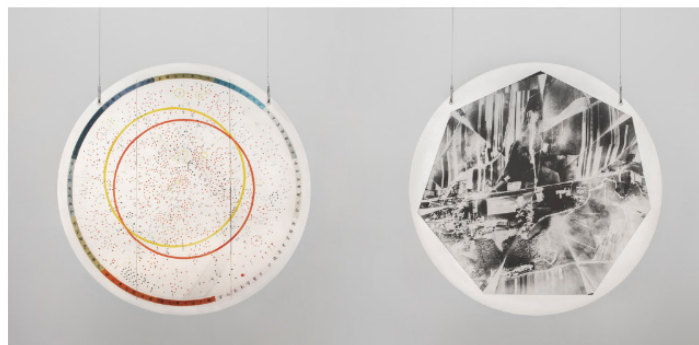
Pinsky flawlessly exposes these relationships in the bronze scale models of the cities in which she lives. Flusser wrote that the only way to break the technical image production system is to do something different with the device that produces the images than what the industry intended it to do. That's exactly what Pinsky is capable of: turning photos into sculptures and vice versa; making analog and digital layers overlap; interweaving place and time several times and adjusting the tempo of viewing the images she creates. She shows how the omnipotence of technology is able to determine all human and social relations and at the same time is able to show its complexity.

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 5/6



Marina Pinsky, *Not Yet Titled (Foam Blocks 1-10)*, 2017 (detail). *Strata of the Slow, Buried Trench*, Vleeshal Markt, Middelburg. Photo: Marina Pinsky

Pinsky's fascination for place and time is also reflected in her interest in logistics and transportation: trucks, trains and planes return regularly. This movement through time was central to her exhibition *Flight 714 at Sydney*. On her flight from Berlin to Sydney, via London and Singapore, Pinsky made an ink drawing. The colors - red, green and blue - reflect the standard RGB values that play an important role in digital photography. The paper scroll was especially made to fit the tray table on the plane. During this flight Pinsky drew the landscape that passed under her. Just like in the works mentioned above, Pinsky manages to control the pace of viewing: on one occasion the elongated drawing is more abstract, on the other it is more detailed. Anyone who has ever flown knows the certain lack of sense of time and place. The drawing seems to attempt to contain this displacement.



Marina Pinsky, *Joseon Map of the Astronomical Order* and *Nebra Sky Disk*. © Eden Kesmanovic / Courtesy of the artist and CLEARING New York, Brussels

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6/6

This is a more recurring element in Marina Pinsky's work: the presence of structures, diagrams, calendars and clocks is a common thread in the oeuvre. They are all ways of understanding the complexity of the relationship between place and time, or at least trying to get a grip on this relationship. Take *Golden Hat Mandrel* (2020), a series of sculptures based on the "Golden Hat", a European artefact dating back to the Bronze Age, part of the collection of the Neues Museum in Berlin. Pinsky made wooden replicas of the golden hat enlarging the object's calendar function by adding color. In addition, she made tapestries with a diagram of the calendar function as shown on the hat. Pinsky's preference for craft seems to be related to the functionality of apparently decorative objects.

By connecting the hat and tapestries, Pinsky shows that the daily structures that are complex in themselves are also interrelated. These connections arise from technological, human and social relationships. Flusser claimed that the linear, causal historical time has fallen apart in an infinite universe of reproducible images. Pinsky demonstrates the ability to combine various elements from this infinite network into the concrete, precisely by using the device responsible for shattering that network.



Marina Pinsky, *Dyed Channel*, Kunsthalle Basel, 2016. Installation shot. Images courtesy of the artist and Kunsthalle Basel.  
Photos by Philipp Hängler, Hugard & Vanoverschelde.