

# Katja Mater

## What We See And What We Know



13.10—8.12.2013

Art often begins with the desire to make something visible that otherwise would remain wholly or partly invisible — wondrous details, complex structures and aspects of reality that are beyond the reach of our natural perception. The latter is also an important starting point for Katja Mater. While she tries to capture the poetry of the moment, she unveils the beauty of basic laws of physics.



I

*Site-Specific Density Drawings 23/08/13, Maastricht, 2013*  
5 instant photographs, 4x5 inch, on a painted wall and floor

In instant photography — such as the Polaroid camera — the time of exposure (almost) coincides with that of the development of the image. As with painting, the colours and tones are mixed on the spot. When exposing the same surface several times, one can introduce a layering into the final image. This is exactly what Katja Mater does in her *Site-Specific Density Drawings*. The basic principle of this work is quite simple; she paints the white wall and floor in the exhibition space — section by section — black and then white again. The artist photographs the different stages and stacks various ‘moments’ on each other by working with multiple exposures. She thus creates layered images; two on the way to black and two on the way back to white. And since in the end only a white wall remains, one single picture documents the wall when painted completely black. The images constitute the memory and documentation of this process as well as something entirely new: ‘paintings’ that we would otherwise never have seen.

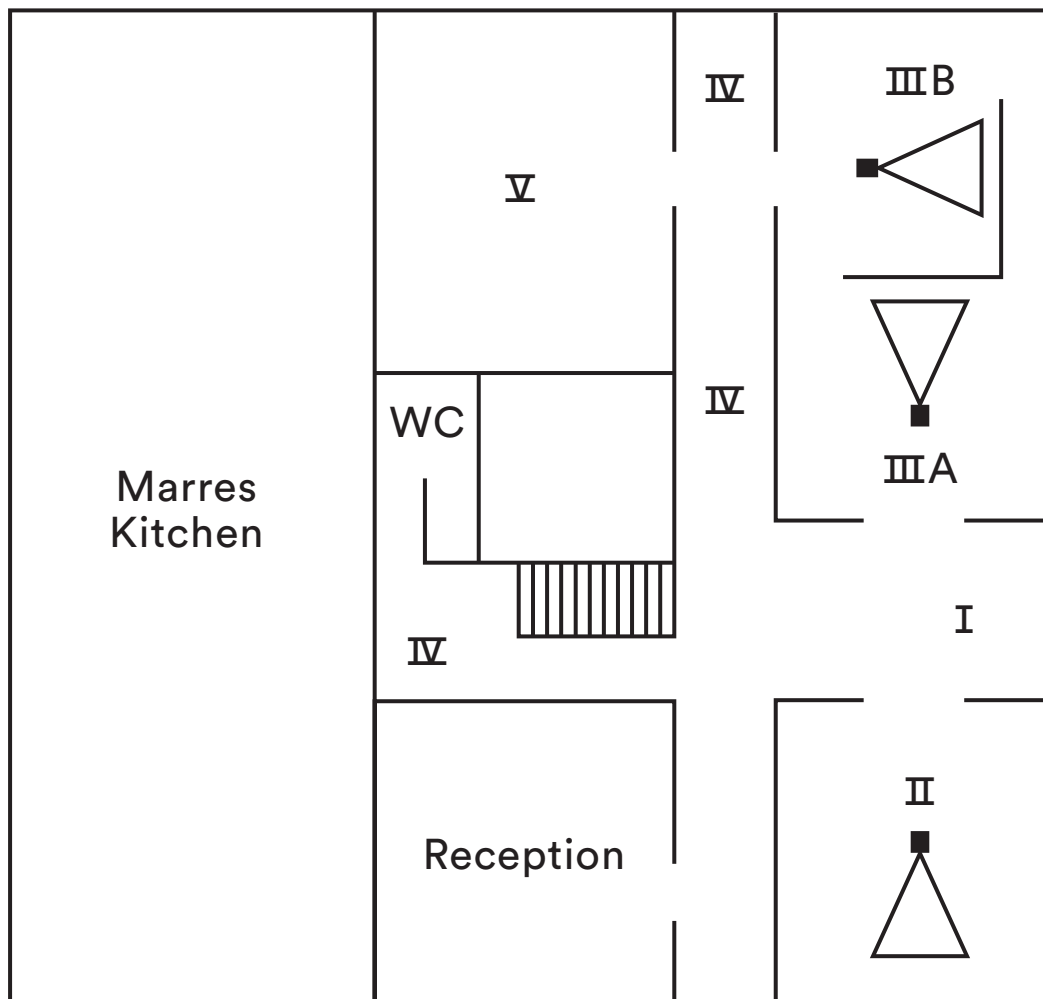


II

*Composition of Light, 2013*  
16mm film, 04'27" loop

We do not notice white light. It is so normal that we usually do not realise at all how much it colours our perception and reality. However, when white light falls through a prism, suddenly all colours of the rainbow appear: red, orange, yellow, green, blue and indigo. This wondrous phenomenon is embedded in our everyday reality. For *Composition of Light*, Mater built a device that can project the

Ground floor



colours caused by the refraction of white light onto the wall. She then filmed these colours, exposing the same filmstrip over and over again, so the colours of the projection — the end result — reappear side by side. A new composition is created from the ingredients of ordinary light.

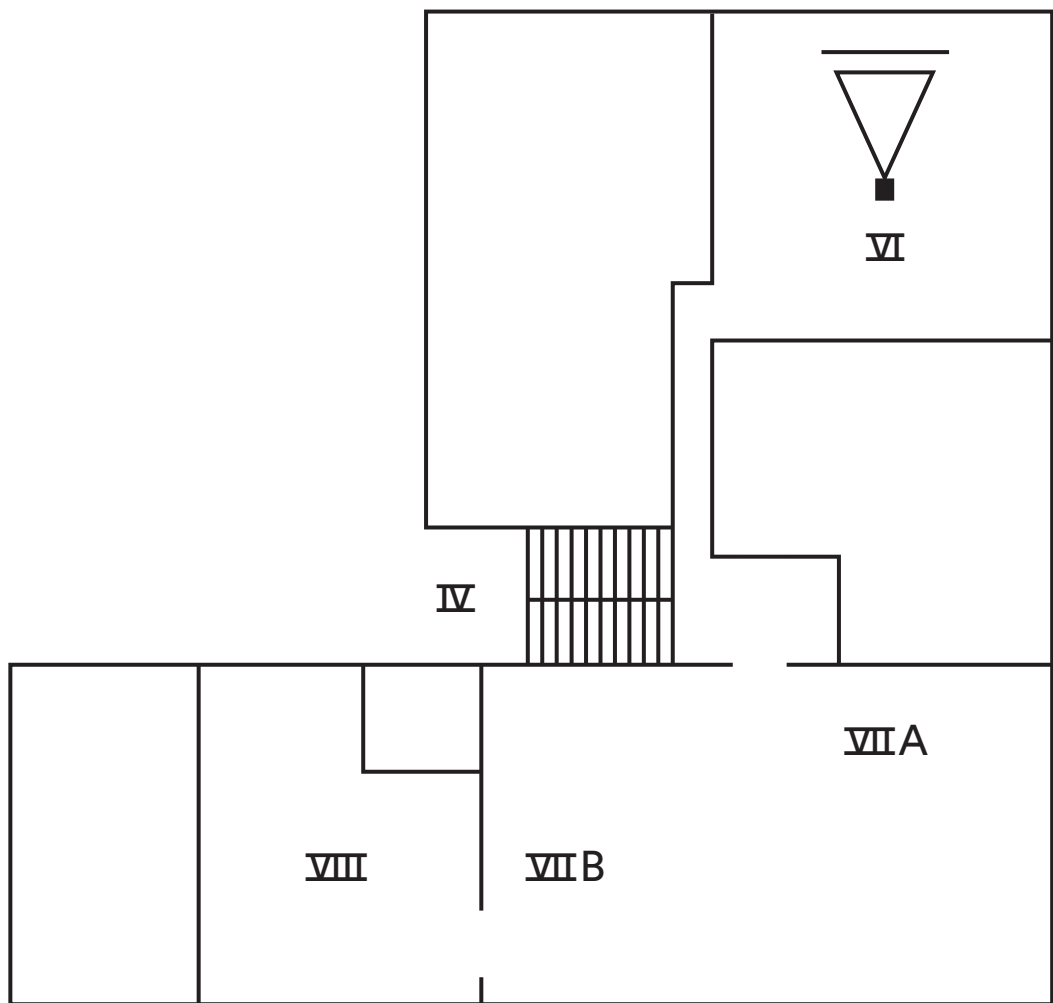


IIIA

*Searching for White*, 2009  
16 mm film,  
2'25" loop

By making use of a colour wheel Mater attempts to blend the spectrum colours into white. The colour wheel is based on a simple principle; the faster the wheel spins, the less the human eye is able to distinguish the various colours. With the right combination

First floor



of colours, a white circle appears. Using a trial-and-error approach, Mater attempts to find the right balance between the colours that would result in a white circle. She starts with an imperfect colour wheel on a wall, filmed with a camera that rotates around its own axis, so the colours will blend in the recording. At a certain point, Mater walks into the image, only visible as a black dot, in order to adjust the colours. The palette slowly shifts from yellow to green to blue, until the circle becomes (almost) white.

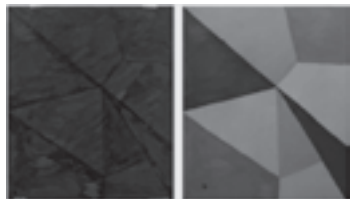


III B

*38 Colour Wheels on Black and White Slides, 2009*  
Projection of 35mm-slides, black and white

Black-and-white photography is based on a gradient system; according to the logic of contrast and exposure, each colour must be translated in a shade of grey in order to be

displayed. This principle is also applied in the slide series *38 Colour Wheels on Black and White Slides*, in which the colours of Mater's handmade colour wheels correspond with a variety of shades of grey. Here, the artist seems to playfully refer to the supposed 'objectivity' of photography — it is not a clear record of what we see, but an interpretation of reality.



IV

*Density Drawings*, 2010–2011  
Diptychs, each consisting of a painting and a C-print

The previously shown *Site-Specific Density Drawings* are based on the principles of Katja Mater's *Density Drawings*, in which the camera becomes a drawing tool. Using ink, pencil or paint, Mater colours the planes until a monochrome image is created. The colour of the paper blends with the colour of the used drawing materials. Meanwhile, the artist photographs the different stages by exposing a single negative over and over again. The more exposures, the darker and more saturated the plane. This results in two 'paintings', the layered photographic image and the monochrome painted surface, thereby questioning which one is the end product and which one merely serves as documentation.



V

*Time Passing Objects*,  
2010–2012  
C-prints of objects  
of paper and cardboard

Photography means traveling back to a time that no longer is. Or to several moments at the same time, when you stack different moments

in time, as Katja Mater does. In *Time Passing Objects* she paints three-dimensional objects made of paper and cardboard. Because the paint that she applies makes the objects heavier, they become increasingly unstable. The objects also move slightly when new layers of paint are applied. During the multiple exposures, this leads to shifts, resulting in new shades and tones in the photographic image. Coincidence plays an important role in the process; new forms of fragile beauty arise, like snow crystals on a window or footprints in the sand.



VI

*Motion Drawing*,  
2013  
35 mm film,  
01'49" loop

In this film Katja Mater translates the principle of the *Density Drawings* into moving images by introducing it to the realm of (animation) film. In fact, the *Density Drawings* can already be seen as a form of 'animation' — something that is explicitly addressed in this work. Painting is always a form of 'moving image', given the gradual process in which the image is created. In the film, Mater moves a camera along gradually painted paper strips (shown elsewhere in this room). As in the photographic series, the film is exposed multiple times.

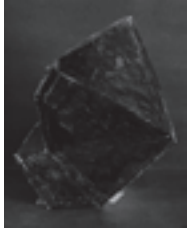


VIIA

*Interior A-H*, 2013  
Installation consisting of  
a wooden structure and  
a series of C-prints

Mater photographed the inside of a self-built wooden room through eight holes, while gradually painting the interior of the wooden structure from blue to black. The different camera angles create a strange impression of the space that seems to float between a three-dimensional reality and a

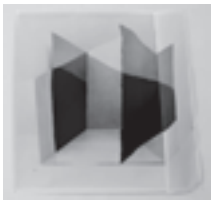
two-dimensional representation of that reality. The visible holes, architectural lines and angles are the only elements that anchor the image in the pre-photographic reality and refer back to the black wooden construction in the exhibition space.



VII B

*Residuum*, 2010  
C-print

*Residuum* refers to Katja Mater's series *Objects*. The image presented here is a single shot of a painted object that she used for this earlier series. The photographed object is completely black, just like the background. The image documents the state of the paper object at the end of a process it has gone through.



VIII

*Folded Variations 04*,  
2013  
5 folded C-prints

A photograph is not just a representation of something, it also is something, such as a piece of paper that you can tear, crumple or fold. The *Folded Variations* series consists of paper objects that Mater painted and documented through multiple exposures on a single negative. By folding the photos in different ways, new paper 'objects' are created that change the form of the depicted objects and give them a new, literal sense of depth.

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# Studies

Images of Katja Mater's four most recent works combined with a selection of preliminary sketches, drawings and photographs.

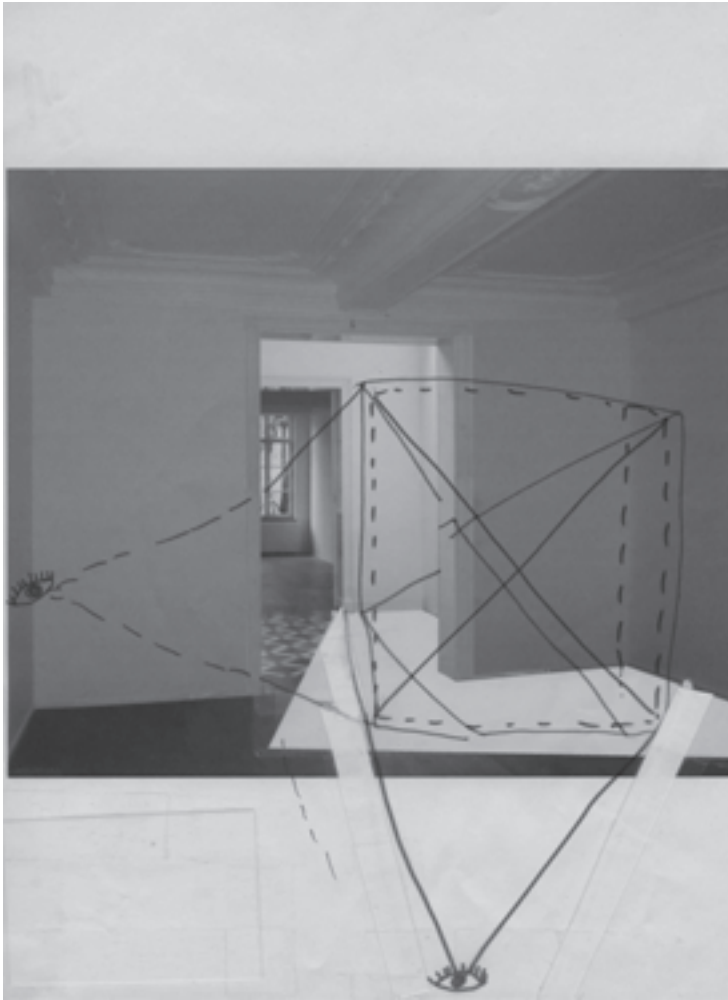
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Site-Specific Density Drawings  
23/08/13, Maastricht, 2013

2  
Motion Drawing, 2013

3  
Composition of Light, 2013

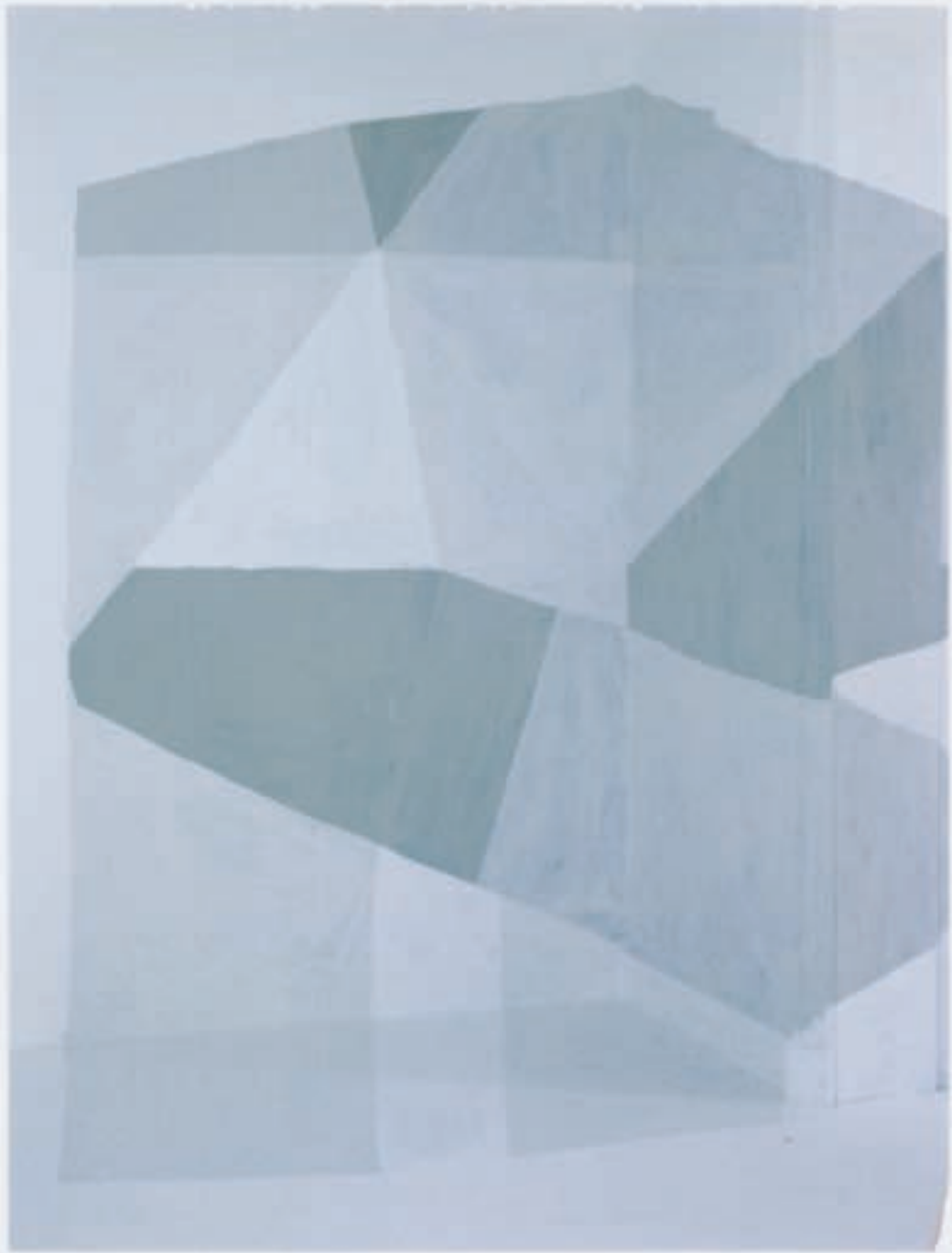
4  
Interior A-H, 2013

1









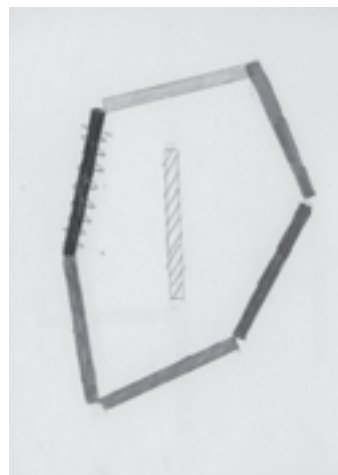
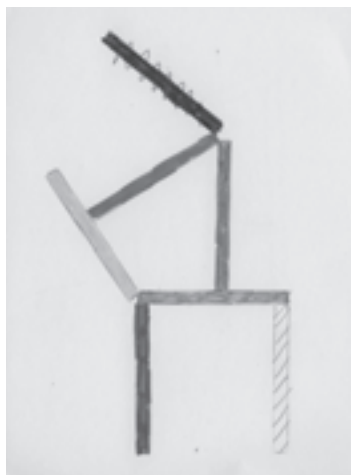
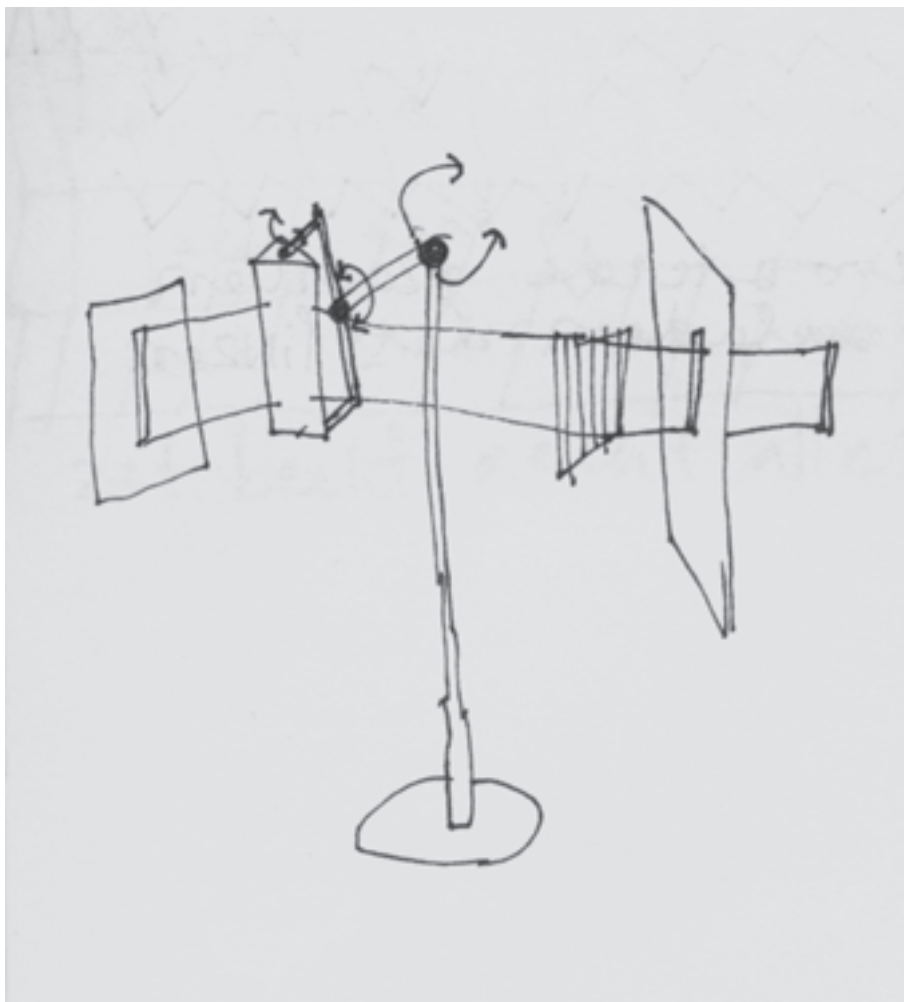


2





3





4











