

Reimagining The Future Of Art

JUNE 2022

# HELL, YES!

United States \$ 35 | Europe € 25

**NAE ZERKA**  
Transformation is not  
a metaphor

+ Frieze New York  
+ Art Basel Hong Kong



# Nae Zerka

## ***Transformation is not a methaphor***

Transformation is understood to mean an absolutely fundamental change. From a social perspective, the term is used to describe sudden changes in political, economic or technological development. The artist Nae Zerka looks at this term from an artistic perspective and wants to make understandable what has long been taken for granted.

Every transformation is a long-term, ongoing process of learning and searching, which is associated with many uncertainties, says Nae Zerka. It only comes to a conclusion when new system structures have become permanently established and stabilized. A transformation can be triggered by new technical possibilities as well as significantly changed social needs. We live in a time in which both occur at the same time, which is not the case for every generation.

In recent times, there has often been talk of human transformation. On the one hand, this expresses the global digitization process and the fact that central questions about the future of humanity will be decided in an artificially created digital world. On the other hand, this transformation describes the diverse changes that will shape the face of life in the future. However, transformations cannot simply be controlled; they can only be steered in a socially accepted direction through negotiation processes.

***>> As an artist, I try to reflect at this point. But as a digital artist, I am naturally in a dilemma. Am I allowed to ask all these questions at all without providing an answer?***

Nae Zerka



Images of woman | Independent & Image, Chongqing, CHINA

**In your most recent works you show transformation that also thematizes a kind of extinction?**

Yes. The creation of a metaverse is on the agenda of the so-called digital giants. But is it even possible to digitise human beings? To illustrate this transformation, I have created digital 3D meshes from black and white portrait photographs and distorted them. These are then additionally painted over. In order to see the truth, something has to be taken away, so to speak. This also creates a kind of erasure. The works are also mostly realised without color in order not to distract from the search for truth.

**>> "But those who are adaptable need not fear. As humans, we are, as evolution has proven." Nae Zerka**

**Is it then more disruptive, so to speak?**

Yes and no. Disruption is a much used buzzword that companies in particular fear. Disruption can replace established things and thus make entire things disappear. But those who are adaptable need not fear. As humans, we are, as evolution has proven. That means I tend to cover up existing things, but that doesn't mean that they are then gone. So here I use a technique that was already thematized in Austrian art history by Arnulf Rainer. Whereby he has proceeded much more radically!

**The art world itself is undergoing a disruptive transformation. Crypto bubble?**

First and foremost, you have to look at the underlying technology. NFT is just a technical carrier medium. The file associated with it can be anything. A digital work of art, or a silly GIF. From an artist's point of view, the technology is certainly interesting for theoretically creating a unique piece. But what is currently being done with it is mostly pure speculative madness of a self-proclaimed community. But that has hardly anything to do with art, except for a few exceptions.

**Your works are currently on view in China and will soon be on Broadway in New York. You get around pretty well, don't you?**

Laughs. I think it's great what opportunities are sometimes offered to you, but of course it also takes a lot of work to make it happen. But the galleries and organizers are becoming increasingly creative and a digital world is creating completely different approaches to art.



Images of woman | Independent & Image, Chongqing, CHINA





***You mean that digitalization also creates new ways of perceiving art?***

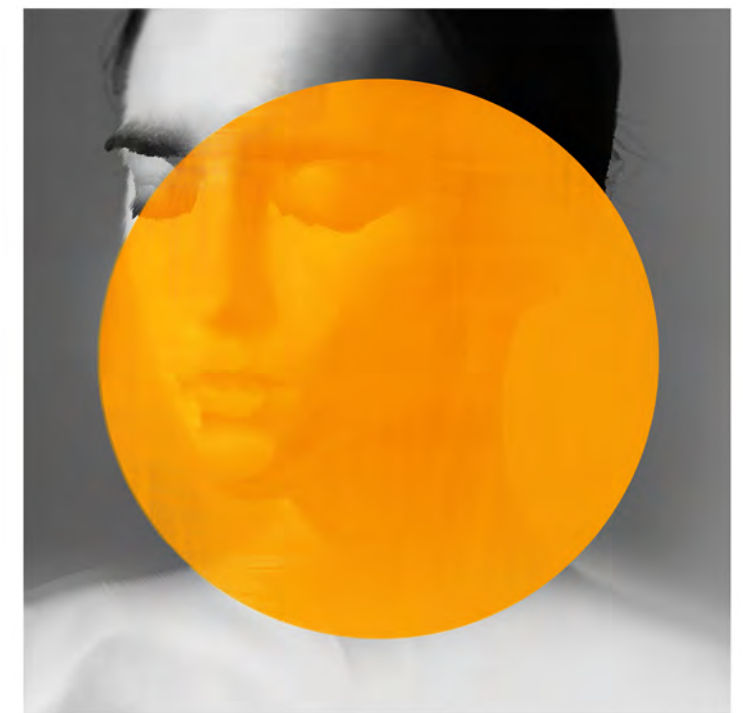
Exactly. I think it's a nice aspect when you can show a work in two different continents at the same time, for example, and thus make it accessible to the viewers. At the same time, it offers completely new approaches to viewing art. It can be a huge LED screen at times square or a kind of private viewing on the iPad. It will not replace any spatial installation, but it is a wonderful addition.

***Isn't that also a bit dangerous?***

Sure, if you mean that possibly art and commerce begins to mix with advertising on a screen. Art is starting to gain new spaces of representation that were previously available only to advertising. But I kind of like this situation, it brings in new aspects. Many will say, for heaven's sake, art belongs in a sheltered environment, but I still find it an interesting thought. Andy Warhol would have his highest joy with it.

***What else can we expect from you this year?***

I am currently working on a group exhibition in Athens, which will take place in September, and over the summer months I will begin preparations for my solo exhibition at the CICA Museum in November. So there is enough to do! #



U.O. Untitled Orange | Digital Painting, 2022