

USP Tel. 0732/
667766

Politik

Durchkreuzt

die Logik der Herrschaft

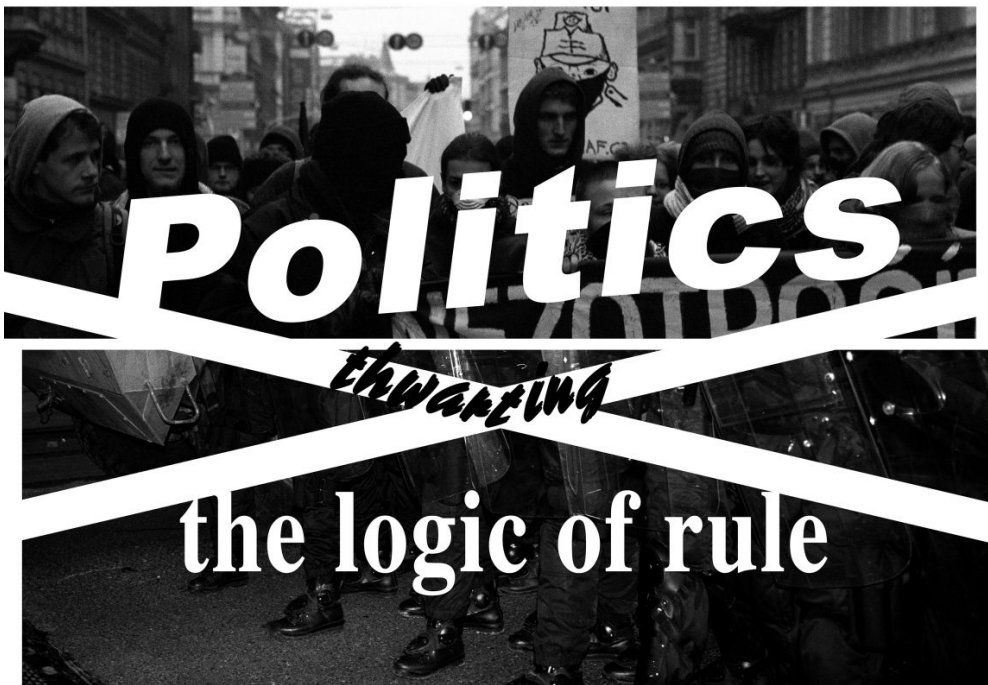
Politics thwarting
the logic of rule

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A billboard/digital print by Oliver Ressler

2005

Oliver Ressler has developed a large-scale 16-sheet billboard project as a contribution to the "Police" exhibition (18 June to 28 August 2005) at the Landesgalerie, Linz – the state gallery for Upper Austria – that was put up at different locations around the city of Linz from June 2005 on. The following text montage is based on quotations from "Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy" (2002) by the contemporary philosopher and political theorist Jacques Rancière. It provides an indication of a theoretical framework by means of which an extended insight can be gained from this large format piece.



"Politics thwarting the logic of rule", poster

[In parliaments] there is a spreading climate of resignation [...] that there are scarcely any issues left to debate, that the decisions are pushing themselves forwards autonomously and that the real task of politics is none other than that of adjustment point by point to the global market and the balanced distribution of the profits and the costs involved in this adjustment process. [...] The term politics is being used generically to designate the totality of those processes by means of which the coalescence and compliance of the communities, the organisation of powers, the distribution of positions and functions, together with the system of legitimation for

this distribution is implemented. I suggest that this process of distribution and the system of these legitimations should be given another name instead. My suggestion is that the process should be referred to as police. It is probable that a number of problems will result from the use of this term. The word “police” commonly conjures up an image of what we designate as the generically lower police, the truncheon-wielding force of law and order and the inquisitions conducted by the secret police. [...]



“Politics thwarting the logic of rule” (“Politik durchkreuzt die Logik der Herrschaft”), 16-sheet billboard, Karlsruhe, 2005 (Photo courtesy Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe)

Through use of this definition the police is first and foremost an ordering of the body; determining the distribution process by the instruction of making, the instruction of being and the instruction of saying, that is responsible to ensure that these bodies are allocated their name, position and task.

Political activity is that which removes a body from a location to which it was assigned, or that changes the determination given to a location; it permits the seeing of something no location was supposed to have seen, permits speech to be listened to where formerly only noise could have been heard. [...] Or it is also the activities of demonstrators or street fighters on the barricades, who literally transform the city streets into a “public” space. [...] Politics exists when the natural suppositional logic of the ruling power [...] is thwarted. [...] The political process can be made to either happen or not to happen by one and the same thing – an election, a strike, a demonstration. A strike is not political when it demands reforms primarily in terms of improvements, nor when it denounces the authority situation instead of the inadequacy of wages. It is political instead, when it brings about a new ordering of those circumstances that have the determining influence on work in their relationship to the community.



"Politics thwarting the logic of rule" ("Politik durchkreuzt die Logik der Herrschaft"), 16-sheet billboard. Installation view: "Police", Landesgalerie Linz am Oberösterreichischen Landesmuseum, Linz, 2005



"Politics thwarting the logic of rule", digital print behind acrylic glass, 160 x 113 cm, 2005. Installation view: "Globalizing Protest" (solo show), Galleria Artra, Milan, 2005