

Transatlantic Project (I)

Loch, Loch, Straße, Loch, Loch

DIRK JANSEN/MAREIKE LANGE/SHUO YU



*Exhibition of the »Pothole« project in Cincinnati, 10. April 2017
(© Mareike Lange)*

If you think about Ohio, what is the first thing that comes to your mind? It might be the Ohio River, the »corn belt«, or possibly »Ohio is literally a pothole«¹. Potholes occur in old, brittle asphalt or in sloppily patched roads. Cracks allow the water to penetrate into the gravel layer under the surface of the road. In the winter time the water freezes to ice, which expands and lifts the asphalt upwards. After the ice is thawing, pools of water remain under the surface. Above the softened ground and under the weight of the cars, the asphalt surface breaks and crumbles. »According to Cincinnati's Open Data Portal, there where [sic] 3373 potholes filled in six months.«² Potholes come with an unpleasant feature namely damage. While the following project is about demolished concrete,

1 | Sarah Brookbank: Big spring mood: »Ohio is literally a pothole«. In: The Enquirer, April 5, 2018, online at <https://eu.cincinnati.com/story/news/2018/04/05/ohio-pothole-shape-twitter/490033002>.

2 | Ibid.

Bruno Latour explains the intentional application of concrete, in the form of a speed bump. He describes a program of action: slower driving as an inscription of this construction. The speed bump, as an invention of the engineers, does not appeal to the morals of the driver, but to the self-interest;³ »I drive slower, because I do not want to damage my car.« In contrast to this intended intervention in the traffic, the pothole is caused by faulty road construction and is therefore not at all intentional. However, its effect is equal to the speed bump: »I reduce the speed, I try to drive around, because I do not want to damage my car out of self-interest.« While the one construction is intentional, the other destruction is to be avoided and yet, the consequences are ultimately the same. This raises the question of whether it matters for which reasons people discipline themselves? Is the conclusion that destruction has the same effect as intended construction? Despite this, potholes hurt, and they are dangerous, no matter how new or old the vehicle is, no matter in which area and on which roads you are traveling, nobody likes to drive into a pothole.



Dirk Jansen, Shuo Yu and Mareike Lange investigated potholes through the camera lens and discovered an unexpected aesthetic appeal. The displayed 8 images (out of originally 10) were exhibited at the University of Cincinnati in April 2018. Each image was greatly enlarged to 42 by 54,5 Inches and together they were installed as a quasi-photo-wallpaper to make the details that appear

3 | Bruno Latour: Über Technische Vermittlung: Philosophie, Soziologie und Genealogie [1994]. In: Andréa Bellinger/David J. Krieger (Ed.): AnThology. Ein einführendes Handbuch zur Akteur-Netzwerk-Theorie. Bielefeld 2006, p. 483–528, here p. 494, online at http://medientheorie.com/doc/latour_vermittlung.pdf.

without the photographer's intention visible. We invite you to look closer at the eight black and white images. Can you make sense of the tension between aesthetics and destruction?⁴



4 | Images by Dirk Jansen, Mareike Lange and Shuo Yu; Text by Mareike Lange.

