North Circular

23.10.2026 — 16.01.2027

Merlin Carpenter

My show "Warning Signs" in Zurich in March 2026 pictured an artificial 3D model. A model which could process potential outcomes backwards and forwards in time. But though I did not mention it at the time, I saw this as only an overlay to another model, one of value. My model-building is a synthetic affair, without any set truth claims. But the value model is also in some sense artificial. In value form theory, there is no separation between exchange value and use value, even though exchange value is often seen as being bad. In fact both use and exchange are integral aspects of value (labour in abstract form). They form a double which actually cannot be separated. One commodity expresses the value of each other - that is their "use". So what happens on the internal code strip of capitalist value itself is also arbitrary to a degree, or can only be described through a projection, projection about what determines the indeterminate.

A conditional arbitrariness, for example consider the "world" itself. In its post-internet manifestation this so-called world expresses this arbitrariness as second world, an "other" day. Like a map of recommendations that precedes the city's own map. Here in an exhibition in Lyon, the invitation card, the social media buzz, are actually the main meal. The "world outside" is in fact only a small custom made test box to regulate the electronic circuits within. In their recent book "The Subject of Counterrevolution"[1] the SdA talk about the relationship between the event and its virtual positioning as informational warfare. Even though an event may be real, it has quite likely been instigated as plan by interested actors. Because of this: "It is only possible to go back from myth to reality, from dream to real cause, or from media evaluation event to real event, because a complex material infrastructure and unknown program code lies in between." In other words you'd need to "lay out" a contingent picture of what lies behind this process, on a radically unknown ground.

An electric truck is a means of circulation, its virtual quality in no way contradicting its apparent large mass, just as its transportation role enables rather than denies productive labour. Under the skin of the truck is another skin - the Mercedes "parts". Impacted fragments, they exist as technology shaped by value, dead labour thirsty for some living labour, their current helper a truck driver who soon will not even be needed. Commodities are anyway incomplete, because they are only moments within a value chain; and the truck parts are existing on a third order, themselves incomplete, yet fully commodities, ones that make up the truck commodity. Like pieces of a plastic model kit bound up in impossibly tight social relations inside their Airfix box with matter between them instead of air, or like body parts protecting themselves from the real vortex of the death drive. Although pictorial shards become this regulating meta-model, the parts in the show do not express the laying out of a value order, but merely fall into place as low key arrangements. The formation of an underlying model is adequate in its contingency to gravity of the true antagonism: not between use and exchange but between value and the worker.

Merlin Carpenter, Lyon, October 2026

[1] SdA Strategien der Aufstandsbekämpfung / Julia Eichler, Fabian Ginsberg, *The Subject of Counterrevolution. Art, War, and the Public*, Gato Negro Ediciones, 2026

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North Circular, Merlin Carpenter, 2026

Mercedes-Benz eActros 600 truck parts, packaging, poster. Dimensions variable.

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