

# FRANK J. SCHÄPEL

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## **Alien-Project**

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Frank J. Schäpel's *Alien*-project is aimed at the artistic observation of UFO-phenomena. His endeavor fits into the context of those research-based experiments, which strive to integrate artistic practice with scientific analysis. However, the *Alien*-project has a subversive potential, as it plays with the allegedly legitimate borders of discourses. The critical analysis of the topic of paranormality is able to reveal the process of power structures which control and define the parameters of "high" art and science. In this sense, the exploration of "truth" is defined by aesthetical and scientific ideologies and they, in a dialectical way, can produce "bad truth", namely elements which should be subjects of discard, ingestion and exclusion. This bad truth is precisely what excites Schäpel, the point where prohibition and recognition are inseparably mixed.

His series "Trace drawings made from witnesses' sketches of alien beings, they claim to have seen" build a pseudo-scientific panorama evoking the worlds of anthropological albums and biological classification. The positivist demand of the systematization of the world attempts to show empirical reality as a cognizable order. Schäpel's *Alien*-typology makes a case for that the system can never be closed, because reality is "open" and the concept of empirics is rewritten along technological and cultural codes. The redrawn UFO heads, based on the drawings of witnesses, are part of an alternative physical science, yet at the same time this para-nature queries the order of our world, as the "bad truth" unveils that the objectivity of the scientific view is a power construction.