



ART DESCRIPTIONS

And This is Us 2023 – Young Art from Frankfurt

30.03. — 11.06.2023

Rashiyah Elanga

Another dream under the Troposphere, 2023

Film and digital photo collages, 18 min

Actresses Elie Autins, Lalla Nomoko, Rashiyah Elanga

Music Kamal Jahi

Project management Emma Bombail

Script, direction and editing Rashiyah Elanga

Camera Jing Lin, Rashiyah Elanga

Makeup Simon Mine

With thanks to Kabena Kasangati, Jackson Bukasa, Jean Patrice Keka, Valentin Noujaim, Camille Claire

Courtesy the artist

Rashiyah Elanga are a filmmaker and installation artist. Their work is characterised by an aesthetic of digital collage and performative storytelling. They have developed the video installation *Another dream under the Troposphere* for the Frankfurter Kunstverein. It describes a journey into the unknown, in search of identity, an imaginary voyage into space that they relate to events in Congo, the country Elanga's parents come from, a country Rashiyah have never visited, yet imagine in their films. Elanga are one of the many voices engaged in the current debate on cultural allegiance in the post-colonial age and the dissolution of rigid boundaries of identity.

Rashiyah Elanga locate the starting point of their fiction *Another dream under the Troposphere* in the capital of Congo. An off-screen female voice describes how the astronaut Elie takes off in a spaceship from La Place du 30 Juin, the central square in Kinshasa, and heads towards the moon Europa. Once there, Elie, full of hope and fascination tries to plant life. Her exploration is interrupted by the arrival of two other astronauts who try to convince her to return to planet Earth. They are aware that the utopia of starting a new life in space cannot be the solution for a better life for their community.

However, Elie has fallen in love with Pando, original inhabitant of the moon, who does not return her feelings. The love story ends tragically, resulting in a feeling of speechlessness and alienation. Elie overcomes the pain of disappointment by re-discovering herself.

The destination of the journey is not chosen by chance. Europa is a real moon of the planet Jupiter. As the surface of the moon is icy, the presence of salt water under the icy shell has led scientists to consider for several years that Europa may be a place for life in the solar system. Through a post-colonial lens, Elanga's film narrates a metaphorical reverse colonisation of Europe, here meant as a continent; a reference to Congo's colonial history is also suggested by the protagonists' choice of costumes, with white skirts and gowns, corsets and ruffs in the style of 16th century European scholars and scientists. Pop style wigs and make-up with glittery sci-fi accents reminiscent of David Bowie as Ziggy Stardust complete the look, steering the narrative towards the futuristic.

Another dream under the Troposphere is a video work with elements of fantasy, magical realism, science fiction and also draws on Congolese Bantu cosmology. Created exclusively in the studio, the scenes are filmed against a green background. Elanga collage footage from the internet and filmed scenes during post-production, creating a mix of digital and analogue. The result is a narrative whose simple low-tech aesthetic evokes early cinema pioneer George Méliès (*1861 † 1938 in Paris, FR) in films such as *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (The Voyage to the Moon), 1902. The aspect of craftsmanship becomes the creative moment of their work. An essential feature of Elanga's visual language is the visible, analogue animation of self-made objects in front of a green screen. The artist animate objects with their own hands, which remain visible and are not subsequently airbrushed away. They dispense with high-tech post-processing methods as a way to celebrate a do-it-yourself aesthetic that is an established stylistic feature in numerous internet subcultures.

Rashiyah Elanga take post-colonial and speculative narratives of Afrofuturism and connect them to the Congolese astro-programme Keka Aerospace. Privately initiated and crowdfunded, the private Congolese company has developed a series of rockets designed to travel into the troposphere. *Another dream in the Troposphere* is not only Rashiyah Elanga's vision of an odyssey in space, but also a hero's journey, the story of a struggle for new ways of being and the search for identity. This adventure describes the journey to self-love, from exploration to introspection in search of ourselves.

Rashiyah Elanga (*1997 in FR) graduated in 2022 from the Hochschule für Bildende Künste - Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main (DE) with Prof. Gerard Byrne and before that in 2019 from the National Fine Art School of Lyon (FR). They work mainly with video, sculpture and performance. Among others, Rashiyah Elanga have exhibited at the following institutions: Macro Museo, Rome (DE), 4redehyes, Zurich (CH), Centre d'art Arsenic, Lausanne (CH), Cherishh, Geneva (CH), Palmengarten, Frankfurt am Main (DE), Mountain Gallery, Berlin (DE). 2022 they won the Rundgang Prize from the Hochschule für Bildende Künste – Städelschule.

Sonja Rychkova

Blessed 2, 2023

Oil on canvas

380 x 280 cm

Views, 2023

Oil on canvas

260 x 280 cm

Courtesy the artist

Sonja Rychkova portrays people from her surroundings, friends, also youngsters from the neighbourhood where she grew up. Her gaze is not that of a stranger, it is intimate and familiar. Since she began working as an artist, she has placed her friends at the heart of her chosen motifs. She describes them as central to what captivates her, what drives her artistic zeal, what she obsessively and repeatedly endeavours to capture in her motifs. Young people in search of their identity and belonging. Clothes, accessories, poses, gestures are at once self-presentation and provocation.

The artist draws the picture of her closest companions and her time, creating monumental paintings in which the bodies of these young people seem to burst out of the pictorial space. She makes her human studies based on video recordings. She looks and searches for the essential pose, from which she makes sketches as a basis for the composition. She aims to depict the intimacy of closeness and yet stage each person as they would like to be seen. The subjects always recognise themselves in the pictures, they know that they are meant. Rychkova searches for the single, unique gesture that characterises the portrayed individual and at the same time turns him or her into an icon. Bigger than life and as protagonists, these bodies dominate the space, that of the canvas first and through that the institutional exhibition space too.

Sonja Rychkova masters her material. On raw cotton fabric, primed with rabbit skin glue, she applies a first, transparent layer of oil, the broad, rapidly applied brushstrokes of which remain clearly visible. The rusty brown colour is the central element she employs to put all her figures on the canvas. Actually intended as a base coat, in classical painting as a primer for further layers of paint, this colour Rychkova uses as a stylistic device, a primary feature of her painting. She thins the oil paint with turpentine in order to skilfully create transparency and pastosity, which in turn lends her figures greater plasticity and three-dimensionality.

In her new works developed for the Frankfurter Kunstverein, Sonja Rychkova works for the first time with compositional references from classical painting. She is fascinated by the figures of the Mannerist period: elongated and frozen in movement, their bodies strikingly slender and exposed. On both picture surfaces, the artist divides the figures according to a classical composition.

Two monumental paintings have been created for the exhibition at the Frankfurter Kunstverein. The painter has conceived of the two pictures as a site-specific ensemble. The lower picture shows two figures lying on the floor and leaning against each other. Their postures and gaze are turned away from the viewers, so we look at their backs. In the upper picture two figures stand out monumentally on the canvas. They hold each other by the shoulders and spread their arms. The gesture remains open and suspended, like the figures themselves. What is omitted in most of Sonja Rychkova's paintings is the depiction of what represented the central vanishing point in classical portrait painting: the eyes and the gaze of a recognisable face. In these new works, too, the faces remain averted, or dimly hidden in shadow. After all, individual portraiture is not her theme. In her works, the painter looks for poses, for attitudes that embody a mood and programmatically stand for a circle of friends' attitude to life. Belonging, cohesion and unconditional friendship as an anchor in a time when many people feel excluded.

Sonja Rychkova (*1998 in Darmstadt, DE) studies painting at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach with Prof. Heiner Blum and Mike Bouchet since 2020. In 2022 she received a scholarship from the Frankfurter Künstlerhilfe and in 2021 she won the Rundgang Prize of the Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach. In 2022, her first solo exhibition took place in the Bürohaus an der Alten Oper in Frankfurt am Main (DE).

Lisa-Sophie Gehrmann

Horizontsucher, 2023

Five latex reliefs

120 x 80 cm, 160 x 130 cm, 50 x 140 cm

Narrenfreiheit, 2023

Four 3D print, oil paint, plaster

50 x 27 x 20 cm, 50 x 22 x 20 cm, 50 x 26 x 27 cm

Courtesy the artist

With its origins in drawing, Lisa-Sophie Gehrmann's artistic practice is marked by the eclectic use of different ideas, techniques, materials, stylistic elements and pictorial motifs. Whether pencil on paper, glazed ceramics with open forms, reliefs, 3D drawings or 3D prints, her visual worlds are always inhabited by fantastical figures. These beings are the result of a world-making practice that separates and uses them as fragments of different frames of reference. Many elements derive from a fictional surreal world, while others possess symbolic features and embody social customs or human qualities that fascinate the artist.

Her figures are always set in an implied natural environment and often accompanied by insect-like animals. They are prehistoric crabs, living fossils, the oldest known living animal species on our planet. The anatomy of both the animals and humans is strikingly drawn. Particularly eye-catching is the design of the bones, which in Gehrmann's work do not stand for mourning or death, rather eternity. The artist takes up the motif of the faun in the three-dimensional individual figures. This

figure from Greek mythology stands as a deity of nature and the forest, a hybrid creature between man and animal. Glitteringly located between faun, satyr, pan and jester, their beings display a self-confident sensuality and eroticism that seem to celebrate their freedom and subversiveness.

Gehrmann draws archetypes as primal images that are associated with certain characteristics. Her fascination is for the instinctive in people, their irrationality, and for marginal figures in society. Some wear head covering reminiscent of Phrygian caps. These have historical connotations, often symbolising contradiction and independence. The cap existed in a wide variety of cultural contexts, from ancient Rome, where it was worn by freed slaves, to the French Revolution as an allegory of freedom and the republic. Other figures can be recognised as Till Eulenspiegel or as jesters. In all cultures, the court jester occupied a special status as fool, allowing him to criticise and satirise existing conditions with impunity. Outsiders to society, jesters embody the spirit of freedom of expression by addressing society's ills in a humorous way.

Linking up with them are the child-like figures in Gehrmann's drawings. Children, too, cannot be categorised in the way society operates, as they as yet have neither historical memory nor social imprint. With their often-unprejudiced attitude, they are free in their actions.

A presentation was conceived for the Frankfurter Kunstverein that provides insight into new experiments and Gehrmann's current working methods, involving latex reliefs and sculptures created with 3D printers. With haptics always playing a role, the latex reliefs continue a practice the artist has been carrying out for several years. Carving her drawings on fresh clay plates, she then casts them with latex. The resulting negative moulds give the drawing lines a raised and three-dimensional look. The latex reliefs are then finished with silver paint, creating a monochrome aesthetic redolent of fossils.

This practice of drawing on clay brings to mind early techniques of writing on surfaces. As far back as early antiquity, people carved writing and drawings into clay slabs with simple tools, making them the first forms of human record to stand the test of time.

Lisa-Sophie Gehrmann (*1999 in Gera, DE) has studied at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach with Prof. Manfred Stumpf since 2019, with a focus on ceramics and drawing. In 2021, she received scholarships from the Cusanus and Johanness-Mosbach Foundations. Lisa-Sophie Gehrmann presented her work at the Haus der Stadtgeschichte, Offenbach am Main (DE) and participated in the exhibition project Frankfurter Kunst Vertrieb by the collective Magma Maria in 2021, which was presented at the Frankfurter Kunstverein.

Meret Kern

Untitled, 2022/2023

24 drawings with gouache on paper, charcoal on paper, charcoal and gouache on paper, pencil on paper

21 x 29,7 cm, 76 x 112 cm, 50 x 70 cm, 53 x 76 cm, 150 x 248 cm

Courtesy the artist

Meret Kern works with gouache and more recently with charcoal on paper. She has also mastered the techniques of photography and digital drawing. Numerous drawings have been created for the exhibition, of which only a selection is presented, filling the room as a painterly installation.

Kern's working method is rapid. It emerges from the constant repetition of a painterly act – and the intensity of a momentary mood. The artist searches for her figures with a practice akin to automatic painting. Working without a model, her central motifs are heads and busts. The figures are created by pouring paint onto paper impregnated with water, which is then laid out to dry. Her painting materials are gouache, pencil and charcoal pencil.

In the resulting areas of colour, the artist draws minimal interventions with fine brush marks to articulate individual physiognomic elements. An ear, the mouth, teeth and nipples are elaborated. Often, only individual elements create areas of colour from the abstract. Kern's painting is suspended between abstraction and figuration.

The eyes and the gaze of the figures on the viewer are always key. We see stylised faces reduced to the essential, not portraits of existing people. Kern does not seek to depict the individual head, rather the closest possible approximation to inner topographies.

In the charcoal drawings, the line is the essential element. Kern blurs this selectively, thus creating plasticity and shadows on the bodies. She draws and paints in a continuous process, an intensive creative flow, on the lookout for forms, expression and feelings until a face appears familiar. Feelings that have become form, mental moods captured on paper in human faces.

Meret Kern hunts for the essence of expression. Almost obsessively, she repeatedly paints in search of true feelings, the expression that encapsulates being human that is etched into faces by time and the years. Her figures, neither embellished nor idealised, bear the inscriptions of their inner worlds in skin and flesh. They reveal characteristics of time, imperfections verging on ugliness that is touching. These mostly bald beings gaze at us in melancholy silence. Her figures are never given a surrounding space, nor a structure to hold them. They stand alone and isolated in the void.

Meret Kern (*1997 in Frankfurt am Main, DE) grew up in Hamburg and lives and works in Frankfurt am Main (DE). She has been a student at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach (DE) with Prof. Heiner Blum since 2019, with a focus on drawing, painting and photography. Meret Kern exhibits her work at the following institutions, among others: noroomgalery, Hamburg (DE) Zollamt Galerie,

Offenbach am Main (DE), Magma Maria, Offenbach am Main (DE), Kunstverein Familie Montez, Frankfurt am Main (DE).

Anita Esfandiari

Gave to the cypress a rosy shade of the redbud; and to the tulip gave the stature of a bambuseae

(سرو را رنگ ارغوانی داد لاله را قد خیزرانی داد), 2023

Mixed media

ø 150 x 300 cm

Courtesy the artist

Trained as a painter in Tehran, Iran, Anita Esfandiari worked with sculpture, drawing and installation during her studies at the Städelschule. The formal starting point of her entire artistic production is always the fountain, whether as a drawing, ceramic or fabric sculpture, or as an installation with sound. Fountains are typical elements of architecture in Iran. Part of private and public spaces, they serve as places to relax and meet at in large cities. They stand for abundance in a region marked by drought. Formerly of great importance, fountains have now become a symbol of abandonment. They have not been built for years, but can still be found in traditional houses. In public spaces, they are losing their function as meeting places and are being converted into underground stations or monuments. Public places that could become sites of protests have been removed.

In her new work for the Frankfurter Kunstverein, Anita Esfandiari uses artistic symbolism to reflect on current political events in Iran and the international media coverage of them. Her focus is not only on the protests since the murder of Mahsa Amini, but also on the development in and increased protests for women's rights currently taking place. From these dangerous visual worlds, the artist creates a kinetic sculptural painting whose form is derived from that of a fountain. 12 canvas panels 3 m high hang circularly from the ceiling, forming a slightly open cylinder that rotates. The visitors can glimpse passing sections through the slits. The cylinder recalls the praxinoscope of early cinema, which tells a story in many individual images through their circular movement. Like water in a fountain, the images flow, with each fabric panel representing an hour of the day. The images can be read on two levels. As quotations from Persian literature and miniature painting, as well as individual, symbolic media images that lead back to the present time and political situation in Iran.

In the foreground, ornamental fountains, geometric buildings and streets can be seen. A woman, the protagonist, carries a lamb on her shoulders. Again and again, she runs up an endless flight of stairs. This is a tale from the Persian epic *Haft Peykar*, a famous literary reference in Iran, about the life of King Bahram Gur and his seven princesses. The story begins with the fate of Feṭna, Bahram Gur's mistress, who is sentenced to death for challenging the arrogant and self-proclaimed brilliant hunter King Bahram Gur. Thanks to her cleverness, she survives the death sentence and dedicates her life to taking revenge on the king. She thus becomes a female symbol of resilience.

A bridge connects these two contexts and at the same time becomes a narrative element in today's protests in Iran: a highway overpass as an escape route from the police as well as a stage for suspending political posters burned in the act of protest. Fire and flames as a symbol of protest and revolution, but also as a practical form of self-protection against the spread of deployed tear gas. A woman rides a motorbike with long, loose hair.

Symbols of protest are always hidden behind the most decorative details. The steps Feṭna walks up show the basic geometric shape of an electricity box, former site and symbol of the Enghelab Street women's protests against the compulsory hijab. The Enghelab protests began in 2017 when Vida Movahed raised her hijab on a stick like a flag while standing on an electricity box on Enghelab Street. The original electricity box quickly became a symbol and was made inaccessible by government constructing a metal roof. But in Anita's narrative, the electricity box continues to be climbed by Feṭna every day despite the government's obstacles.

Anita Esfandiari (*1985 in Tehran, IR) graduated in 2022 from the Hochschule für Bildende Künste - Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main (DE) with Prof. Judith Hopf. Previously, she studied painting, art and architecture at the Islamic Azad University in Tehran (IR). She mainly works with sculpture, painting and video. In 2022 she spent a period abroad in Hendaye (FR). Institutions Anita Esfandiari has exhibited her work at include: Medium P, Frankfurt am Main (DE), Opelvillen, Rüsselsheim (DE), Abi Gallery, Tehran (IR), Delgosha Art Gallery, Tehran (IR), Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio (US).

Pia Ferm

Capriccio (study), 2023

Handtufted tapestry

Wool, linen and polyester yarn, polyester fabric, textile glue

225 x 420 cm

Courtesy the artist

Pia Ferm draws, sculpts and works with textile materials and with marble. Her works emerge from the act of drawing, which she then transforms into different materials and practices.

The artist has created a large-scale spatial installation, a sculptural textile painting, for the exhibition. For weeks, Pia Ferm worked in a workshop set up especially for her at the Frankfurter Kunstverein in order to produce a monumental format for the first time. The panorama that she has realised shows an abstract, man-made landscape that has emerged from her memories of very different urban places: a building site in the city, a deserted sun-drenched industrial area with flat roofs, an abandoned quarry or a large stone mill. Ferm conceives of these places as freestanding structures, separated by dusty open spaces. She has merged these architectural sites into an ensemble. As in urban spaces, Ferm's landscape is characterised by compressions and voids.

Pia Ferm's approach to the realisation of her works is highly planned. She prepares visual ideas as sketches, noting down memories and impressions of colours and forms. Ferm researches a special colour palette to achieve precisely conceived colour blends and nuances by mixing different wool threads. The final shades of colour within a surface are created through work with the individual wool threads that requires considerable time and accuracy.

The artist perceives her working process as experiencing how to understand and control her material. The shapes and surfaces are often contoured by lines. Starting from her drawings, she sets lines and contours on the stretched tufted fabric, which she then fills with expanses of colour and models three-dimensionally. Individual architectural structures seem to draw their shadows and reflections using sunlight. Pia Ferm's motifs are suspended between the abstract and the figurative and are not formed solely by lines and monochrome surfaces. The textile sculpture is positioned in the space thanks to a supporting structure made of wood, which has served the artist as a tufting frame.

She has been working with the tufting technique for several years. Tufting has been practised since the 1920s with the first tufting machine for the industrialised production of rugs. Tufting works much like a sewing machine: the machine stitches the thick yarn at high speed into the carpet backing. Worked from the back, it creates loops on the front, which are treated and trimmed like a mouldable material to produce three-dimensional textile surfaces. In the industrial process several needles are placed next to each other; Pia Ferm, however, works with a specially developed hand tufting machine that is activated by an air gun and a compressor to sew stitches onto the stretched backing material. The artist also chooses to work with the pistol-like machine to dispel associations with textile production that carry feminine connotations.

Processual handwork is central to her practice: from the careful selection of her materials, to the use of controlled physical movements for the workflow, to the profound knowledge of her material and technical know-how.

Familiar with traditional craft techniques that require time, knowledge and concentrated manual work, Pia Ferm deliberately chooses tufting to create three-dimensional images that she sees simultaneously as drawings, paintings and sculptures. Whether wool, linen, cotton or Cottolin, Pia Ferm always sources her material from family-run companies in Sweden, where it is dyed with natural pigments by a small dye works. The working process is lengthy, dynamic and physically demanding. It consists of constant repetition in terms of looking, shooting, stepping back, looking, shooting and always checking the other side. The creative process becomes an artistic struggle for the final composition.

Pia Ferm (*1986 in Lykesil, SE) graduated in 2020 from the Hochschule für Bildende Künste - Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main (DE) with Prof. Tobias Rehberger. Since then, she has worked with tapestry and marble sculptures. Previously she studied printmaking and painting at the Dômen Artschool in Gothenburg (SE). Venues she has exhibited at include: Galerie Judith Andreae, Bonn (DE), Nassauischer Kunstverein Wiesbaden (DE), Opelvillen, Rüsselsheim, (DE),

Museum Villa Rot, Burgrieden (DE), Portikus, Frankfurt am Main (DE), Göteborgs Konstförening, Gothenburg (SE).

Jenny Sofie Kasper

50°06'20.4"N 8°45'52.2"E, 2023

Virtual Reality Installation

3D Scan Collage, Trnio+, Ue5.03

Duration variable

Film, Ue5.03, 29 min

Ceramics, bisque fired, dipped in ink

Dimensions variable

Courtesy the artist

Jenny Kasper maps and documents the city. She has long been collecting impressions and observations of the city she inhabits, Offenbach am Main: a blown-up cash machine in a square, a subway with a defective neon lighting, abandoned streets, her friends.

When everything was paralysed by the pandemic, the artist spent months walking through the city, which, like a scenery, a closed row of façades, seemed to outlast time, waiting for public life to recommence.

Using a 3D scanner, Kasper has captured digitally the surfaces of entire streets. For the exhibition at the Frankfurter Kunstverein, she has plumbed her archive to create a fictional world from the many visual and acoustic finds. The result is a collage, a condensation of experiences and sensual memories evoking a time of imposed isolation. Façades and exterior views lose their contours. Geometries dissolve in an act of digital, artistic distortion.

Using VR data glasses, visitors can move around the city as if in a film set. The spatial experience is enhanced by a soundscape of collected field recordings and a soundtrack that sets an unmistakable mood. It was created by Frankfurt sound artist Tim Kernwein, a friend of the artist.

The digital city tour evolves over time. Beginning next to a collection of bulky waste, it leads through streets and a square to the banks of the River Main in Offenbach. For Jenny Kasper, bulk waste takes on a higher meaning as a symbol for a city in constant transition. And so she makes a modular sculpture out of fired clay, which she transfers as an analogue element from the digital to the real world of the exhibition space.

Time and again the façades open up, allowing the viewers to peer inside and encounter human figures. We enter the studio of Barnabas Vollmer, an Offenbach artist. We encounter his digital persona and his art, his sculptures and paintings, occupy his space and listen to his music. To then resume our path. We walk on, down a deserted shopping street with a gambling arcade, beauty salon and the Corona Test Centre, a distinct feature of an era.

The path leads onto a bridge over the River Main. Facing the water, alone, Niklas Linnenbach, Offenbach poet, recites a poem that illustrates this place and time with words. Jenny has captured it digitally, recording the transience of the moment forever. It almost seems that we are moving in the image of a memory, in a digital reality that has become the counterpart to the work.

'Cat Calls of Offenbach', a female artists' collective, is also part of Jenny Kasper's counterworld. The three women collect reports of sexual harassment without physical contact in public space and use these as their material, which they bring back into urban space, including this digital zone. Mona Nguyen & Minju Oh are the protagonists of an encounter where we meet them as they enact a performative work. Kasper also places the Waggon am Kulturgleis, run by the Soziale Plastik association and a cultural meeting place in Offenbach, in her city tour.

The starting point of the digital city, the pile of bulky waste, becomes an element of the analogue world in the here and now. Precisely, by hand, the artist has individually recreated further elements, which she reproduces first digitally and then in clay. Jenny Kasper arranges the sculpture in the exhibition space by setting it in an almost virtual shimmer with projected images that link up with those of her virtual world.

Jenny Sofie Kasper (*1995 in Waldkirch, DE) has studied electronic media and ceramics with Prof. Alexander Oppermann and Merja Herzog-Hellstén at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach since 2018. Previously she completed an apprenticeship as a graphic designer. A recipient of a Hans Böckler Foundation scholarship since 2020, Jenny Sofie Kasper has exhibited at the following institutions, among others: Kunsthalle Darmstadt (DE), Delphi Space, Freiburg (DE), B3 Biennale des bewegten Bildes, Frankfurt am Main (DE).

Benedikt Ackermann

Filtered time series (Frankfurt), 2023

Installation

23 screens, 23 media players, switches, power supplies, network cables, video cables, power cables, adapters, velcro

Filter #0 (F)

Filter #1 (F)

Filter #2 (F)

Filter #3 (F)

Filter #4 (F)

Filter #5 (F)

Filter #6 (F), 2023

Screen clusters

Annual Plots (Frankfurt), 2023

12 Inkjet prints on paper

Courtesy the artist

Benedikt Ackermann works conceptually, questioning the meaning of images in the digital age. His interest lies in the invisible shift in power that accompanies the ongoing development of digital technologies.

Ackermann has developed a complex spatial installation for the exhibition at the Frankfurter Kunstverein, comprising more than 20 monitors and a series of prints. The installation accesses the image material of a camera mounted on a Frankfurt skyscraper. Installed in the south of the city, it records the skyline and its surroundings. The data is archived online and can be retrieved there. Ackermann has downloaded the pictures the camera took every 5-10 minutes from 2021 to 2022. These images total more than 100,000.

He assembles them into a time-lapse recording, which he in turn crops so that often only highly pixelated videos remain. Some of these videos, those showing individual windows, he uses as the basis for a series of inkjet prints, images somewhere between a digital contact print and a diagram. Where exactly the windows are, he deliberately leaves unclear. He sorts all the frames of a year into a coordinate-based system of day and time, thus revealing the daily routines of people who live and work behind each window. He writes down observations on the edges: when people get up or when they are on holiday, when they start working and when they stop again. In a fascinating yet comprehensible way, Ackermann reinterprets the images as data and the camera as a measuring instrument.

Beyond that, his pictures have a painterly quality. For the apparent rationality of the material loses its contours and becomes flowing, implied forms, behind which we recognise the coming-into-being and elapsing of human existences, as well as the infinite circularity of everyday life. The temporality of all things, making the individual recede as a replaceable part behind the machinery of the city. Recurring sequences of day and night, of summer and winter, mirrored in the glass towers of the financial world, behind which light and shadow offer us a glimpse of people's stories.

Ackermann examines the images not as individual works created by an individual author, but as data, as a record. For today's production of image information is created as bits, as information exchanged between computers, often no longer designed for a human viewer at all. Just consider the millions of surveillance cameras, whose images are increasingly analysed automatically, for example by facial recognition software. But the number of man-made images has also grown rapidly. Digital files, images, videos, sound are constantly produced and exchanged, copied, reproduced, whether by industry, the financial sector or private users. The global data throughput is constantly expanding. Computer centres have been turned into hubs of social power without questions being asked about who owns the data, who evaluates and uses it. The computer has made us a society of data collectors, and the sensors on our cameras busily assist in amassing this.

Benedikt Ackermann (*1994 in Frankfurt am Main, DE) works mainly with photography, video and digital media. Since 2019 he has been studying at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste -

Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main (DE) with Prof. Gerard Byrne and Prof. Haegue Yang. Previously, he studied philosophy at the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main (DE). Among others, Benedikt Ackermann has exhibited at Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt am Main (DE) and at Goethe Institut, Dublin (IE).

Offert Albers

0-12 Beaufort, 2023

Set of 13 images, projected

Faders 0-12, 2023

13 archival pigment prints, aluminum frames
each 30 x 40 cm

Courtesy the artist

For the exhibition *And This is Us 2023*, Offert Albers creates a two-part photographic work whose parts are of equal value to one another, as they both point to the importance of photography as a secondary reference.

The result is two series of images that the artist juxtaposes. One consists of images that take the Beaufort scale as their point of departure. This scale indicates a spectrum of thirteen wind forces used to classify and name wind according to its speed - from windless to hurricane. The spectrum comes from observations of the effects of wind on the environment, i.e. from phenomenological criteria. Albers does not choose to visualise wind speed on land, rather on water surfaces, which is important for navigation. The artist has researched and written to numerous German museums and archives to request access to depictions of various sea states and to document the works - photographic as well as pictorial - in the context of their archives. In each of these storage locations, he photographs a picture representing a level of the Beaufort scale in connection with its institution. 13 images have been gathered in all. In addition, he searches for one image of the wind measurement scale from printed photo volumes and from digital image stocks respectively. Albers assembles all 39 images as a sequence in video format.

The second series also consists of 13 images. The motif is a disco ball, a pop culture icon whose image the artist commissioned from product photographers using digital freelancer platforms. The photographers, who all received the same assignment, had to create as close an image of the product as possible on this basis. Offert Albers is not interested in the final processed and post-produced images, but in the unprocessed digital data, the RAW files. These are the files where the camera writes on to the storage medium largely without editing and from which meta-information concerning the creation of the image and the technique used can be read. Without digital retouching, the 13 commissioned works reveal their expanded pictorial spaces, the space in which the image is created: the set, technical aids, lights, background, right up to the camera and the photographers themselves, who are depicted in the mirror fragments.

Albers works conceptually. In this double series, he sets out to investigate what is not elevated to the status of a photographic subject yet nevertheless comes into view. The work explores photography as an imaging medium of phenomena, i.e. not as a direct image, but via the indirect route of the method of making one thing visible through another. It is not the motif, the content of the image that is at the centre of his investigation, but the second-degree information content.

Offert Albers (*2000 in Wiesbaden, DE) has been a student at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste - Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main (DE) with Prof. Judith Hopf since 2020. Previously he studied at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf (DE) with Prof. Franka Hörnschemeyer. His artistic practice deals mainly with photography and concept art. Among others, he exhibited at the following institutions: Opelvillen, Rüsselsheim (DE), Hotel Nizza, Frankfurt am Main (DE), KIT - Kunst im Tunnel, Düsseldorf (DE). An exhibition is currently planned for 2023 at the 1822 Forum, Frankfurt am Main (DE).

Ramon Keimig

Bent cold sidewalk, 2022/2023

Installation

Silkscreen on canvas (70 x 70 cm), digital print on mesh (432 x 332 cm; 357 x 457 cm; 427 x 352 cm), digital print on paper, cassette cases (10,16 x 6,35 x 1,27 cm), lp-covers (315 x 312 cm), woven blanket (185 x 150cm), crowbar, mercedes-star, metal ashtray, stickers, painted bedside table, mattress, fabric with concrete (90cm x 200cm)

Courtesy the artist

Ramon Keimig's work has its roots in printmaking and drawing. His materials are ink and pencil on paper, which he combines with digitally created designs. He edits elements drawn by hand with digital imaging and drawing programmes or duplicates them on the photocopier, laser printer and scanner. He then takes the technical fragility as his theme and incorporates random disruptions as new elements in the compositions.

His pictorial motifs derive from references to the subculture and the psychedelic movement of the 1970s as well as his personal environment. Thus, Keimig uses the private photo collection of his father who died at an early age. This includes a few portraits of his father as a young man who, in search of his identity, got caught up in the turbulence of the 1970s, as well as his photographic impressions that reveal a sensitive view of the world. The artist detaches individual elements of this personal archive from their context to embark on a journey back to a time marked by a strong counterculture, criticism of consumerism, aspirations of individualism and a potent musical subculture.

Informed by references from the photocopy aesthetic of the 1970s and 1980s, his motifs pay tribute to tape culture, underground comics and concert flyers. We encounter here his second artistic field: working with experimental musicians from psychedelic and krautrock, and participating in an underground concert scene.

For both his musical and visual work, Ramon Keimig has accurately examined historical sources and draws parallels to himself and his generation. On this basis, he creates new and original visual worlds, which he samples from his own works and combines in new ways. On the computer screen, he draws and creates collages of found imagery and his own drawings. The designs thus produced he transfers to each of the elements of his spatial installation: a stylised bed, a ceiling, scattered drawings, cassette covers, vinyl covers and the walls and ceiling of the imaginary room.

His work is rigorously kept in black and white. A room has been specially created for the exhibition at the Frankfurter Kunstverein, a place of retreat - an intimate refuge - into inner worlds, for sleep, for lying down and experiencing mind-expanding practices and escaping into artificial paradises.

Keimig designed the room with essential elements only. Hence, it has become a sculpture, in monochrome grey, abstract, representative of a universal experience. This is set in an implied space. It consists of three surfaces that drift apart, displaced from each other, in an imaginary force of flight. The screens are diaphanous supports for his drawings, which he has transferred from the intimate format of his drawing pads to huge picture surfaces, and which hover over the camp like shadows from a dream world of oversized ghosts and narratives. The drawings interweave images from different eras, from the father's past, with references to the subculture of the past and present, creating a cycle between the generations, the times, the questions that people have always asked themselves.

Ramon Keimig (*1994 in Aschaffenburg, DE) has been a student of drawing and printmaking at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach with Prof. Mike Bouchet and Prof. Heiner Blum since 2019. Previously, he studied communication design at the University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt. His practice also includes the publication of numerous art books for example with Ultimo Mono Press, Sevilla (ES) and Nieves, Zurich (CH). His work has been presented at numerous book fairs such as COZI Festival for Contemporary Comics & Zines, Frankfurt am Main (DE), Druckfestival Hot Printing im Klingspormuseum, Offenbach am Main (DE), NY Art Book Fair, New York City (US), Taipei Art Book Fair, Taipei (TW). Among others, Ramon Keimig has presented his works at Feinkunst Krüger, Hamburg (DE) and at Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt am Main (DE) as part of the exhibition project Frankfurter Kunst Vertrieb organised by the collective Magma Maria.

Nassim L'Ghoul

Zwei Schritte vor, ein Schritt zurück, 2023

3-channel-video installation, 05:44 min

3D-Animation and machine learning algorithms

Sound by Phil Hoffart

Nassim L'Ghoul works with 3D animation to generate digital images that he creates individually for his films. L'Ghoul has produced a new three-channel work for the Frankfurter Kunstverein. His moving images unfold monumentally on three screens positioned in space. The central narrative runs in the middle, extended by two lateral projections.

The title of the work, *Zwei Schritte vor, ein Schritt zurück* (Two Steps Forward, One Step Back), refers to a practice known as pilgrimage walking, which stems from the tradition of processional rituals. L'Ghoul's films do not develop in a linear fashion, but rather seem to follow the logic of dreams in which personal associations and fantasies weave and flow into one another. Inanimate objects are given life, have mouths or can walk, miniaturised people move through giant sceneries or speak into oversized telephone receivers, while fantastic beings appear as if from nowhere, only to disappear at once. Individual figures repeatedly break through the picture surfaces and enter a different, underlying dimension.

The main feature of his chosen, reduced aesthetics is the 3D basic model without textures. He models his figures himself, but also makes use of found material that he reshapes for his 3D applications through skilful use of artificial intelligence. He uses physically based light calculations, which the computer performs as an intermediate step in the process of creating images. Using a speedy working method, he omits every unnecessary step from conception to realisation.

The artist seeks the open, unfinished form by using only so-called 'prepass images'. These are created during the animation of images in the computer process, but are not intended to be the finished result. He uses the intermediate step and deliberately chooses an aesthetic of digital, image-generating technologies. This constitutes the porous, translucent nature of his worlds, which are dream-like in their openness and make it possible to break through from one layer to the next at any time. L'Ghoul condenses his characters and narratives from out of the darkness. This process results in a dark visual world consisting of black and white dots that reinforce the dreamy, unreal feel.

Sound plays a central role for the artist, who has also produced music videos. For the new work, he has collaborated with sound artist Phil Hoffart. The soundscape embeds L'Ghoul's images in a tonal atmosphere that highlights individual elements, lending a certain acoustic three-dimensionality.

Forms and figures dominate his works, entering his worlds detached from a classical iconographic interpretation to assert a visual autonomy. This corresponds to an updated practice of sampling, which has established itself as a common working method with the digital culture of reels and memes, and defines the work of numerous artists today.

Employing different visual worlds, Nassim L'Ghoul creates a dimension all of his own from them. His surreal worlds and stories are inspired by art motifs from the Middle Ages and Gothic painting, myths and popular stories. Yet they do not take place in a linear and logical way, but remain open and associative.

Nassim L'Ghoul (*1997 in Bad Soden, DE) has studied electronic media at the Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach (DE) with Prof. Alexander Oppermann since 2017. In 2020 he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna (AT). He has won numerous prizes, including a scholarship from

the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes and the Rundgangpreis of the Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach. Among others, Nassim L'Ghoul has exhibited his work at the following institutions: Zollamt Studios, Offenbach am Main (DE), L187, Offenbach am Main (DE), Magma Maria, Offenbach am Main (DE) and at the Best Austrian Animation Festival, Vienna (AT).