

KÜNSTLERHAUS BETHANIEN

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Berlin, 14th July 2021

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to invite you to the opening of the following exhibition:

SWIMMING POOL – TROUBLED WATERS

ARTISTS

DANIEL BOZHKOV

NINA CANELL

C& CENTER OF UNFINISHED BUSINESS

MOUNIR GOURI

HULDA RÓS GUDNADÓTTIR

KLARA HOBZA

FERMÍN JIMÉNEZ LANDA

SANTIAGO MOSTYN

NEW MINERAL COLLECTIVE

(TANYA BUSSE UND EMILIJA ŠKARNULYTE)

SANDRA VAKA

ULRICH VOGL

MING WONG

ZEVS

+ FILM PROGRAMME BY

OLAF STÜBER WITH WORKS BY HANNA ARVELA,
ALICE CREISCHER, RÄ DI MARTINO, MONIRA AL QADIRI
JULIKA RUDELIUS AND CORINNA SCHNITT

CURATOR

VALERIA SCHULTE-FISCHEDICK

CURATORIAL ASSISTANCE

GUSTAV ELGIN

CAROLA UEHLKEN

SOFT OPENING:

FRIDAY, 6TH AUGUST 2021, 3 - 9 PM

EXHIBITION:

6TH AUGUST – 15TH SEPTEMBER 2021

Tuesday – Sunday, 2 – 7 pm

Kottbuser Str 10, 10999 Berlin

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RECHTSFORM: Künstlerhaus Bethanien GmbH · SITZ: Berlin · AG Charlottenburg

GESCHÄFTSFÜHRUNG: Christoph Tannert · Andrea Boche · HANDELSREGISTER: HRG 8089

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SWIMMING POOL – TROUBLED WATERS

We are all familiar with that cosy, languorous, sun-drenched feeling as the glistening water in a deep blue pool swirls around our feet . . . We are *all* familiar? The exhibition *Swimming Pool - Troubled Waters* draws on the wide range of ideas and emotions we associate with the topos of the swimming pool, and seeks to expose those common clichés and prejudices that chart our diverse, lasting, and often murky experiences with water. The exhibition probes class barriers and systems of exclusion, amongst others those brought to the surface by the European migrant crisis. References from film history, contemporary art, and a participative reading room developed by C& Center of Unfinished Business, attempts to sound out the gradual infiltration of the issues of inclusion and exclusion into the awareness of affluent societies.

The pivotal axis of the exhibition is Luca Guadagnino's *A Bigger Splash* from 2015, a film inspired by Jacques Deray's thriller *La Piscine (The Swimming Pool)* from 1969. Luca Guadagnino has created a veritable anti-film, brushing its sensually elegant predecessor from 1969 against the grain. While *La Piscine* barely touches on contemporary social conflict, *A Bigger Splash* casually fades refugees into the background plot, before fatally weaving them into its climax: when the question of who is to blame for a murder by the pool arises, the films protagonists agree to frame those for the crime. The title of the film also alludes to David Hockney's 1967 painting of the same name. This iconic depiction of hedonistic, queer, Californian *joie de vivre* is here contrasted with awareness of acute water shortages and water pollution.

In the exhibition, the waters of the swimming pool as a carefree sign of prosperity and the corresponding clichés are permanently clouded.

A catalogue is published for the exhibition, including contributions by Andrew Berardini, Övül Ö. Durmusoglu, Gustav Elgin, Maaïke Gouwenberg, Gudny Gudmundsdóttir, Nele Heinevetter, John Holten, Linda Jalloh, Angels Miralda, Mearg Negusse, Bert Rebhandl, Vanina Saracino, Valeria Schulte-Fischedick, Olaf Stüber and Carola Uehlken. ISBN: 978-3-941230-89-7

Place: Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin

Opening: Friday, 6th August 2021, 3–9pm

Duration: 6th August – 15th September 2021

A press event will take place from 11am to 1pm on 6th August 2021.

Please register for this event until 1st August 2021: uehlken@bethanien.de.

For press inquiries please send a message to Carola Uehlken: uehlken@bethanien.de.

The exhibition's accompanying programme will be announced shortly at www.bethanien.de.

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The artists:

With the knowledge of acute water shortages and water pollution, French artist **ZEVS** transforms the dream scenario in David Hockney's *A Bigger Splash* from 1967. In his series *The Big Oil Splash*, 2016, he integrates an uncanny oil spill that drips into the pool. In her film *Diver* from 2018 (part of the film programme compiled by Olaf Stüber), Kuwaiti artist **Monira Al Qadiri** has synchronized swimmers perform the theme of oil as the drastic change in an era for the Persian Gulf. The issues of water shortage and man's simultaneous hubris in wishing to transform deserts into cities and spas are manifest in the video installation *Neon Oasis* by **New Mineral Collective (Tanya Busse and Emilija Škarnulyte)**, which critically examines our entertainment and wellness culture. Using thickly applied sunscreen, which she inscribes into the surface of her photographs with her own body, **Sandra Vaka** questions the privilege of sunbathing as a tourist activity, and her work also addresses indifference towards the consequences of the use of sunscreens for natural habitats. In turn, in her artistic practice **Hulda Rós Gudnadóttir** is interested in the consequences of the fishing industry and the resulting massive changes in working conditions in Iceland and internationally.

A miniature swimming pool by **Ulrich Vogl**, whose water is reflected shimmering on the exhibition wall, turns a light-hearted version of the pool into sculpture, while his work *Cactus* from 2020 uses the simplest of means—a cactus is placed next to a half-full glass of water—to raise the question of water shortages. The stone slabs of **Nina Canell's** *Days of Inertia*, which hold puddles of water trapped in their centres with the use of special substances, could each be read as an abstracted pool: the formless liquid is kept in shape, the water is subjected to artificial, human intervention.



Images: Monira Al Qadiri, *Diver*, 2018, video (videostill), 4:00 min; Rã di Martino, *Controfigura (Stand In)*, 2017, video (videostill), 76:00 min; Ulrich Vogl, *Cactus*, 2012, cactus, glass of water, pedestal, acrylic glass hood; Nina Canell, *Days of Inertia* (detail), 2015, water hydrophobic coat, stone, dimensions variable.

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In addition to an absurdly comical work by **Daniel Bozhkov**, who has Darth Vader purify sea water with a Brita filter, we also encounter **Klara Hobza**, who—in her work *Diving through Europe*—swims below the surface of Europe's brackish, artificially straightened waterways alongside gigantic propellers and goes ashore in Delft in front of some astonished tourists.

The film *The Swimmer* dating from 1968 provides a further template referencing class segregation and racism. The protagonist crawls through the swimming pools of his neighborhood. Slowly and metaphorically, the man's life story is revealed, progressing from the middle of society to its margins. **Fermín Jiménez Landa** re-enacts this iconic film in 2013, crossing Spain by swimming in the country's swimming pools. **Alice Creischer** (film programme Olaf Stüber) transports German colonial history and participation in the bloody suppression of the Paris Commune to *Tropical Island* in Brandenburg, a spa and bathing area under palm trees that operates with high energy expenditure. **Ming Wong** stages clichés relating to the South Seas and tropical exoticism with his installation *Bloody Marys - Song of the South Seas* from 2018.

Separation by (sea) borders and unpassable countries becomes extremely poetic yet equally painful in the work of Algerian artist **Mounir Gouri**, who transforms a farewell between two friends travelling by sea to Italy into a subtle film. The tour from Turkey to Samos by **Santiago Mostyn**, filmed in long shots from a small rowing boat, also leaves the viewer with a subliminal feeling of melancholy. Not least, it conveys the disproportion between the colossal expanse of the ocean and the tiny size of the boat and its human crew. The sea can hardly be seen without thinking of its history of cruel human deportations and current migratory movements.



Images: Klara Hobza, *Die Schlickschlacht zu Schillig*, 2016, HD video (videostill), 9:59 min. Fermín Jiménez Landa, *The Swimmer*, 2013, video (videostill), 8:54 min. Mounir Gouri, *Naufrage (Shipwreck)*, 2016, video (videostill), 9:00 min; Santiago Mostyn, *Citizen*, 2017, two channel HD video installation (videostill), 4:12 hours