

KÜNSTLERHAUS BETHANIEN
P R E S S R E L E A S E

CONSTRUCT
YOUR
STORIES III

KERSTIN FLAKE / FRENZY HÖHNE
LEA KUNZ / REMOFILOE NOMANDLA MAYISELA
MATHILDA OLMI / BJÖRN SIEBERT
JAN SOBOTTKA / ANETT STUTH

EM EUROPEAN MONTH
OP OF PHOTOGRAPHY
BERLIN

24.02. – 23.03.2023
Opening: 23.02., 7 – 10 pm

KÜNSTLERHAUS BETHANIEN
Showroom
Kottbusser Straße 10
10999 Berlin

Tuesday – Sunday
2 – 7 pm

ATELIERS UND BÜROS: Kohlfurter Straße 41–43 · 10999 Berlin · SCHAURAU: Kottbusser Straße 10

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

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

KERSTIN FLAKE

b. 1967 in Karlsruhe, lives and works in Leipzig
1997–2003 Studied photography at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig.
2001 Recognition prize at the 5th Aenne Biermann Prize for Contemporary Photography,
Museum of Applied Arts Gera
2022 Laureate of the 28th Leipzig Annual Exhibition
www.kerstinflake.de

An artist working mainly in photography (and, occasionally, video), Kerstin Flake investigates the secret life of anachronistic, failed or transformed places. She explores their history by staging traces, objects and remains so as to create new conceptual and spatial relationships among them. To this effect, she constructs detailed installations or staged situations in real space, which she then captures in photographic images. In the resulting shots, the objects are deprived of their original function and take on a life of their own. They appear as living actors, creating their own reality in which the laws of physics seem to have been suspended. As the transitions between past and present become visible, perspectives and meanings are shifted in often humorous ways.

Flake's photo series *Shaking Surfaces* (2018–2021) shows household furniture and analogue media relics that appear to move autonomously, as suggested by their blurred outlines. Playing with viewers' expectations, Flake invites us to contemplate the continuous variations of meaning suggested by her riotous domestic mise-en-scènes.

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FRENZY HÖHNE

b. 1975 in Dresden, lives and works in Leipzig

1997–1998 Studied philosophy at Leibniz University Hanover

1998–2005 Studied fine arts at the Hamburg University of Fine Arts

2010-2012 Master student with Prof. Alba D'Urbano at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig

www.frenzy-hoehne.de

For her series *Bilder machen Leute* (2020) – the title substitutes the word ‘images’ for ‘clothes’ in the expression ‘clothes make the man’ – Frenzy Höhne has transposed Internet descriptions for non-loadable images into the medium of painting. On social media websites, when an image fails to display, it is routinely replaced by automatically generated text descriptions that capture their authors’ sometimes pathetic efforts at self-staging in dismally simple sequences of words. Höhne’s works consist of largely empty surfaces with the text line ‘Picture could contain...’ appearing at the upper edge of the painting. Their shadow-gap framing and conceptual hanging is modelled on the Facebook user interface.

In the exhibition, this series is shown in dialogue with *Denkmal* (Monument, 2012), a 180 × 130 cm C-print depicting a yellow sticky note, framed in oak and standing on a massive stepped plinth. The painterly lightness of the coloured surface contrasts with the physical coarseness of the sculptural plinth. Höhne thus stages a semantical clash between our desire to capture the fleeting moment and the essential finiteness of being.

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LEA KUNZ

b. 1991 in Basel, CH, lives and works in Les Pommerats, CH

2007–2012 Studied graphic design at the École professionnelle d'arts appliqués in La Chaux-de-Fonds

2015–2016 Studied visual communication with a focus on photography at the École de photographie, Centre d'enseignement professionnel de Vevey

2022 Participant in the „26th vfg Young Talent Award 2022“ of the "vereinigung fotografischer gestalter*innen" in Switzerland

www.leakunz.com

Lea Kunz's surprising images of stretching, leaning, contorted bodies and bizarrely pointed fingers are phenomenal. They confront viewers with variously tangled poses of young models, seemingly randomly assembled from the body parts of women, men and a furless pet in domestic or outdoor settings. In her ongoing series *Nude*, the artist undermines conventional representations of the naked body. Her photographs of almost surreal body constellations are poetic statements on human emotional modes of being. Kunz's assemblages open up the realm of possibilities because they effortlessly challenge commonly accepted standards.

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REMOFILOE NOMANDLA MAYISELA

b. 1994 in Johannesburg, SA, lives in Spruitview, Katlehong, SA

2012–2015 Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg

2021–2022 Through The Lens Collective and Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg

2022 Winner of the CAP Prize for Contemporary African Photography

Remofiloe Nomandla Mayisela's series *Lip Service* (2022) takes its cue from the infamous saying that 'the way to a man's heart is through his stomach' to explore patriarchal dominance, stereotypical notions of femininity, and domesticity as a locus of power imbalances.

In *Enigma* (2021), the artist uses found photographic material, mainly from anonymous photo albums, to create new, near-surrealistic collages. The vintage photographs play a special role in framing the temporal context of the work, as they not only refer to events in the past but also depict people who have since grown older or passed away. In a certain sense, the portrait thus becomes a contemporary vanitas motif in which the photographic image itself signifies transience. By manually reworking these found images, Mayisela moves beyond the role of a producer to adopt the viewer's perspective and demystify her own status as 'creator', while simultaneously opening up a field of contradictions. The challenge in her practice lies in unearthing unintentional artistic aspects in the amateur photograph and bringing to the fore unexpected moments of beauty or emotion, which are then carried over into the new work.

KÜNSTLERHAUS BETHANIEN

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

MATHILDA OLMI

b. 1991 in Châtel-Saint-Denis, CH, lives and works in Lausanne, CH

2011–2013 Professional School of Photography in Vevey, CH

2013–2015 Higher School of Photography in Vevey

2022 Participant in the „26th vfg Young Talent Award 2022“ of the "vereinigung fotografischer gestalter*innen" in Switzerland

www.mathildaolmi.com

Combining intimate portraits, nudes and still lifes, Mathilda Olmi's project *Rosa Canina* (2021) invites us to question the way we represent and look at the female body.

Her work, in which she pairs images of bodies with close-ups of nature, draws on ecofeminist theories that relate the exploitation of nature to the oppression of women. After being actively engaged in various forms of feminist struggle for several years, the artist today explores these issues through her work.

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BJÖRN SIEBERT

b. 1978 in Hamburg, lives and works in Leipzig

1999 Assistant at photo studio Wohlgemuth Bilderwerkstatt

2001 Studied graphic design and media art with a focus on artistic photography at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design

2004–2007 Studied artistic photography at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig

2008–2010 Master student with Prof. Timm Rautert and Prof. Christopher Muller at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig

2019 Foundation of the artist group *darktaxa*

www.bjoern-siebert.de

Since 2006, Björn Siebert has been developing an ongoing series of large-format photographs in which he meticulously reconstructs amateur images taken from the Internet. Its title, *Remake*, is borrowed from film theory, highlighting the central importance of repetition in the artist's work. His minute stagings replicate the original image in order to question its underlying mechanisms. By translating the 'essence' of small digital snapshots into large analogue photographs, Siebert tries to unravel the mystery and symbolism of the amateur photographs, while lending his replicas a life of their own as viewers are deprived of the original image and its context.

For his contribution to the exhibition, Siebert has essentially chosen two types of images from the large scope of motifs that characterises his work.

The *nocturnals*, which were taken at night with a frontal flashlight, depict young people performing strange rituals. They are the result of what the artist calls 'nocturnal vampirism'. While vivid, his images of adolescents are not calculated stills that show a climax, a turning point or an end state, but rather snapshots of in-between moments. Almost all of them consciously fail to adequately describe or even approximate the actual event. Siebert furthermore puts great emphasis on the intricate web of gender attributions, which in his images always appears to be ambivalent and fragile.

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From the interplay of original/amateur/authorship and remake/artist/authorship, a complex hybrid authorship emerges, which the artist invites us to question.

Although Siebert's *still lifes*, as opposed to the *nocturnals*, were taken during the day, they appear almost lifeless. They depict discarded objects in or under water: soft drink cans, alcopops, a dead cat, crime scene tape and leaked waste oil with the characteristic rainbow iridescence casually referred to in youth culture as 'unicorn piss'. The *still lifes* are characterised by a kind of morbid hangover mood, either slightly underexposed or steeped in the approaching twilight. While they are reminiscent of so-called 'day-for-night' techniques used in film, they focus on littered objects that can be read as ironic allusions to German places of longing such as La Paloma or Capri. The relics seem to strike poses like pop stars, symbols of a world between celebrated brand fetish and profane environmental pollution, or visual reflections of the zeitgeist: DOOM – MOOD.

(Björn Siebert & Rolf Hengesbach, November 2022)

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JAN SOBOTTKA

b. 1953 in Berlin, lives and works in Berlin

1973–1975 Studied German literature at TU Berlin

1973–1981 Studied art education at the Berlin University of the Arts

1980 DAAD scholarship for a stay in Milan

1980–1981 Master student with Prof. Wolfgang Petrick at the Berlin University of the Arts

1989 Founding member of the artist group DER KONGRESS

1986 Scholarship holder of the Karl Hofer Society

1986 Art Prize of the German Federal Ministry of Justice (project with Paolo Palagi)

www.jansobottka.de

Since 2004, Jan Sobottka, who started his artistic career as a painter, has been dedicating his time to documenting the Berlin art scene as a photographer. Today, his website www.catonbed.de comprises more than 50,000 photos. During his spontaneous gallery and museum tours, he photographs exhibition openings, events and artists in their studios. In parallel, he also works as a portrait photographer in his own premises. This work with models was published in 2015 in the book *Kitchenwork*, which documents his very personal approach to the genre.

In the course of his documentary project, which has been ongoing for over 18 years, Sobottka has met countless people, many of whom he keeps encountering over and over. This has allowed him to build relationships of trust between himself and the people he portrays, as witness his intense images of personalities such as Georg Baselitz, Roger Ballen, Hanna Schygulla, Elvira Bach and Rosa von Praunheim, but also of gallery owners, artists and curators. The photographs are created spontaneously, always using the existing light of the place of encounter. The persons' faces appear neither elated nor standardised, as if detached from the consciousness industry, photographed as individual subjects in a rare moment of immediacy.

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ANETT STUTH *TIME LOOPS*

b. 1965 in Leipzig, lives and works in Berlin

1991–1996 Studied photography at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig

1996–1998 Master student with Prof. Timm Rautert at the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig

www.anettstuth.de

In her recent series *Time Loops* (2021–2023), Anett Stuth photographs, collages and decollages fragments of nature, plant and animal objects, and remains from a recent and prehistoric past. The artist's series offer a condensed reflection on the sublimity and simultaneous destruction of nature as well as on the staging of natural objects. In her photographic collages, historical and contemporary images or references to nature are assembled and related to our present civilisation. In her decollages, on the other hand, large-format photographs of animal and plants are divested of all superfluous information. The objects thus appear detached from origin and time, like mute, frozen witnesses of a transient diversity.

Through the interplay of collages and decollages, the artist opens up new spaces of thought in the form of time loops.

Anett Stuth was nominated by the Künstlerhaus Bethanien for the **EMOP Berlin – European Month of Photography 2022**.



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