

Ins Dunkle schwimmen. Abysses of the Creative Imperative

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An exhibition by Collection and Archive, University of Applied Arts Vienna

The exhibition *Ins Dunkle schwimmen* presents contemporary art that explores how the individual is shaped as a 'creative subject.' It examines both the continuation and deconstruction of modernist hopes for art as a supposedly authentic expression of the inner self and for creativity as a tool for improving living conditions. Today, creativity plays a fundamental role in processes of subjectivation and navigates the tension between personal desires and social expectations, between longing and imperative. Cultural sociologist Andreas Reckwitz also speaks of an "ideal of creativity" in this context. Atmospherically, the exhibition title *Ins Dunkle schwimmen* [Swimming into the Dark] refers less to an ominous unknown but rather to the deep waters, dangerous currents, and at times dark abysses of self-doubt and perceived inadequacy that are closely associated with creativity.

"Be your own brand": Today, self-realization and self-presentation are fundamental components of the entrepreneurial self. Doing the things one is 'passionate' about, that you 'burn' for, is part of the ideal of a successful life that hyped on social media. Where, instead of communal care and support, often merely individualized 'self-care' is suggested, while ecological, social, and political crises exacerbate the situation, relations of (self-)exploitation take on an increasingly existential significance.

As 'self-designers' par excellence, artists are prototypical for the creative existence that has become an overall societal requirement profile. The resulting contradictory expectations and abysses of creativity in the context of art production therefore often become subjects of artistic practice themselves. The works shown in the exhibition question societal mechanisms of aesthetic capitalism and the associated myth of the new. Strategies of repetition, removal, non-action, refusal, revaluation and elimination play a central role. They sound out the conditions of self-formation in artistic production and in refining one's life, or seek exit strategies from the instrumentalization of the pathos of creativity and freedom.

Ins Dunkle schwimmen Abgründe des kreativen Imperativs

Die Ausstellung *Ins Dunkle schwimmen* zeigt gegenwärtige künstlerische Auseinandersetzungen mit Modellen des „schöpferischen Subjekts“. Sie fragt nach Fortschreibungen und Dekonstruktionen der Hoffnungen der Moderne auf Kunst als vermeintlichen Ausdruck des Inneren und auf Kreativität als Werkzeug zur Verbesserung des Lebens.

Kreativität nimmt heute eine grundlegende Funktion in Subjektivierungsprozessen ein. Dabei steht sie im Spannungsverhältnis zwischen eigenem Begehren und sozialer Erwartung, zwischen Wunsch und Imperativ. So spricht der Kulturosoziologe Andreas Reckwitz in diesem Zusammenhang auch von einem „Ideal der Kreativität“.

Der Titel der Ausstellung *Ins Dunkle schwimmen* verweist atmosphärisch weniger auf ein ominöses Unbekanntes, als vielmehr auf die tiefen Gewässer, gefährlichen Strömungen und mitunter finsternen Abgründe von Selbstzweifeln und gefühlter Unzulänglichkeit, die mit Kreativität aufs Engste verbunden sind.

„Be your own brand“: Selbstverwirklichung und Selbstinszenierung gehören aktuell zu den Grundkomponenten des unternehmerischen Selbst. Etwas zu tun, wofür man (ver-)„brennt“, ist Teil des Ideals eines gelungenen Lebens und wird in den sozialen Medien gehypt. Wo statt gemeinschaftlicher Fürsorge und Unterstützung oft nur eigenverantwortliche „Self Care“ nahegelegt wird, während die ökologischen, sozialen und politischen Krisen die Situation verschärfen, kommt (Selbst-)Ausbeutungsverhältnissen eine immer existenziellere Bedeutung zu.

Künstler:innen sind als „Selbstbildner:innen“ par excellence prototypisch für die zum gesamtgesellschaftlichen Anforderungsprofil gewordene kreative Existenz. Die daraus hervorgehenden widersprüchlichen Erwartungen und Abgründe von Kreativität im Kontext der Kunstproduktion werden daher häufig selbst zum Thema künstlerischer Praxis. Die in der Ausstellung gezeigten Arbeiten befragen die gesellschaftlichen Mechanismen im ästhetischen Kapitalismus und den damit verbundenen Mythos des Neuen. Strategien der Wiederholung, Auslagerung, Nichthandlung, Verweigerung, Umwertung und Einebnung spielen dabei eine zentrale Rolle. Sie loten die Bedingungen der Zurichtung des Selbst in künstlerischer Produktion und in der Arbeit am eigenen Leben aus oder suchen nach Exit-Strategien aus der Instrumentalisierung des Kreativitäts- und Freiheitspathos.

Tonio Kröner (*1984, DE)

***I remember when I was a very little girl
our house caught on fire*** [...], 2024

» Room 2: **SCHEIßE!**, 2024

» Room 3: **SCHEIßE!**, 2024

» Room 3: ***It's the same old S.O.S.*** [...], 2024

Tonio Kröner's impressively hairy figures appear gentle and seem to have sprung from the Muppet Show. Their aesthetic is borrowed from this popular cultural phenomenon of the late 1970s and early 1980s and, in the context of their revival in the current exhibition, exhibits both a certain irony and melancholy. Standing on wheels, stiff and silent in the exhibition space, the Muppets' lifeless yet expressive appearance evokes a sense of ambivalence. A moment of expression that can be attributed to them is reflected in the titles of the works. Two Muppets bear the same name, the exclamation "SCHEIßE!", while the other two adopt the words of the artists Morrissey and Peggy Lee, whose songs grapple with existential questions, despair and hope. Kröner's figures symbolize constructed or imagined identities, such as artist figures. As proxies, they reflect on biographical and media constructions of subjectivities and artistic expression in an ironic way.

Friederike Mayröcker (1924–2021, AT)

Le Chien, undated

The multiplied, superimposed [dog], reduced almost to the point of unrecognizability, allows the signifying and the signified to blend on the paper: The line between text and image becomes blurred and in simultaneously reading and recognizing the signs, a mental image emerges. While the words "LE CHIEN" forms the body of a dog-like figure that is both repeated and scaled down, the phrase "et son anima," which almost seems like the comma of a long enumeration, emphasizes the repetition; at the same time, it lends liveliness to the animal depicted on the paper and opens up another level of interpretation exploring the relationship between the physical representation and the immaterial, symbolic meaning. The resulting rhythm creates a tension between text and drawing, with which in her primarily literary practice the writer Friederike Mayröcker often experimented with.

Her approach raises the question of the porosity between these two forms of artistic expression—text and image production—which due to predominant processes of categorization are usually considered separately. By conceiving her drawing practice as a sporadic play within her literary work—one that was by no means meant to occur outside of it or represent a creative gesture opposed to the genre of writing—Mayröcker encouraged a re-evaluation of the rigid definition of being an artist. She considered her drawings and picture poems as "unimportant side notes that occur usually after or during prolonged or difficult writing sessions, to her own surprise and joy, [...] something like resting, catching one's breath." Drawing was practiced as an act of distancing, a departure from a primary artistic practice, thereby casually enabling new forms of artistic expression.

In a conversation with Heinz-Norbert Jocks, Mayröcker described the figures she sketched with a few fine, schematic lines as resembling herself. She added, "Strange round heads, usually cat-like or dog-like, impose themselves on me and that's because I feel like a dog from time to time." The dog, therefore, could be interpreted as a kind of self-portrait of the artist.

Monika Baer (*1964, DE)

Mozart, 1997

Monika Baer's works navigate between abstraction and figuration. Positioned between these two poles, they raise questions about the performative nature of painting. For the artist, the motifs in her serial works are agents that transport the narrative of the images. Banknotes, bottles, spider webs etc. and painting itself appear in a kind of play. *Mozart* is part of a series of works from the 1990s in which, in a theatrical setting, marionettes with wigs seem to be pulled by strings. The depicted scenes, based on Mozart concerts the Salzburg Marionette Theater, create a kind of rococo look that is heightened by intrusive, delicate patterns taking on a life of their own from the left edge of the picture. *Mozart*, pulled by strings at the center of the image, evokes the myth of "child prodigy." The picture questions not only the power of tradition, but also the possibilities and freedom of art itself. What is the artist's role, and who is pulling the strings?

Josef Dabernig (*1956, AT)
Ohne Titel, 1992

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Jack Smith (1932–1989, USA)
Horror and Fantasy at Midnight, 1967 und
The Last Picture Show, nach 1973
 » Room 3: **Flaming Creatures at the Tivoli Theatre**, 1963

The spontaneously shot low-budget experimental film *Flaming Creatures* (1963) by Jack Smith portrays an ensemble of drag performers through various loosely connected vignettes, such as a lipstick advertisement, excessive dancing, orgies, and an earthquake scene. Initially, the film was received primarily within the New York underground scene. It became known to a wider audience only after it was confiscated by the police at a screening at Bleecker Street Cinema in Manhattan in 1963 and its subsequent banning in many U.S. states due to its explicit sexual content.

Flaming Creatures is inspired by the melodrama genre, by B-movies, and the exuberant glamour of Hollywood and deals with the fluidity of gender and sexuality. Like Jack Smith himself, the characters and actors in the film are on the fringes of mainstream society. Struggling for a chance to live according to their own desires and ideas, they clash with social norms and “burn brightly” in the process. The two posters—one, an invitation to a screening of *Flaming Creatures* and another one to the event *Horror and Fantasy at Midnight* of the Filmmakers’ Cinematheque—are part of an overflowing artistic practice that Smith employed as a tool for self-realization, where the boundaries between performance and everyday life were consistently blurred. In a seemingly casual manner, Smith doodled along the torn edge of a sheet of paper with the credits of the Hollywood film *The Last Picture Show*.

Lee Lozano (1930–1999, USA)
Masturbation Investigation, 1969 and
Private Book 1, 1968–69
 » Room 2: **Party Piece (or Paranoia Piece)**, 1969
 » Room 3: **Piece, Companion Piece**, 1969

Lee Lozano produced art for a period of only ten years, from 1961 to 1971. In 1972, she left New York, giving up her role as one of the protagonists in the city’s 1960s art scene. Her work *General Strike Piece* from 1969 is a boycott declaration to the art system, articulating a pursuit of a “total personal and public revolution.” The necessity for art and life to overlap, which Lozano had already articulated in many of her *Language Pieces* and in a statement before the Art Workers’ Coalition, was, in her opinion, the only way to remain part of the art world. Lozano also articulated her decision to only exhibit works in the future that included ideas and information related to social revolution. For the artist, the irresolvable conflict was that critical discourse always remained part of the very system it sought to distance itself from. Artists’ criticism of the art system, she argued, was paradoxical, as they, too, had to participate in the creation and maintenance of the art system to secure their own livelihoods. Lozano’s withdrawal became evident in a shift in her artistic language: in her earlier, often large-scale works— frequently depicting fantastic, grotesque and machine-like bodies and orifices rendered with powerful, almost brutal strokes—she dealt with obsession and sexuality. Later, she reduced her artistic means to the act of writing down instructions for action (*Pieces*) such as meditations, mental exercises, analyses of everyday life or ways of interacting with the public. Also her final work, *Dropout Piece*, is a written note of an instruction.

Franz West (1947–2021, AT)
Er kam, sah und siegte, 1983 and **Oh my Darling**, 1977
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Josef Strau (*1957, AT)

Harp Hypostasis, 2023

» Room 3: **Hypostasis 1**, 2023

» Room 5: **The Writer who lost his way but then was found**, 2024

Josef Strau's artistic practice involves the blending and juxtaposition of various media and creative processes. Often beginning with text-based reflections, Strau experiments with combining various artistic means ranging from writing to (sculptural) installations. Contradictions and ambivalences form a productive framework for his artistic research and production. Strau's texts link everyday narratives with urban scenes, where personal information and literary motifs merge. Often conceived as an expression of a stream of consciousness, they weave a biographical network that allows for various forms of subjectivization and authorship.

The work series *Hypostasicisms*, from which *Hypostasis 1* and *Harp Hypostasis* originate, reflects on Neoplatonic metaphysics and its potential usage in art in an experimental way. Strau focuses on a repetitive practicing process to apply philosophical ideas in a practical way. He collects and combines different materials and techniques and discovers new connections between them. Drawing on the principles of the ancient philosopher Plotin, Strau explores how ambiguity and contradiction in art can result in intellectual freedom. By dissolving preconceived concepts, he creates space for creative growth and spontaneous inspiration, enabling materials and thoughts to connect.

Ulla Rossek (*1978, DE)

raw material outwith time pleasant useless untrue, 2013/2019 and

raw material – outwith time – pleasant, useless, untrue, 2013

The work, created six years apart, consists of several raw, untreated blocks of clay and a hand-bound book. In it—virtually a book within a book—black and white photographs – show the artist's hand turning pages. The photographed texts originate from contemporary theorists such as Alain Ehrenberg and Dierich Diederichsen as well as Sabine Spielrein, a pioneer of psychoanalysis. Among other things, the texts deal with questions of production and depression. With her reflexive approach and formally reduced realization, Rossek encourages reflecting on the role of art and its demands and promises. She captures the tension of resisting to create a genuine "work" by incorporating copying, allowing for contemplation, and generating chance in the production process.

The clay blocks show subtle changes—superficial scratches and pressure marks—that occurred more or less by chance during the drying process. While the texts have partly become almost illegible due to the reproduction process, and stand in contrast to the meticulously crafted book cover, the clay on display, hardened through the drying process, is no longer malleable and has become virtually unusable.

Helena Huneke (1967–2012, DE)

Untitled, undated

» Room 3: **Held**, 1999, **exhibition documentation**
Schaufenster Ditmar-Koel Straße,
correspondences, 2002–2003 and
Ausbruch, undated

» Room 6: **Untitled (Faxes)**, 1997

Helena Huneke's works are shaped by her use of a wide variety of media. She works with the medium of the collage, drawings and textiles – mostly found, appropriated or used material – and text, from fragmentary notes resembling diary entries to manifesto-like statements that repeatedly describe the difficulty of positioning herself in the art world and are characterized by her permanent (self-)withdrawal. By using techniques such as layering, folding, draping, embroidery or superimposition, the supposed contrast between art and design becomes visible, although applied and fine art do not appear separate in Huneke's works.

Again and again, the artist's works refer directly to the networks in which she moved and which she played a decisive role in shaping. She repeatedly transformed her Hamburg apartment into a "restaurant"; it became a stage for performances and her personal objects became "props". In her works, she actively and sometimes painfully blurred the imagined boundary between her private and professional life. At the same time, she positioned her work as antagonistic to the art market. At the end of the 1990s, Huneke was part of the "Akademie Isotrop", a group of Hamburg artists who developed both an alternative to the institutionalized art academy and different forms of collective work.

Jean-Marie Straub (1933, FR–2022, CH)
La France contre les robots, 2020

“A world won for technology is lost for freedom.” These words from the writer Georges Bernanos’ essay *La France contre les robots*, published in the 1940s, seem almost prophetic in view of the technological developments of the coming decades. The repeated recitation of Bernanos’ text in the video of the same name by filmmaker Jean-Marie Straub begins and ends with them. The camera follows a person walking slowly along the shore of Lake Geneva and quoting a passage from the first chapter of the book, in which Bernanos criticizes the silent alliance of the great imperial powers. According to the author, this union by means of technology leads to the loss of the freedom of its citizens. He sees the system in which these powers are bound as dictatorial.

In the film, the text is spoken twice by the same person traveling the same route and filmed from the same perspective, but at two different times of day. The monotonous voice makes Bernanos’ words sound as though they have been strung together mechanically. The almost imperceptibly created cinematic diptych offers a reinterpretation of the critique of technological encroachment and industrial capitalism through the prism of a present marked by man’s dependence on machines as well as ubiquitous and increasingly unsettling forms of automation. By alluding to the prevailing technocratic order based on efficiency, performance and profitability, the film’s text, spoken in the present tense, invites resistance in the sense of an absolute revolution, i.e. a complete overthrow of the capitalist system. Only a radical renunciation of this system could counteract the dictatorial state of affairs that Bernanos demonstrates on the basis of the dominant structures of money, ethnic origin, class and nation.

Sigmar Polke (1941, PL–2020, DE)
Günter Brus, 1973

Through his art, Sigmar Polke explored contemporary and historical art movements as well as the social positioning of artistic figures somewhere between elevation and demonization. He often explored the subject of artistic media and the formats themselves, explored pictorial discourses in an ironic way and employed strategies of appropriation and deformation.

The offset lithograph portrays the Viennese artist-activist Günther Brus. Printed in negative, the artist, looking down and with a hand raised to his face, is barely recognizable. By 1973, the year the lithograph was created, Brus had already appeared in the performances *Selbstverstümmelung* [Self-Mutilation] (from 1965), *Wiener Spaziergang* [Viennese Walk] (1965) and *Kunst und Revolution* [Art and Revolution] (1968) as a member of the Wiener Aktionist:innen [Viennese Actionists] and had left the conservative Vienna of the post-war period as a result of radical public rejection and a court case for “degrading state symbols”. This lithograph is not merely the portrait of an artist; in view of Brus’ role as an Actionist performer of self-defilement, the work raises questions about both the limits of artistic expression and social reactions and sanctions.

John Miller (*1954, USA)
Untitled, 1990

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Michael Krebber (*1954, DE)

Untitled, 2003

» Room 2: **Botschaft als Medium**, museum in progress, Der Standard, 26.02.1991, p 9.

For the work shown here, which is reminiscent of his series *Flaggs (Against Nature)*, Michael Krebber uses an industrially produced fabric and a popular naturalistic subject. The work, on a brown bed sheet, shows an imposing horse in front of a romanticized landscape background. The wide fabric is stretched on a frame like a painting and thus far removed from its function as an everyday object. Through this minimalist painting practice based on appropriation, Krebber negates the notions of artistic expression and originality usually closely associated with the medium of painting.

By evoking Jasper Johns' series *Flag*, Krebber's work creates a double reference and, like post-war modernist paintings, thus transcends the conventions of the medium.

In 1991, the curator Helmut Draxler invited Krebber to take part in the exhibition project *Botschaft als Medium* [Message as Medium], a series brought to life by the Viennese initiative *museum in progress* with the aim of showcasing contemporary art in print media. By designing pages for the Vienna daily newspaper *Der Standard* and the financial magazine *Cash Flow*, Krebber became involved in this project exploring the intersection of media and art.

For his contribution to *Der Standard*, Krebber selected a drawing created between 1976 and 1977 by the artist and former fellow student Martin Brauer. In the late 1980s, Krebber had decided to take up painting again and wanted to express this in his contribution. As he had not yet produced any new paintings himself at this time, he chose images of Brauer's works instead.

Ghislaine Leung (*1980, SE)

Holdings, 2024

Score: An object that is no longer an artwork

Ghislaine Leung's art is based on a continuous critical reflection on the production conditions of art, its formats, institutional frameworks and norms. Using both conceptual and minimalist strategies, Leung explores the tensions between the visible and invisible hierarchies that structure exhibition spaces and shape our perception of art. The vulnerability of the artwork is of particular interest here, which Leung sees as its complete dependence on the system in which it is created, presented and continually renegotiated. This vulnerability is reflected in how (very) resistant the work is to the influences and conditions that shape its existence and reception. By relinquishing this control, Leung opens her work up to interaction and explores how the piece can draw its resilience from its dependence on the contexts and relationships that shape it.

In this sense, Leung's Scores are to be understood as simple descriptions that, instead of giving strict instructions, allow the institutions to interpret the works in their own way. They allow for the circulation of sculptural works in different contexts and the creation of new meanings through the combined effect of the actors and spaces involved.

Hanne Darboven (1941–2009, DE)

Ein Jahrhundert I B, 1973

» Room 3: **Theatré**, 1985

In her “action”, as she herself described her art, the artist Hanne Darboven developed methods for the comprehensive representation of the world, time, social systems and cultural developments. Her work, influenced by American conceptual art, tends towards rationalization and objectification. However, she expanded on standard formats and forms of expression to include a form of individual expression through the use of her own handwriting. Darboven worked with both writing and numbers as well as with extensive collections of visual materials.

After a two-year stay in New York, on 31 July 1968 (the exact date can be determined from a diary entry), Darboven developed a system for calculating cross sums from the days, months and years of a date. Cross sums are calculated using the individual figures of a day's date (e.g. 1.1.1900). Omitting the century means the system can also be applied to past and future centuries (the calculation is not $1+1+1+9+0+0$ but $1+1+0+0$). The key data of this system are the calculated cross sums of the first and last days of the year in a century: 2 ($1+1+0+0$), 43 ($31+12+0+0$), 20 ($1+1+9+9$), 61 ($31+12+9+9$). This approach to representing time can be interpreted as a strategy for coping with reality. Darboven's system translates a subjective selection of historical and everyday events or entire periods of time into a simple code. The cross sums are noted as a figure or written out in words and can appear as a numerical notation, in boxes or as a U-shaped wavy line. Darboven's preoccupation with numbers and calendar data calculations enables her to “write without describing”, providing a means of representing duration while making the flow of time visually perceptible to the viewer.

Tonio Kröner (*1984, DE)

SCHEIBE!, 2024

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Jana Euler (*1982, DE)

Camera 4 (Lumix) in use since 2018, 2021

In her art, Jana Euler explores both social and digital networks, showing relationships as institution-building and reflecting painterly myths in an often grotesque way. *Camera 4 (Lumix)* is part of a series of paintings that are hung in a circle in the room in an installation setting, reminiscent of panopticons. The work is displayed alone and the larger-than-life painted lens of a digital camera becomes a technical eye that observes the viewer. This can be read as a reflection on the omnipresence of the camera in contemporary culture, in which being observed and recorded has become a central aspect of life, along with audiovisual forms of self-exploitation.

Michael Krebber (*1954, DE)

Botschaft als Medium, museum in progress,

Der Standard, 26.02.1991, p. 9

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Lee Lozano (1930–1999, USA)

Party Piece (or Paranoia Piece), 1969

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Franz West (1947–2021, AT)

Liege (Caravaggio), 1989

» Room 1: **Er kam, sah und siegte**, 1983 and

Oh my Darling, 1977

» Room 3: **Liège**, 1989

» Room 5: **Die Zeit**, 1983

Franz West's *Liege* or *Liège* is presented in the exhibition space as a dynamic sculpture, inviting visitors to reflect on their posture and awareness of their own bodies in the space, while at the same time invoking a specific socio-cultural context by metaphorically bringing the psychoanalysis space into play. By combining the name of the Belgian city "Liège" with the German term "Liege" [couch] in the title, West relies on a phonetic play on words that humorously refers to the Freudian slip of the tongue and to Freud's approach of free association.

The tension between creativity and neurosis forms a guiding principle in West's art. His *Adaptives*, which can serve to represent neuroses, are a typical example of this. In the case of the *Liege* or *Liège*, the exchange between West's sculpture and the beholder, who also imagines themselves as a subject of analysis, enables a mutual transformation: the observer has the potential to activate the *Liege*, in that the work encourages them to reflect on their own physicality and emotions.

According to West, the piece is experienced via the pressure points created by the reclining position assumed on the sculpture. A connection is therefore forged between the work and its recipients on both a physical and psychological level. This reciprocity exemplifies West's approach to art as a dynamic process in which artwork and viewer engage in mutual dialogue. In reaction to the Viennese context of the 1960s, which was characterized by Viennese Actionism, West designed an ironic moment that does not strive for the radical liberation of the body through the intensification of a condition, but rather proposes a confrontation or a harmonization with one's own neuroses through the experience of art.

Jack Smith (1932–1989, USA)

Flaming Creatures at the Tivoli Theatre, 1963

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Josef Kramhüller (1968, DE–2002, EN)

Untitled (weekend), 1999

Untitled (performance with cat), 1993

Untitled (orange yellow), 1993–1994

Josef Kramhüller's works are characterized, among other things, by his use of different techniques: drawing, painting, (dé)collage, text and performance. This combination results in a multi-layered and dynamic work characterized by intensity, constant movement and fragility. Kramhüller sees the free exploration of different materials and media as an opportunity to arrive in a "land of ambiguity" or a "manifesto of the attempt", often using strategies of appropriation, alienation and abstraction.

Former colleagues and friends point to Kramhüller's deep interest in the economic, political and social systems that shaped the development of art in the 1990s. Questions of class, recognition and production shaped both his artistic and social approach, pointing to the reciprocal influence of his private and professional lives as an artist.

The Critical Ass (Anke Dyes (*1980, DE), Niklas Lichti (*1980, DE) with Michele Di Menna (*1980, CA)

Attract and Repel, 2024

The blog *The Critical Ass* is designed and edited by the artists Anke Dyes, Niklas Lichti and Robert Müller. In regularly published issues with different thematic focuses and collaborative settings and in the form of essays, art and socio-critical analyses as well as collages or conversations, the online magazine deals with artistic production in late capitalism.

In collaboration with the artist Michele Di Menna, a new piece has been created for the exhibition. The installation contains spells, curses and "positive energy" cast in synthetic resin and demonstrates the absurdities of a neoliberal culture of self-care and self-optimization, whose supposedly straightforward promises cannot be kept. The pyramid-shaped shelf serves as a presenta-

tion surface for the various promises of salvation. Its structure humorously reflects the esoteric symbolism of spiritual ascension, reminding us of the different levels of human consciousness and the claim to an elevation of the self.

The Critical Ass Issue 7:



Maria Lassnig (1919–2014, AT)

Selbstportrait als Blondine, 1981

Meditations-Sessel 1968, 1986

Dies lieb ich sehr, Selbstportrait, 1969

Selbstportrait, 1958

Maria Lassnig's etching *Meditations-Sessel* [Meditation Chair] was created in the 1980s, when the artist had already been teaching the master class in experimental design at the Angewandte for some time. The title of the etching refers to the year in which Lassnig emigrated from Paris to New York – a time in which her large-format cyclical works on sensual perception and consciousness gained notoriety as "body awareness" self-portraits. In July 1986, she wrote: "Diary notes from before and after 1945. How much heartache, interspersed very early on with artistic remarks that anticipate everything that comes later. [...] Compared to the past, I now seem to lead an uneventful, thoughtless life." *Meditations-Sessel* reflects Lassnig's characteristic depiction of specific bodily perceptions and her repeated reflexive examination of her own work. Seen as a merging of body and object and the superimposition of several perspectives, the work can be read both as the artist's view of her own crossed legs during meditation and as a depiction of a mid-century chair or a slumped anthropomorphic figure.

Amelie von Wulffen (*1966, DE)

Ohne Titel, 2020

» Room 5: **Untitled (Daughter of the Hunter)**, 2020

A central component of Amelie von Wulffen's oeuvre is her preoccupation with the middle-class world, its abysses and her own role. Everyday scenes are distorted, exaggerated, and occasionally visualized in fantastical ways.

An anthropomorphic figure made of brown material stands in the exhibition space, reminiscent in color and structure of both bark and excrement. The elongated shape of the figure, which emphasizes the association with excrement, merges at the lower end into a tree stump. Peppered with flies, the figure carries a belt bag and casts a distant and unimpressed glance at its surroundings. Excrement, the residue that human and animal bodies rid themselves of, a material that is normally disposed of, is fixed here. Coming from Old High German, the term "Quāt" means softened earth, to which we return after death.

The artist Tonio Kröner associated the figure in his writings with the "Kotkind des Wolfsmannes" [Wolf Man's Excrement Child] – a patient of Sigmund Freud, from whose case he derived the relevance of childhood neurosis for psychological disorders in adulthood. The man, whose anonymized name is derived from an exaggerated childhood fear and recurring nightmares of wolves, developed the fantasy of giving birth to himself as a child of excrement in order to obtain a new chance of a happy and fulfilled life in this form.

Verena Dengler (*1981, AT)

Verena Dengler, Besuch Nachlass der Künstlerin Helena Huneke, März 2023, Sichtung einer Kiste Arbeiten A5 auf Papier (FACEBOOK SENTENCE, ca. 2011?), 2024 (unfinished)

Verena Dengler's art is characterized by a multidisciplinary approach that combines digital media, performance and text pieces. The artist often deals with questions of representation and power (structures) and invites viewers to critically reflect on social norms and identity constructions. In her work, she often humorously destabilizes and deconstructs the juxtaposition of pop culture and high culture, as well as concepts such as the autonomy of art and of genius.

By integrating Huneke's works into her performance, Dengler questions the mechanisms of representation in the art world – how one gains access, how one is represented and why, a subject also addressed in Huneke's works.

Helena Huneke (1967–2012, DE)

exhibition documentation Schaufenster Ditmar-Koel Straße, correspondences, 2002–2003

Ausbruch, undated

Held, 1999

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Jessyca R. Hauser (*1990, AT)

control (chapter 24–27), 2017

continue (chapter 20–24), 2014/16

Over a period of eight years, parallel to her studies at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Jessyca R. Hauser filmed herself with the Photobooth program on her laptop. The recordings of her face oscillate between authentic emotional expression and controlled self-staging. The depiction of the artist's supposed inner life becomes a central component of external perception. Emotions are fundamentally structured by social systems and logic. Situations that feel immediate change with the pressing of the record button. The clip/performance has already rewritten the moment, the filmic montage completely overwrites it in a second step.

In the text accompanying the installation *Do you feel me now?*, Hauser describes *continue* and *control* as autobiographical works in which the "I" becomes the "she". The boundary between self and performance becomes blurred. The portrayal of the self runs through personas that are influenced by different, sometimes contradictory media images that serve the topos of the "young white woman". The Photobooth program becomes a mirror that enables self-assurance at the moment of the shot, while the performance is for the benefit of the potential gaze of the camera, an anonymous counterpart. Hauser uses a variety of media in her art, such as video, performance, sound, acting and text. The boundary between private and public, between role and authentic expression is repeatedly strained and rendered obsolete.

Franz West (1947–2021, AT)

Liège, 1989

» Seite 8

Josef Strau (*1957, AT)

Hypostasis 1, 2023

» Seite 4

Lee Lozano (1930–1999, USA)
Piece, Companion Piece, 1969

» Seite 3

Tonio Kröner (*1984, DE)
SCHEIBE!, 2024
It's the same old S.O.S. [...], 2024

» Seite 2

Hanne Darboven (1941–2009, DE)
Theatré, 1985

» Seite 7

Min Yoon (*1986, KR)
Standing Composition Book, #MY 1056, 2023
 » Room 5: **Break + ing Time (back (still))**, 2024 and
Break + ing Time (back (analytical proposal)),
 2024

Tanja Widmann (*1966, AT)
V (Angewandte), 2021

Tanja Widmann deals in her works with questions of authorship, the construction and fiction of the artist-as-subject, the economy of the means of production, reproduction techniques and the status of the artwork in the context of symbolic and economic value production. Scripts are often the source material for Widmann's art. They introduce factual and fictional narratives, figures and confrontations with contemporary and historical social conflicts, form the basis of scripts for performers, installation instructions for objects, or narratives that are not recorded but are passed on in conversations.

One of the scripts in the V series is a graffito that was left on a sculpture by artist Nairy Baghramian exhibited during the Venice Biennale in 2019 – the name "Vanessa" carved into the material. The prints are based on a low-resolution cell phone photo taken in passing. They document an action that does not destroy the exhibited artwork but questions the literal inviolability of art objects in the exhibition space. "Vanessa" becomes a fictitious figure whose banal gesture is made visible and repeated and translated several times using simple and crude processing methods: V appears in various contexts – in the gallery, online or in the Angewandte Collection – and in versions using different materials. In each reproduction, the source material is repeatedly fragmented, rearranged and charged with new meaning by the material and context.

Min Yoon grapples with the conditions and structures of art, creativity and productivity. He plays with the expectations and projections with which artists are confronted and often exhibits the equipment used to produce his works. Paint boxes, mixing palettes, brushes and notebooks become the motif. The objects depicted are often taken from the hobby industry or art lessons. Time and again, fantastic creatures and characters can be found in his works, sometimes curious, sometimes exhausted or indifferent, looking back at the audience.

The painted notebook in *Standing Composition Book, #MY 1056* is upside down, the letters of the title have almost fallen out of the space intended for them. Four round eyes peer out of a black hole. The back of the stretcher frame shows the bodies of the two creatures – perhaps a bean and a blob of paint. Holding a pencil, they look at the drawing of a landscape and seem ready to make another creative gesture. A felted mouse and a dense line drawing of two faces leave the two-dimensional space and populate the structure of the stretcher.

John Miller (*1954, USA) & Richard Hoeck (*1965, AT)
Deliveries in the Rear, 2001 » Seite 13

Martin Kippenberger (1953, DE–1997, AT)
Miete Strom Gas (Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt, Plakat), 1986
 » Room 6: **ICH HALT MICH VERSCHLOSSEN**, 1989

The poster for the 1986 exhibition *Miete Strom Gas* [Rent Electricity Gas] at the Landesmuseum Darmstadt, in which Martin Kippenberger made several references to Joseph Beuys, follows the principle of superimposing various elements that are not directly connected to each other. The poster shows two portraits of the artist – one in black and white and the other in yellow. The background is a documentary photograph, charged with emotion in the contemporary context of the exhibition. It shows billows of smoke from the Challenger space shuttle, which exploded shortly after take-off in January 1986; an event that was broadcast live at the time and attracted a great deal of attention.

The title *Miete Strom Gas* [Rent Electricity Gas] addresses basic everyday financial expenses that must be paid in order to be able to participate in certain areas of society. The significance of art as a commodity and the role of artists within these production structures is reflected both as a component of and dependent on the logic of capitalism.

In several works, Martin Kippenberger used adhesive tape with the inscription “YO ME MANTENGO AISLADO / I HALTE MICH VERSCHLOSSEN / I HOLD MYSELF CLOSED”. This adhesive tape, which is usually used for transporting art and bears the inscription or logo of the transport company, evokes questions about the transparency and inscrutability of artists' self-presentation and identity.

Linda Bilda (1963–2019, AT)
Ohne Titel (Sockel), undated

A white exhibition plinth, itself usually a supporting element in an exhibition, becomes an art object. Linda Bilda appropriated the representative plinth and transformed it into a support for her comic figures.

For a number of years, Bilda published *Keep it real* and *Die goldene Welt*, comics addressing political and socio-critical themes in a deliberately unwieldy and brittle drawing style. At the center of her focus was the exploration of (self-)critical methods as a reaction to the dominant systems that emerge from the capitalist order. Her work as an artist thus developed as a form of committed communication aimed at creating a sensual and critical perceptibility and legibility. Bilda was particularly interested in exploring artistic forms of expression that developed outside the established art canon.

From the beginning of her career, Bilda was active on the fringes of the dominant art scene and grappled with questions of social exclusion, gender inequality and postcolonialism. She spent part of her early career in a Vienna squat known for its sociopolitical activity. These experiences shaped her understanding of art as a form of resistance against established power structures. In her early work, she experimented with the central method of combining text and images, starting with the founding of the magazine *Artfan* in 1991 with Ariane Müller. In addition, she often used art forms that exist outside the traditional gallery context, such as public events, magazines or flyers, to convey her messages.

Josef Dabernig (*1956, AT)

Hypercrisis, 2011

» Room 1: **Untitled**, 1992

In a former Soviet rest home for artists near the small Armenian town of Dilijan, the writer Boris Martov tries to overcome his crisis of creativity and concentration during perestroika. Although it is still unclear which treatment measures were planned, we instead see the staff and doctors reading, cleaning the deserted-looking building and eating various dishes. Scenes of the contemplative upkeep of both architecture and human bodies alternate with the poet's restless walks through the surrounding neglected gardens and the decaying parts of the complex. The soundtrack accentuates the contrast between the static, rigid interior shots and the dynamic camera movements in the outdoor scenes – Giuseppe Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* alternates with an improvised accordion piece by Iulian Patranoiu.

The scene reaches its climax during a performance in a sparsely populated event room. Doctors and audience follow the musical performance of a pair of twins while the poet's crisis reaches its nadir. By looking at a past social order in which the function of state-run rest homes for Soviet cultural workers was to increase artistic productivity by cultivating an atmosphere of enjoyment and relaxation, the film focuses attention on the contemporary call for constant creativity in all areas of life. The structure of the film's location acts as a local manifestation of a utopia that cannot be made real. The actions shown in the film come to nothing, the crisis is not overcome. Even the building complex filmed by Dabernig was rebuilt a few days after filming and thus destroyed.

Richard Hoeck (*1965, AT) & John Miller (*1954, USA)

Something for Everyone, 1999

» Room 1: John Miller: **Untitled**, 1990

» Room 3: John Miller & Richard Hoeck: **Deliveries in the Rear**, 2001

The figure of the "Delivery Man" tells of the transformation of urban economies and precarious working environments in the age of globalization in late capitalism. Since the 1990s, one delivery service, with its brown uniform, has particularly characterized the appearance of modern "creative" cities. The protagonist of the film, a delivery man named Ken Kenwood, dreams of wealth, luxury and sex. His reality consists of driving through Vienna, delivering parcels, and a series of encounters with different people. With each interaction, the banality of his everyday working life is interrupted in a different way and the relation between closeness and distance is renegotiated. Some encounters are erotically charged, others hostile and frustrating. The figure of the delivery man not only reflects the film's thematic examination of the circulation of goods and of consumer society, it also expands the narrative to include the question of how certain people and professions are positioned within the neoliberal logic of exploitability.

The film *Something for Everyone* smugly alludes to various genres that invoke elements of Jacques Tati, Andy Warhol and independent films, as well as soft porn. The courier's brown uniform offers numerous associations that extend to the abject and illustrate his role as the already colorfully humiliated final link in an accelerating economic production chain. As a pawn and projection figure moving between numerous recipients and senders, the depiction of the courier as a "slacker" triggers a bizarre range of reactions that oscillate between impatience, aggression, desire, curiosity and erotic fantasy. Including figures from the Viennese art and culture scene such as Brigitte Kren, Heimo Zobernig, Kasha Fiedler, Hans Weigand and Karin Pernegger in cameo roles provides for irritating moments in the production, insofar as they form direct links to the production of the film. In the installation setting, Ken Kenwood leaves the film and appears in the exhibition space as "Delivery Man".

Amelie von Wulffen (*1966, DE)
Untitled (Daughter of the Hunter), 2020

» Seite 10

Josef Strau (*1957, AT)
The Writer who lost his way but then was found, 2024

» Seite 4

Luzie Meyer (*1990, DE)
Incognito ergo non sum, 2020

Luzie Meyer uses many different types of media to create multi-layered works. She works with video and sound and writes poetic and theoretical texts as well as exhibition reviews. These different levels of artistic and theoretical exploration can also be felt in *Incognito ergo non sum*.

The question “Was becoming what you are a personal or a professional decision?” is asked in a calm, almost contemplative voice at the beginning of the film. This is followed by a fast-paced conversation between two people, determined by the rhythm of the language and the soundtrack. It is reminiscent of a typical conversation between artists; what is said seems familiar and at the same time the dialog drifts increasingly into the absurdities of private, public and professional self-management strategies. Meyer describes the film as full of half-truths and exaggerations based on personal experiences and encounters. She cites Thomas Nagel’s essay *Concealment and Exposure* (1998), in which he argues for the protection of private spaces, as an important point of reference. With regard to the characters in the film, the question is posed to what extent representation and reality can coincide, yet at the same time diverge.

Franz West (1947–2021, AT)
Die Zeit, 1983

» Seite 8

Uli Aigner (*1965, AT)
Edition Katalog II, 1994

Uli Aigner’s *Edition Katalog II* consists of photographs annotated with comments. It shows a series of interior spaces or everyday situations and objects. Statements by artists with whom Aigner feels a connection personalize the scenes and render visible the dynamics of exchange in creative processes. These “everyday capsules” give rise to a poetic dialog about the tension between the private and the public, presence and absence, (creative) work and leisure. The narrative potential of the successive “speaking” images crystallizes in a metaphorical confrontation with the living space as an expression of the self and a place of introspection.

In his book *The Poetics of Space*, the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard writes: “[...] if I were asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace.” In view of Aigner’s arrangements, one could ask: What place does the dream, and thus the personal living space, have in artistic creation? The work invites us to question the fragile boundaries between artistic production and private living space by merging the artist’s material and social environments, thus opening up the depicted spaces as an expression of an inner dream that shapes creation and self-consciousness. Aigner’s depiction of her “ideal ‘art family’” simultaneously inserts the individual into a relational structure and in doing so raises the question of including the creative individual in an artistic genealogy in the sense of a “home”.

Harun Farocki (1944, CZE–2014, DE)
The Interview, 1997

“Das Selbst ist vielleicht nur ein metaphysischer Haken, an den die soziale Identität gehängt ist. Im Bewerbungsgespräch soll der ganze Mensch erscheinen, nicht nur seine meßbare Eignung, die auf Papieren vorausgeschickt wird. Der ganze Mensch fühlt sich angenommen oder verworfen,” [The self is perhaps nothing more than a metaphysical hook from which to hang a social identity. In the job interview, the whole person should appear, not just his measurable suitability, which is sent in advance on paper. The whole person feels accepted or rejected] writes Harun Farocki about his film *The Interview*. Job application training sessions for students, the long-term unemployed and managers recorded in the summer of 1996 are strung together in the film. Individual scenes are accentuated by turquoise color filters and fragments of Neil Young songs. As in many of Farocki’s films from the 1990s (*Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* [Workers Leaving the Factory], *Ein Tag im Leben der Endverbraucher* [A Day in the Life of a Consumer], *Die Umschulung* [Retraining]), the artist uses observations on the portrayal of work in Germany shortly after reunification to reflect on the absurdities and power relations of late capitalism. People who try to teach others how to successfully sell themselves are viewed with a questioning, but by no means bitter, eye.

Martin Kippenberger (1953, DE–1997, AT)
ICH HALT MICH VERSCHLOSSEN, 1989

» Seite 12

Helena Huneke (1967–2012, DE)
Untitled (Faxes), 1997

» Seite 4

Min Yoon (*1986, KR)
Break + ing Time (back (still)), 2024 und
Break + ing Time (back (analytical proposal)), 2024
 » Seite 11

Alexander Hempel (*1977, DE)
Performance, 2024

In his performances, the artist Alexander Hempel deliberately plays with the expectations and attitudes of his audience. He often addresses his viewers directly and thus involves them in his examination of social conventions and institutional contexts. These interactions blur the boundaries between art and everyday life, the private and the public.

9.11.2024, 18:00

Event language: German

Martine Syms (*1988, USA)
***The African Desperate*, 2022**

The film *The African Desperate* by artist Martine Syms addresses the institution of the art university and takes a satirical look at interpersonal dynamics and the logic of evaluation, categorization and exclusion. The film shows the last hours of the young Black artist Palace Bryant – played by Diamond Stingily – at an art university in upstate New York. After her final exams, she reluctantly attends the last party of the semester and an absurdly comic odyssey takes its course. Syms uses hallucinatory images and ironically exaggerated situations to examine the desire structures of the creative class as well as the social and economic realities of the art world.

The screening will be followed by a discussion with the artists Brooklyn J. Pakathi, Frida Robles Ponce and the theorist Nanna Heidenreich.

14.11.2024, 18:00

Event language: English

Showcase Collection and Archive

University of Applied Arts Vienna
Vordere Zollamtsstraße 7, Foyer
1030 Vienna

Anna Haifisch

***The Artist 1-3*, 2026/17**

Further information on the accompanying program can be found on our website:
www.kunstsammlungundarchiv.at

The events take place as part of Vienna Art Week and in the exhibition space at the University Gallery of the Angewandte in Heiligenkreuzerhof.

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Ins Dunkle Schwimmen. Abysses of the Creative Imperative

An exhibition by:

Collection and Archive,
University of Applied Arts Vienna

With works by:

Uli Aigner, Monika Baer, Linda Bilda, The Critical Ass (Anke Dyes, Niklas Lichti) & Michele Di Menna, Josef Dabernig, Hanne Darboven, Verena Dengler, Jana Euler, Harun Farocki, Jessyca R. Hauser, Alexander Hempel, Richard Hoeck & John Miller, Helena Huneke, Martin Kippenberger, Josef Kramhöller, Michael Krebber, Tonio Kröner, Maria Lassnig, Ghislaine Leung, Lee Lozano, Friederike Mayröcker, Luzie Meyer, Sigmar Polke, Ulla Rossek, Jack Smith, Josef Strau, Jean-Marie Straub, Martine Syms, Franz West, Tanja Widmann, Amelie von Wulffen, Min Yoon

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Duration of the exhibition: October 16, 2024 - February 1, 2025

The University Gallery of the Angewandte
Schönlaterngasse 5, Stiege 8, 1. Stock, 1010 Wien

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