

CROSSING: NUKLEUS

Sebastian Fritzsch, Katharina Lökenhoff, Sabine Osthoff

18.11. – 20.12.2024 | Opening 16.11.2024

They can contribute to seclusion, isolation and alienation, but they can also provide protection, support and orientation. And last but not least, they can be transgressed, shifted or overcome: borders. They raise ethical questions, determine identity discourses and are often the subject of subversive questioning in artistic forms of representation. Taking up the complex metaphor of the border and border thinking, the group exhibition also explores separating and differentiating, relationship-establishing and connecting functions in intersubjective contexts. The aesthetic exploration by Sebastian Fritzsch, Katharina Lökenhoff and Sabine Osthoff centres on border phenomena that explore time and again areas of an in-between that remains unmarked and open. Those places of transgression elude explicitness and create a dynamic that stimulates the constant re-negotiation of real and imaginary border formations. Along constants and fault lines, the exhibition creates different perspectives on borders and transitions as encounters with the Other. A balancing act that sometimes leads to existential tipping points where there is a risk of slipping. A fine line that can lead to getting lost in the world or falling into oneself. In free fall, this also means: tilting into the inside. A state that points into the open, into a groundlessness and boundlessness, without safe railings or landmarks. A collapse into consciousness that transcends words. Like an inward gaze, which can be delimiting towards the inside and can mean confinement towards the outside. NUKLEUS deals with physical and mental borderline experiences, which can be characterised by uncertainties and insecurities, curiosity and a thirst for adventure, but also by an existential fear - of the abyss, the fall into the bottomless pit, the immensity of space and time.

The exhibition itself also operates across the board: with paintings, collages, installations and sculptural ceramics as well as the performance 'AKTION: Haar!', it brings together artistic works and positions by Sebastian Fritzsch, Katharina Lökenhoff and Sabine Osthoff - and with them visual and aesthetic cultures and practices from the visual arts, film, theatre and drama.

Sebastian Fritzsch 's graphic works repeatedly incorporate elements of the plant and animal world as motifs. These find their way into his exploration of inner landscapes in an unbiased and equal way alongside found objects, artefacts, photographs and elaborated inner images and experiences. The recurring signs are transmedial; they appear in drawings and collages as well as in ceramics and objects. A symbolic motif whose rounded forms are reminiscent of encapsulated seeds and cocoons, which offer protection against the outside and allow development within. Between the curved forms, thorny stems often appear, transformed shoot axes, leaves or side shoots that turn an inside outwards. His formal language is always in a state of transformative change. Reversing inclusions and exclusions, it follows the principles of inversion, in which form and content, cover and concealment can appear on one level. In doing so, the works explore both transcending and spatial moments of the threshold and smooth out flowing transitions. In designing their own semiotic system, they find a language of their own, which the artist seems to work through in a concrete and vivid, almost ritualistic way. In repetition and variation, an enclosure is achieved with which being-in-the-world is transformed into being-at-home, as the Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han states for ritual practices.¹

Katharina Lökenhoff 's artistic work is guided by the concept of the membranous. The interface that remains passable and, as a resonating place, leaves room for movement and encounter. Like the skin, it forms a common level of contact between the world and the body, remaining flexible and mobile in its filigree structure, but also vulnerable. In the membrane works by Katharina Lökenhoff, this becomes effective both formally in the creative means as well as in terms of motif and aesthetics: evident in the supple material of the wax skin, with which the canvas or painting surface becomes a permeable fabric - with iridescent surfaces that range from a delicate, shiny to a matt, opaque appearance. The silk dipped in wax testifies to a lightness and transparency that both conceals and reveals. It is a tactile art in which the skin is not an object of voyeurism, but becomes a feeling subject. In the series of typological portraits, this is expressed in the changing membrane skins, through which certain states of consciousness appear in the face. Seeing as touching, in which the eye (of the artist) can sometimes lose its distance and lead to an encounter with itself. The material image carrier literally becomes a membrane where opposing movements intersect. The composition and format of the portraits themselves also create moments of contact, in which the visual axes penetrate each other and lead us into our own inner selves. Driven by a permeability that dissolves hierarchies and questions positionings and orientations, Lökenhoff's works approach threshold situations and moments that repeatedly elude strict binarities.

ACTION: Hair!

By a hair, by a hairbreadth or even hair-splitting: like skin, hair also marks borderline phenomena, and not just between nature and culture. It is a carrier of memories and magical powers as well as social and cultural attributions - and it remains ambivalent. Separated from the body, it becomes an abject material with transgressive potential that can sometimes cause disgust like a hair in the soup or in the mouth. On the one hand it remains persistent, on the other it only makes a fleeting appearance. And this much can be revealed: The subject of the artistic-performative action is a bundle of hair from the Tinker horse's coat. **AKTION: Haar!** is a first-time collaboration between **Sebastian Fritzs** and theatre and film actress **Sabine Osthoff**. In their performance, they put endurance, concentration and attention to the test and explore physical, mental and temporal limits.

Julia Martel

Sebastian Fritzs lives in Cologne and works as a visual artist, photographer and film director. He studied cultural and theatre studies at Humboldt University in Berlin and completed his studies with a focus on film direction and photography at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne with the short film *Spuren* (2009). In addition to film and photography, his media include painting, drawing, collage and sculpture. His latest film *Der Wald in mir* (2024) was screened in the competition at the Max Ophüls Preis film festival. His works have been shown in exhibitions at Galerie DD55, GOLD+BETON, Galerie Haus Schlangeneck, Kunstraum Loge in Essen and in various group exhibitions.

Katharina Lökenhoff studied philosophy, art history and art in Bochum and Essen. Her works have been shown in solo exhibitions at Galerie Schütte, Kunsthaus Essen and Greatmore, Cape Town, among others, and in group exhibitions at the Off Biennale in Cairo and the Dakar Biennale in Senegal. With CROSSING, she has been responsible for the Artistic Research Project for new life strategies since 2018, which has taken her to Iceland, Finland, Egypt, Lebanon and South Africa and has found a stationary space in Essen with CROSSING. She is also involved in the WHITE FLAG ART PROJECT, which is dedicated to current global challenges.

Sabine Osthoff lives and works in Essen. She trained as an actress at the renowned Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts in Berlin. In addition to stations at Schauspiel Essen, Volkstheater Wien and various guest engagements (including the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin), Osthoff has appeared in numerous national and international film and television productions. In 2002 she was honoured with the 'Aalto-Bühnenpreis für junge Künstler' [*Aalto Stage Prize for Young Artists*]; in 2005 with the 'Förderpreis des Landes NRW für junge Künstlerinnen und Künstler' [*Sponsorship award from the state of NRW for young artists*].

CROSSING. is an interdisciplinary project space for art, action and dialogue. A place dedicated to crossing and overcoming boundaries and liminal experiences of transition. Artistic, aesthetic and philosophical positions find an experimental space in CROSSING to explore the sensual form(ing) and theoretical virulence of real and imaginary borderline situations in different ways. In this sense, the venue also sees itself as an open space for experience and thought, whose artistic and discursive formats invite visitors to cross thresholds and explore diverse perspectives. The initiative grew out of the identically named research project CROSSING THE THRESHOLD by artist Katharina Lökenhoff, which began in 2018 with an interview journey on the topics of borderline experiences, fear and the future in times of global uncertainty and took her to Iceland, Finland, Egypt, South Africa and Lebanon for her talks with artists and cultural workers. CROSSING finally found a stationary home in Essen and opened its doors in autumn 2024.

CROSSING.

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