Michaela
Schwentner

Portfolio 2025

Michaela Schwentner
*1970 in Linz, lives and works in Vienna
1984-1989 College of Fashion Design Linz
1989-1996 Studies of philosophy, history and sciences of theatre, film and media in Vienna
1995-1996 Founding and organising offspace Jadengasse in Vienna
Since 2000 audiovisual collaborations w/ Electric Indigo, Peter Rehberg, Radian, etc.
Since 2004 operator of mosz records, label of electronic music, releases among others by Peter Rehberg, Rashim, Hanno Leichtmann, September Collective, Martin Siewert
2006-2013 Lecturer at the University of Art and Design Linz
2014 Lecturer at Filmakademie Vienna
Since 2013 Lecturer at the University of Technology Vienna/Institute of Art and Design

Awards
2016 *Agents of Confusion!* Joanneum Graz
2007 Outstanding Artist Award for Film, Austrian Federal Ministry for Arts and Culture
2004 Local Artists Award, Crossing Europe Festival Linz

Grants / Scholarships
2025 Project grant: BMKOES/Section Art/Dept Film
2024 Project grant: City of Vienna/Dept Film
2023 State Scholarship in Media Art; Work Scholarship of the City of Vienna
2022 Project grants: BMKOES/Section Art/Dept Film; City of Vienna/Dept Film
2021 Project grant, BMKOES/Section Art/Dept Film; City of Vienna/Dept Film
2020 Project grant, BMKOES/Section Art/Dept Film; City of Vienna/Dept Film
2019 Project grant: Federal Chancellery/Section Art/Dept Film
2018 Project grants: Federal Chancellery/Section Art/Dept Film; City of Vienna/Dept Film; City of Vienna/Dept Visual Arts
2016 Project grants: Federal Chancellery/Section Art/Dept Film, City of Vienna/Dept Film
2013 Project grants: Federal Chancellery/Section Art/Dept Film, City of Vienna/Dept Film, Upper Austria/Dept of Culture
2011 Project grants: Federal Chancellery/Section Art/Dept Film, City of Vienna/Dept Film, Upper Austria/Dept of Culture
2010 Project grants: Federal Chancellery/Section Art/Dept Film; City of Vienna/Dept Film
2009 Project grants: Federal Chancellery/Section Art/Dept Film; Upper Austria/Dept of Culture
2007-2003 Annual project grants, Federal Chancellery, Section Art/Dept Film

Acquisitions
2025 Collection City of Vienna
2019 Collection City of Vienna
2014 Collection City of Vienna
2003 Centre Pompidou Paris

Residencies
2025 HIAP Artist Residency, Helsinki (FIN)
2024 Sciaredo Artist Residency, Barbengo (CH)
2023 Domus Artium of Upper Austria, Paliano (I); Mecklenburgisches Künstlerhaus Schloss Plueschow (GER)
2020 AiR Domus Artium of Upper Austria, Villa Rabl, Bad Hall (A)
2019 subnetAIR Grant + Residency, Salzburg (A)
2018 Dark City, Krumpendorf (A); ORTung, Hintersee (A)
2016 AiR Embassy of Foreign Artists, Geneva (CH)
2015 Pixel, Bytes & Film | Artist in Residence, ORF III
2014 AiR Egon Schiele Centrum, Czesky Krumlov (CZ)
2012 AiR Domus Artium of Upper Austria, Paliano (I)
2009 AiR Domus Artium of Upper Austria, Malo (I)

Solo exhibitions / presentations (selection)
2024 *gewebeproben* Blickle Raum Spiegelgasse, Vienna
2023 *Sympoetic Soundings* Creative Space Verbier
2022 *re-construct, she said* Sehsaal, Vienna
2020 *Statement #09* Kunstraum Lakeside, Klagenfurt; *re-FORM [again!]* Neue Galerie, Innsbruck
2018 *reconstructing archives by rendering representative complexities into moments of desire* ANNA, Vienna
2013 *Angepasste Verhaeltnisse* K48, Vienna
2012 *Billboard/prospects modifiés* rhiz w/ art, Vienna
2009 *pas de deux* v-port, Museumsquartier Vienna

Group exhibitions (selection)

2023 Jewish Museum, Vienna; SOHO STUDIOS, Vienna
2022 Galerie im OÖ Kulturquartier, Linz
2021 Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna
2019 Blickle Raum, Vienna
2018 Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna; Leyden Gallery, London; Künstlerhaus Graz; AIL Vienna
2016 Ursula Blickle Foundation, Kraichtal; London Biennale MANILA Pollination, Manila; Traverse Vidéo, Toulouse
2015 Kunstraum SUPER, Vienna; Le Bel Ordinaire, Billère; Prague Quadrennial of Performance, Design + Space
2014 Klangmanifeste, Vienna; Dazibao, Montréal
2013 Kulturbrücke, Fratres
2011 ACF, New York
2010 Shedhalle, Zurich
2009 WRO'09. Int. Media Art Biennial; landscape 2.0. Edith-Russ-Haus für Medienkunst Oldenburg
2008 1. Brussels Biennial; Kunsthalle Project Space, Vienna
2007 Transmediale. Berlin; Gerngross, Linz
2006 La Casa Encendida, Madrid; Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam; Kiasma, Helsinki
2005 WRO'05. Int. Media Art Biennale, Wroclaw
2004 Manifesta 4. Frankfurt/M; Articulation. Belef Center, Belgrade
2003 Künstlerhaus, Vienna
2001 Transmediale. Berlin; Kiasma, Helsinki
2000 Künstlerhaus, Vienna

Screenings (selection)

2025 Architekturfilmmatinée, Filmcasino, Vienna; BIRDS ON RECORD Labocine's March Issue; RESONANCE Labocine's August Issue
2024 FOCUS ON Work presentation, BSL Vienna; Wechselwirkung, echoraum, Vienna; Nature, be my friend, Belvedere 21, Vienna; IMAfiction portrait #08: Electric Indigo, echoraum, Vienna; Music After Nature Festival, Soho Studios, Vienna; MOUNTAIN PANORAMA Labocine's November Issue
2023 Claiming Spaces, Landuni Drosendorf; Sehsaal, Vienna
2022 Diagonale, Graz
2021 Oktoskop. OKTO TV; Kino im Abseits. VIENNA DESIGN WEEK, Vienna
2020 Kasseler Dokfest, DOK Leipzig; Diagonale, Graz; Filmarchiv Austria, Vienna; Recycled Cinema (a Viennale, sixpackfilm and Austrian Filmmuseum cooperation, Filmmuseum Vienna)
2019 Blickle Archive Series #39, Blickle Kino, Vienna; re:voir: Futur antérieur #6. Focus Autrichien. Paris; *Transform* She Said. Blickle Kino, Vienna; B16 Filmfestival, Brno; Under_the_Radar. Blickle Kino, Vienna; Living collection sixpackfilm, Filmarchiv Austria, Vienna
2017 B3 Biennial of the Moving Image, Frankfurt/M; FIDMarseille; Diagonale Graz
2016 Int. Short Film Festival Uppsala; Breaking Ground: 60 Years Experimental Cinema in Austria. Cinematheque Tel Aviv, Jerusalem Cinematheque
2015 Milano Film Festival; Festival der Regionen, Ebensee
2014 Cairo Video Festival
2013 Breaking Ground: 60 Years Experimental Cinema in Austria. Centre Pompidou Paris, Buenos Aires Bafici Film Festival
2012 Breaking Ground: 60 Years Experimental Cinema in Austria. UCLA Los Angeles, Anthology Film Archive New York, Semana de Cine Experimental Madrid; Elektra Film Festival, Montreal
2010 1st Experimental Film Forum, Singapure; Black & White. BAWAG Contemporary, Vienna
2009 La Rochelle Film Festival; Parvin Etesami Women Film Festival, Teheran
2008 Diagonale, Graz; Crossing Europe Film Festival, Linz; Gene Siskel Film Center Chicago; Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, Frankfurt/M; Espacio Plasma, Buenos Aires
2007 Edinburgh Int. Film Festival; Montréal nouveau; National Museum Of Women In The Arts, Washington DC; San Diego Women's Film Festival; Diagonale, Graz; Crossing Europe Film Festival, Linz
2006 Viennale; Diagonale, Graz; Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen; Crossing Europe Film Festival, Linz
2005 Diagonale, Graz; Crossing Europe Film Festival, Linz; Transat Video, Caen; Synch Festival, Athens; Videofestival Bochum; LIFF London Int. Film Festival; LUFF Lausanne Underground Film Festival; Exis, Seoul; Les Voutes, Paris
2004 Diagonale, Graz; Crossing Europe Film Festival, Linz; Nova Cinema, Brussels
2003 Sundance Independent Film Festival, Park City; NYUFF New York; Edinburgh Int. Film Festival; Sao Paolo Short Film Festival; LIFF London Int. Film Festival; IFFR Rotterdam; EMAF Osnabruck; Diagonale, Graz; Impulstanz, Vienna
2002 Evolution Film Festival, Leeds; Cork Filmfest; NYUFF New York; Wien modern, Diagonale, Graz; IFFR Rotterdam; HAFF Utrecht; Microwave Int. Media Art Festival Hongkong
2001 Videonale, Bonn; Diagonale, Graz; Cinema Auricular. Barbican, London; EMAF Osnabruck; NYUFF New York; CUFF Chicago Underground Film Festival; IFFR Rotterdam
2000 Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen; Diagonale, Graz; Sonar, Barcelona; Cinematexas, Austin; HAFF Utrecht

Performances, presentations, talks (selection)

2024 OFF_screen. Online panels in cooperation with IKW/Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna
2023 OFF. Online panels in cooperation with Blickle Kino/Belvedere 21, Vienna
2022 OFF. Online panel in cooperation with Blickle Kino/Belvedere 21, Vienna
2021 ASSEMBLY. Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna
2020 Statement #09: *re*-ASSEMBLY. Kunstraum Lakeside, Klagenfurt
2019 Intimité et désir. Sound installation + web stream, ART POP/POP Montréal
2018 AAA! Almost-aged Actionists Anonymous. Interventions and presentations in the frame of Wienwoche
2017 Mapping the Image —The Deleuzian Film Classification. Lecture performance. Grazer Kunstverein, Graz; Agents of Confusion! Presentation and artist talk. Kunsthaus, Graz
2016 Concert vidéomusiques électroacoustices #1. MAMCS, Strasbourg
2015 Schichtwechsel. Performance + installation. Festival der Regionen, Ebensee
2013 Melting Plot. Text/Image/sound performances. ExFonderie Limone, Torino, Casa del Lector, Madrid; komm und tanz mit mir. A/V performance. Hundsturm, Vienna
2012 Obras sonoras. Sound performance. Museo Experimental El Eco, Mexiko City
2011 viele köpfe aber auch Os. Performance in the frame of the exhibition Jandl Show. Wienmuseum, Vienna
2010 mélodies en sous–sol. Screening. taps Scala/ Scènes Strasbourgeoises, Strasbourg
2009 female:pressure sound performances. Osaka, Tokio, Naha City; FREI Magazine presentation. Sound performance, Secession, Vienna; BLIND DATE. A/V performance. KomponistInnenforum Mittersill; Linzer Notate. Screening + artist talk. maerzgalerie, Linz; AUTORADIO. Sound performance. Reheat Festival, Kleylehof, Nickelsdorf; A/V performances w/ Peter Rehberg: LUFF Lausanne, La Rochelle Film Festival, Cave12 Geneva
2008 ICH WAR SEBALD — ABVERKAUF. A/V performance w/ Peter Rehberg. Radowanhalle, Vienna
2006 A/V performances w/ Peter Rehberg: Les Instants Chavirés, electroni-]k] Rennes
2005 FRESH TRIPS — About Moving Images, Sound Spaces and Performances. Co-curation + Label presentation, medien.kunst.tirol, Innsbruck
2003 A/V performance w/ unfair: Netmage Festival, Bologna, SARC Belfast
2001 PALIMPSEST. Concept + video installation. Wien Modern, Vienna

Curatorial practice

2021— OFF_screen, semi-public panel format discussing unfinished film projects
2020— XX Y X series of open formats and forms of representation featuring women artists in sound & visual arts
2019 Transform She Said (w/ Claudia Slanar). Blickle Kino, Belvedere 21, Vienna
2018 Choreography of the Frame. (w/ Maia Gusberti). Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna
2005 Fresh Trips — About Moving Images, Sound Spaces and Performances. (w/ Annja Krautgasser). Label presentation. medien.kunst.tirol, Innsbruck

Publications

Shift Change — Slogging Away In Ebensee. Festival der Regionen 2015, Ed. Festival der Regionen, Ottensheim 2015

Film Unframed. A History of Austrian Avant-garde Cinema. FilmmuseumSynemaPublikation, Ed. Peter Tscherkassky, Vienna 2012

Subverting Disambiguities. Shedhalle 2009-2012, Ed. Anke Hoffmann, Yvonne Volkart. Zurich, 2012

Visionary. Index DVD, Vienna, 2009

female:pressure DVD1. female:pressure, Vienna, 2008

Video Edition Austria. Release 02, Vienna, 2008

The Gift of Sound and Vision, Der österreichische Film. Edition Der Standard, Vienna, 2007

CrossMedia. Kunstverein Medienturm (ed.), Folio Verlag, Graz, 2007

Le cinéma autrichien, In: Austriaca. Cahiers universitaires d'information sur l'AutricheN° 64, Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre 2007

Radiostation. medien.kunst.tirol, Innsbruck, 2006

The Mozart Minute. Wiener Mozartjahr, Vienna, 2006

Sonic Fiction. Synaesthetic Videos from Austria. Index DVD Edition, Vienna, 2005

Austrian Abstracts 02 | 005. Lanolin, Vienna, 2005

Abstraction Now. Ed. Norbert Pfaffenbichler, Sandro Droschl, Verlag Edition Camera Austria, Graz, 2004

The Essential Frame: Austrian Independent Film 1955-2003. Mark Webber. The London Film School 2003

My artistic practice is mainly driven by examinations and negotiations of the absent: utopia, longing or, more specifically, the desire machine, the projection surface film itself as a source of reflection, or archives whose historical representative content always refers to something disappeared, extinct, denied or underrepresented in history, society and culture.
In my work, I deal with spaces of meaning that expand into real space in continuous processes: researched and fictionalised material, assembled and recontextualised, opens up the space for different reflections on different levels. My approach is figurative thinking, In this context, I'm interested in internal and external conditions and circumstances. In my work I often use the model as a vehicle of translation and visualisation of thoughts and ideas. For me, working on the model is a way of approaching themes and issues and a form of thinking. In terms of technique and content, I concentrate on reconstructions of structures and economic conditions of social patterns as well as on (moving) image production.

In my practice I explore absence and its representation, be it sonic, cinematographic, photographic or literal, and archives as collectively built, accessible and usable storage systems. The topics are negotiated partly in an interwoven way in my ongoing work series *re*-PARADISE and *re*-STAGING; the prefix *re*- refers on the one hand to the act of repetition, to take up a theme again, also reconstruction, on the other hand to the *re*- in repair.

re-PARADISE brings together explorations of sites, spaces or situations that allow, evoke or reflect desire, longing, fantasy, hope, dreams, etc: Constructions of hetero-topias, reconstructions of utopian ideas; main topics are absence and projection, memory and desire or longing; the past, the disappeared, the lost, the unknown.

The *re*-STAGING projects examine and develop forms of retelling existing narratives by reconstructing historical material in the form of re-enactments or installations.

Technically and contentwise I focus on reconstructions of structures and economic conditions of social patterns as well as (moving) image production. I mainly work in the fields of video, photography, installation and site-specific intervention. My working methods include transition, transformation, reconstruction, repetition and multiplica-tion.

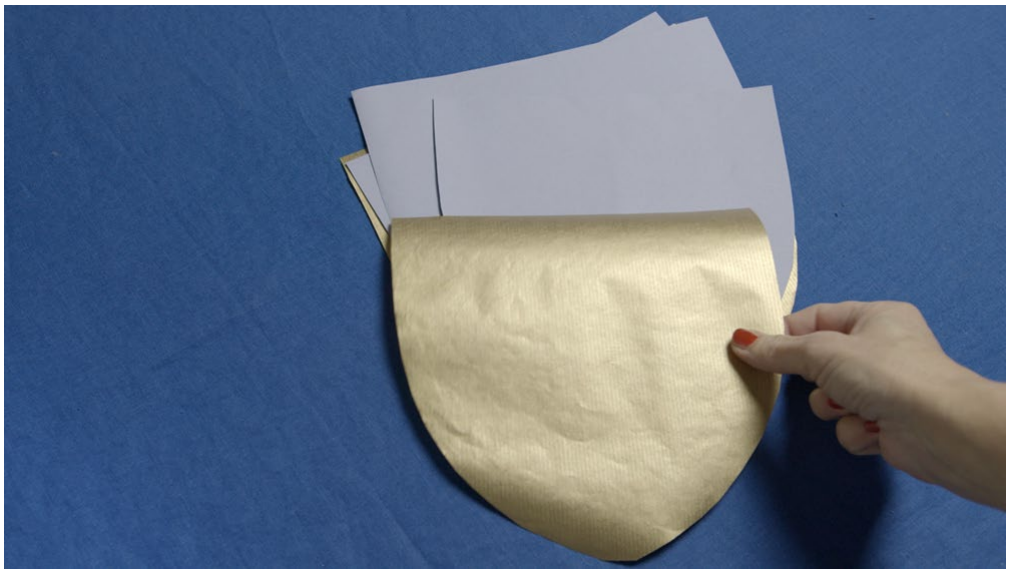
"It's all about weaving, everything's fabrics, everything is linked to the textile sector. We wear clothes, we distinguish ourselves through fashion codes. The industry capitalises on this. Progressive modern technical developments and improvements, automation processes increase the production but worsen the situation of weavers and factory workers: Looms replace the workers who are forced to 14 hours low-wage labour in textile factories, laundries, spinning mills, becoming machines themselves as well. Women workers are struggling double" – this is the beginning of my new film project *re*-WEAVING / *a feminist fabric* which is organised like a warp and weft structure-wise: Political and artistic concepts alternate.
The political thread includes the class struggle, the social question, the woman question, socialist/marxist concepts and feminist liberalisation movements.
What does it mean to be politically active? What does queer/feminist anti-racist resistance, activism mean actually? To what extent are we willing to struggle, fight, to do without, to endure suffering, to bear hardship, to take risks, even deadly ones? The film is also an exploration of my personal history of socialisation and of the influence of role models as well as the reflection on thoughts, positions and claims of queer/feminist activists over the last century. The thread (of patience) is long / torn. We re-write our stories.

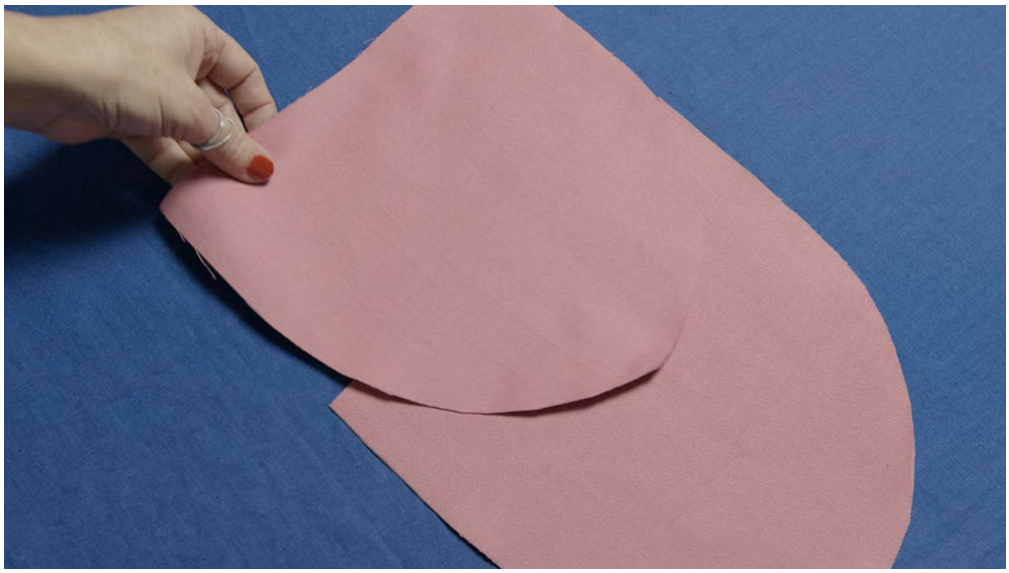
In my essayist film *re-WEAVING / a feminist fabric*, I'd like to shed light on relevant feminist positions and demands against the backdrop of developments in textile production and industry. To this end, I relate protagonists from the fields of politics, art and activism from different periods with different attitudes and positions to each other and develop a fabric of ideas that makes their motives, motivation and resistance comprehensible, rendered by a narrative voice that constantly changes perspective. Using a multi-layered narrative structure composed of analogue and digital archive material, images of artistic works and publications, I interweave the past with the present, historical figures and current queer/feminist positions and strategies of collectively opposing patriarchal structures. Why not abolish the binary principle of warp and weft in favour of a anti-patriarchal, anti-capitalist, non-binary mode of production and spark an intersectional revolution? Struggle needs collective action. That's our direction.

The installation *gewebeproben,* an arrangement of set pieces: sketches, drafts and research material for the film *re*-WEAVING / *a feminist fabric* for Blickle Raum Spiegelgasse in Vienna. The spacial installation of the film miniature and its props functioned on several levels: various aspects of the narrative form and thus of the narrative itself became recognisable by processual interweaving of the inner and the outer structure, of content and form.

The film miniature *re*-WEAVING / *gewebeproben*, which is part of the installation, was acquired in 2025 by the Collection City of Vienna Museum (Sammlung Wien Museum).

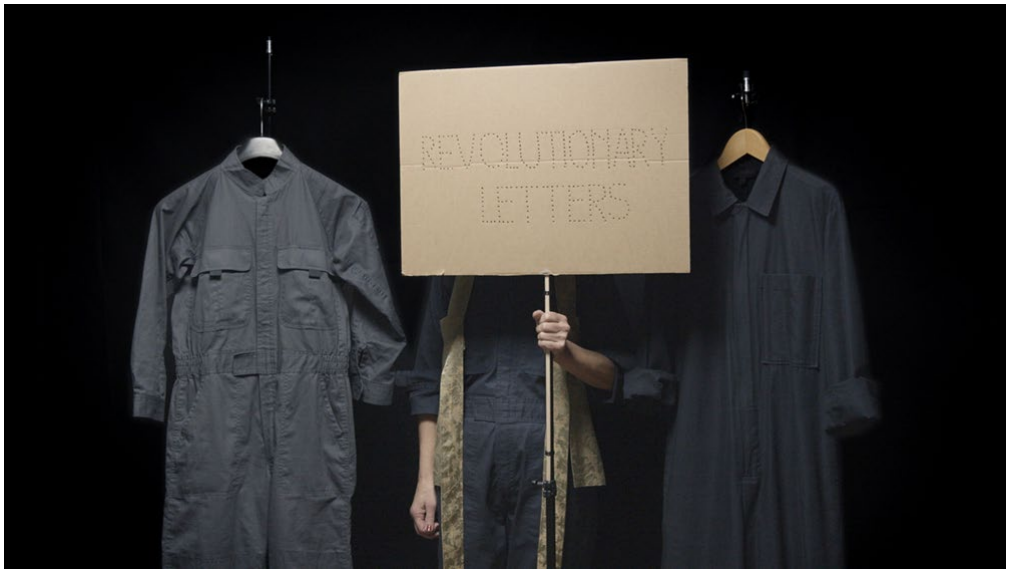
re-WEAVING
Video, 6K/HD, 16:9, colour, sound, 23 min, 2024
video stills



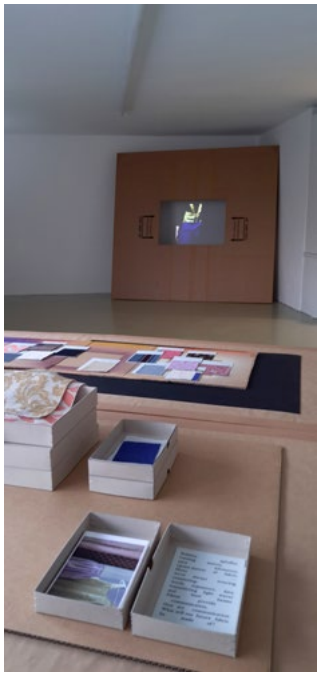


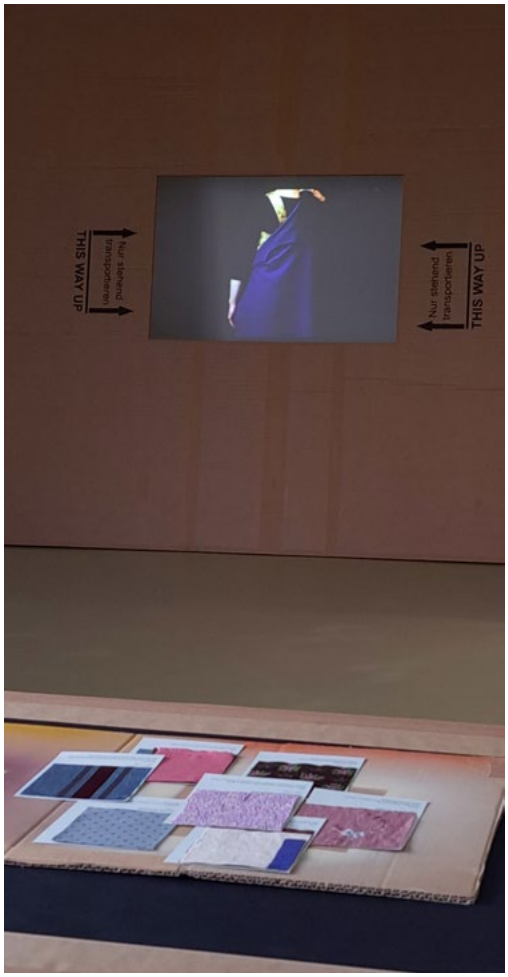
re-WEAVING
Video, 6K/HD, 16:9, colour, sound, 23 min, 2024
video stills

re-WEAVING
Video, 6K/HD, 16:9, colour, sound, 23 min, 2024
video stills

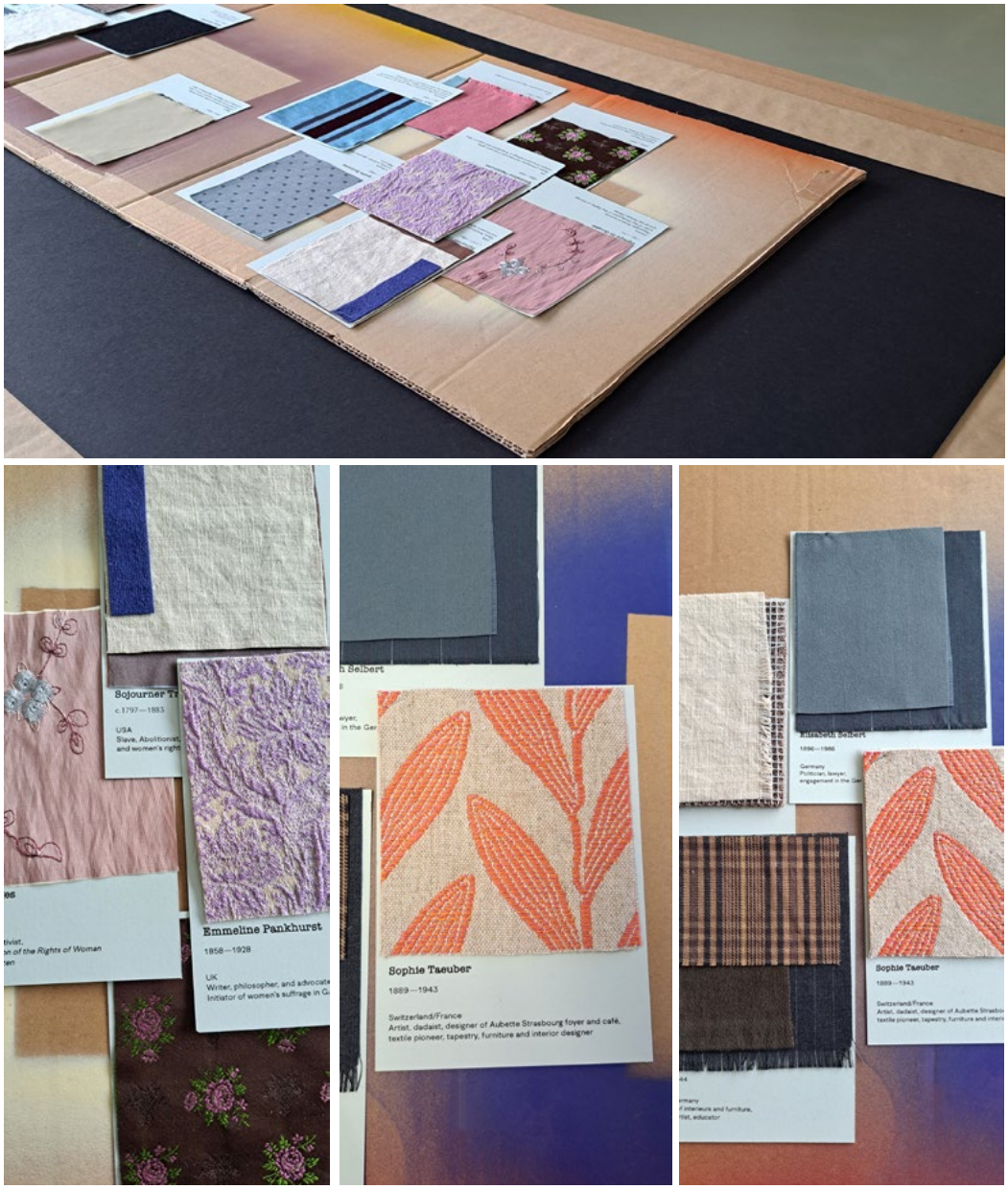


re-WEAVING
Video, 6K/HD, 16:9, colour, sound, 23 min, 2024
video stills





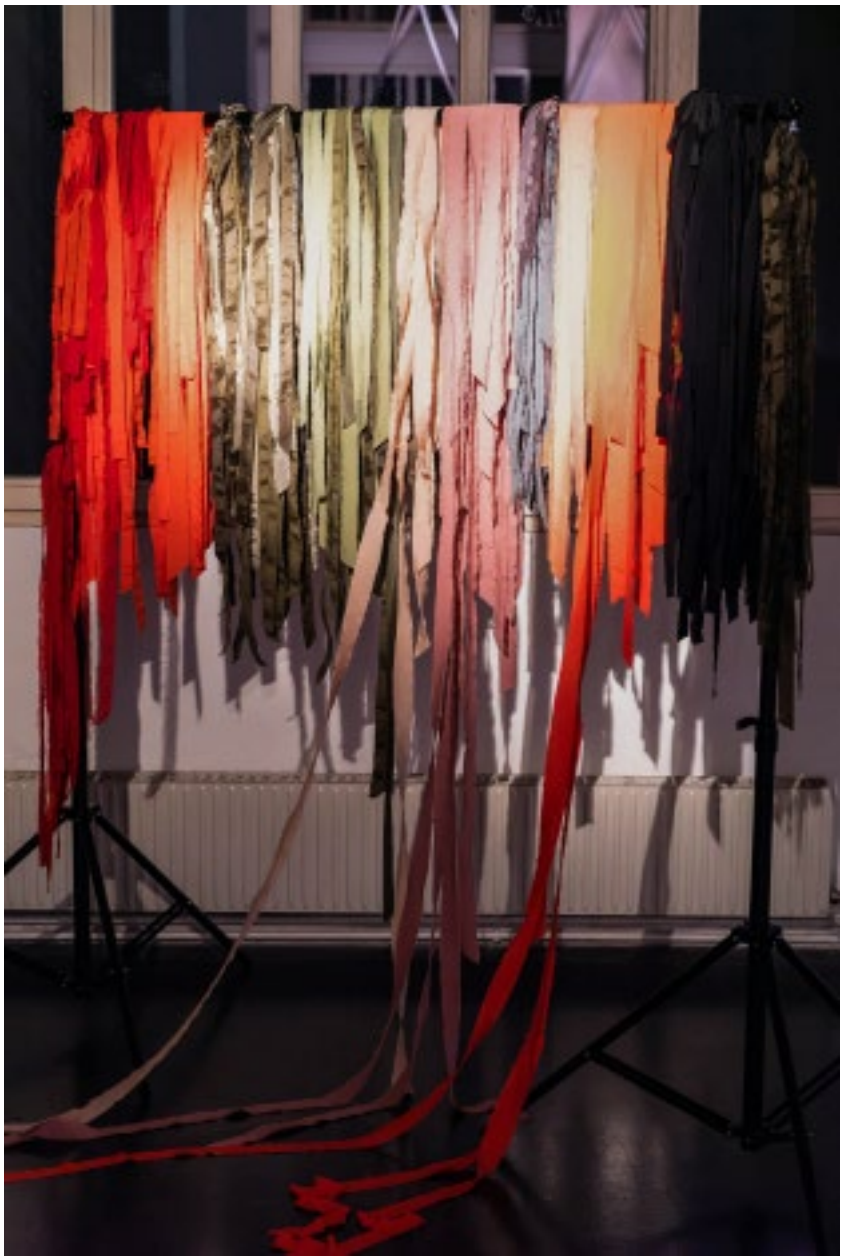
re-WEAVING / gewebeproben
Installation + video, 6K/HD, 16:9, colour, sound, 7:30 min
Installation view Blickle Raum Spiegelgasse, Vienna, 2024



re-WEAVING / gewebeproben
Installation + Video, 6K/HD, 16:9, colour, sound, 7:30 min
Installationsansicht Blickle Raum Spiegelgasse, 2024

Credits:
Concept | script | set design | edit: Michaela Schwentner
Cast: Nina Fog, Michaela Schwentner
Narrating voice: Nina Fog
Camera: Martin Putz | Michaela Schwentner
Costume design: Michaela Schwentner
Golden vest: Natures of Conflict
Dressing assistant: Julia Cepp
Sound design: Nik Hummer
Supported by Stadt Wien Kultur and Ursula Blickle Stiftung

re-BIRDING
Installation view *Der Tanz um die Sorge*, SOHO STUDIOS, Vienna 2023
Photo 3 © Erik Vacev



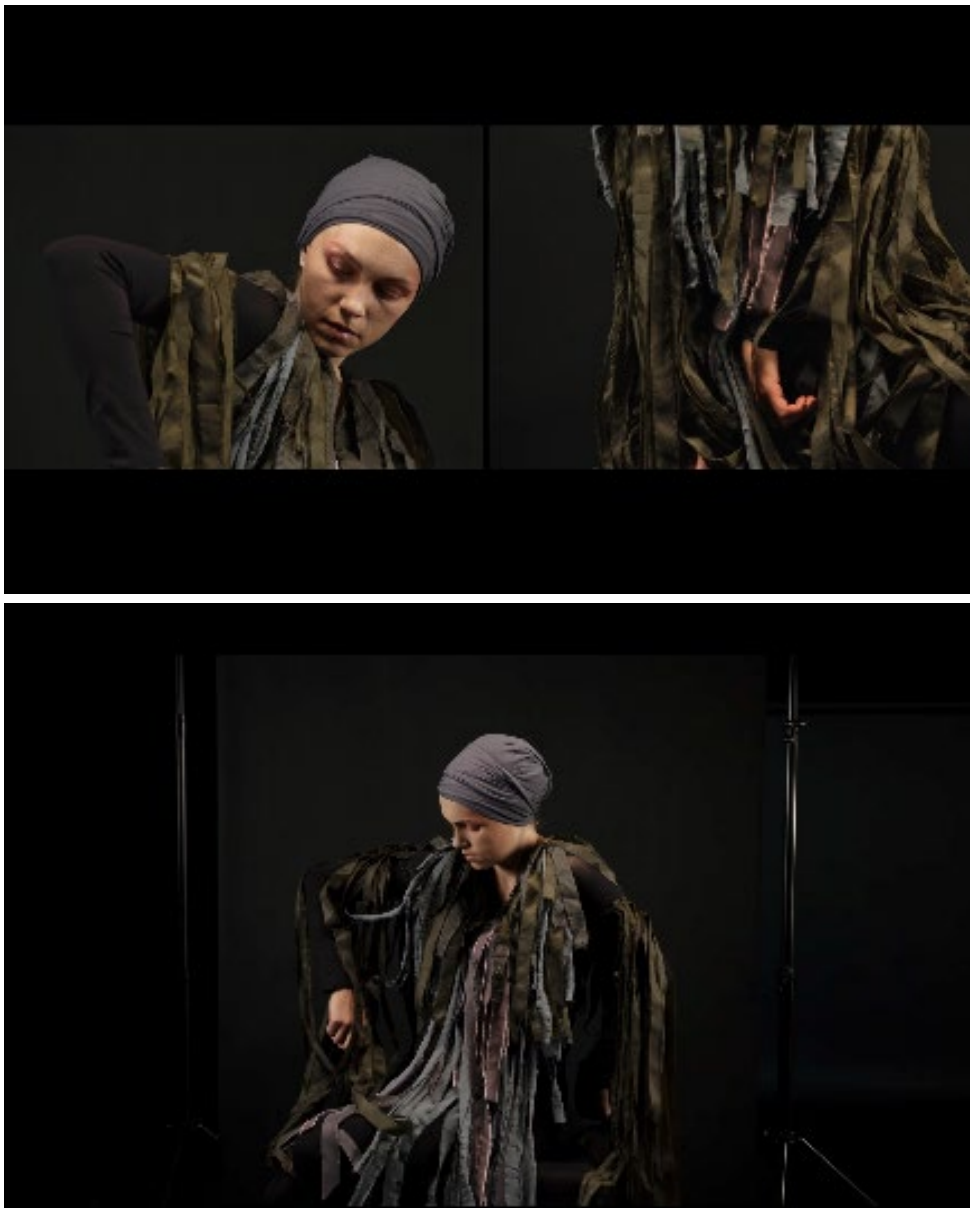
re-BIRDING
Installation view *Der Tanz um die Sorge*, SOHO STUDIOS, Vienna 2023
Photo © Christian Tietge/eSeL

re-BIRDING
Video, 6K/HD, 16:9, colour, sound, 26 min, 2023
video stills

re-BIRDING is an essayistic musical arrangement which can be installed, performed and screened. Digital (re)constructions of bird sounds and bird phenomena, sketches for costumes based on bird depictions, and short film sequences are assembled in a model setting that sketches a temporal, spatial and structural background, enabling contextual orientation. Through the staged reconstruction and narration of extinct bird species, the retrospective view is directed to questionable scenes and actions of the past. Thus, the colonial history of European countries, its principles and structures, its settings and consequences are also questioned. The second part of the film, the narration of contemporary endangered bird species, is staged in a real environment.

In the film I examine ecological and economic connections and effects in connection with the ongoing extinction of species. In doing so, I poetically link human sound production with that of selected endangered or already extinct bird species. The film sheds light not only on the past times but also on the current situation of songbirds in Europe. Based on studies conducted by transdisciplinary research projects and bird stations, also taking into account the current status of Red Bird Index lists, representatives of various endangered or already extinct bird species reflect on current society, its ecological and economic structures as well as their view of the environment, and ask how far human treatment of nature affects biodiversity and ultimately us humans again. I reflect on colonial and ecological violence and alternative collective activities of reparation, recovery and restoration in terms of a more sustainable and harmonious relationship with the surroundings, the environment, the land.

Tracing a world without recording systems
The sound of the film is as important as the image. Birds use the same mechanism to produce their voices as humans do. While humans produce sounds in the larynx, most birds produce their sounds in the syrinx, named after the Greek panpipe, the forerunner of the contemporary flute. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, small flutes such as the flageolet were used to teach birds in cages to sing popular melodies in order to increase their market value.
The birds' lost sounds, essential tools of communication and territorial manifestation, are (re)constructed or invented anew by the use of artificial, instrumental sound. What might an extinct bird have sounded like? (How) can a song be translated into a contemporary, artificial sound? Varying translations of bird sounds are developed from collected natural sounds (field recordings) and the development of artificial sound material (compositions). In the composition of pieces for voices and instruments, I refer to tradition, records and interviews as well as to poetic-technical translations of archived bird recordings, revisiting musical sources, historical as well as contemporary. All collected and generated sound material is instrumented by voices, recorders, transverse flutes, electronics, synthesizers, etc. Especially the use of transverse flutes, and here specifically the recorder is obvious, since recorder derives from Latin: recordārī – to remember, recall, memorise, repeat, recite, make music, from French: recordeur – someone who retells.
All sounds are simulations, invented sound objects, poetic approximations of the unrecorded sounds of the past. By reconstructing and reanimating the blank spaces, lost or unknown information of the disappeared, the non-real, the no longer existing is emphasised even more – the sonic act as becoming world (again). Here, the vocal act will not only be reproduction or invention of sounds but also an expression of artistic and collective thinking.



re-BIRDING
Video, 6K/HD, 16:9, colour, sound, 26 min, 2023
video stills

Colonialism destabilised:
The bird figures are depicted like those in power: monarchs, regents, sovereigns — in representative paintings. In this way, the connotation, the attribution is overturned: The bird figures are staged like the representatives — the conquerors, explorers, robbers, murderers, colonisers, colonialists — but their position is misaligned and questioned.
The arrangement of the pictures does not follow a stately/representative form; the prints are either unframed and lean against a loose panel in an open frame, or they are framed but the picture seems to have slipped, it stands up at the bottom of the frame, and the picture is not hung but leans against the wall.
So the installation, the arrangement, seems very temporary, as if it were not yet finished. but it is precisely this unfinished quality that is my working and presentation principle, which is also intended to show that history, the past, is never something closed, but always open, also in order to go back into it later and retell it anew, in order to learn and to do much better today and in the future.
The open installation also shows the fragility of life, of society, of narratives. The damage caused by colonialism is conveyed by the fragile form of the installation.
The liveliness of organisms, organic forms, networks, weavings, ... is given by flexibility of forms and formations, which are in mutual interaction and also mutually dependent. If one element breaks, others also fall.

The factuality of the space: the chosen location, a dance studio and rehearsal room, a temporarily used space, enables and reinforces the model character of my setting and at the same time opens up an extended scope for interpretation, in that nothing is predetermined, ascribed or visible and thus counteracts the horizon of experience.

Credits:
Concept | script | set design | edit: Michaela Schwentner
Birds: Aurelia Burckhardt, Christine Gnigler, Juli Müllner, Maja Osojnik, Karolina Preuschl
Narrating voice: Anat Stainberg
Angel of History/questioning voice: Elisa Martinot
Camera: Martin Putz | Michaela Schwentner
Music | Sound design: Maja Osojnik
Choir: Christine Gnigler, Maja Osojnik, Karo Preuschl, Sara Zlanabitnig
Flute players: Christine Gnigler, Maja Osojnik, Sara Zlanabitnig
Recordings | mix | mastering: Nik Hummer
Set design: Michaela Schwentner
Costume design: Julia Cepp, Michaela Schwentner
Make up: Miyu Haydn
Assistance: Nik Thoenen
Supported by BMKOES and Stadt Wien Kultur

re-BIRDING
Video, 6K/HD, 16:9, colour, sound, 26 min, 2023
video stills

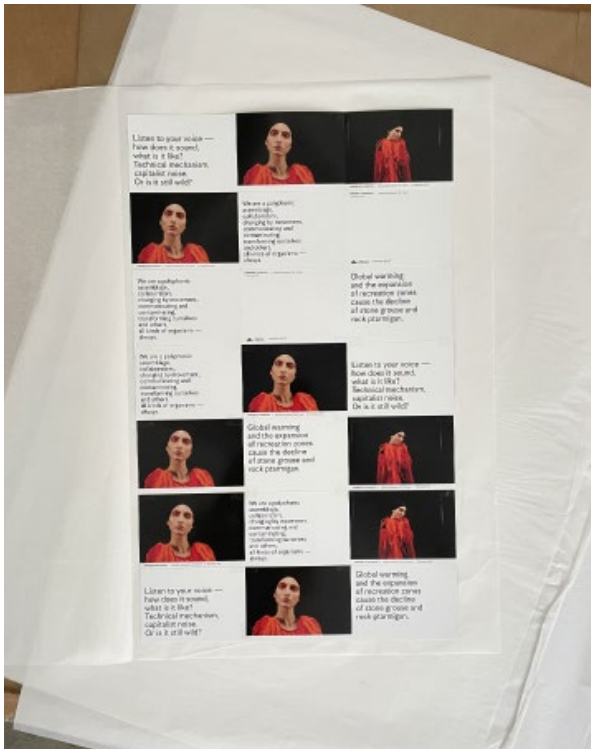
re-BIRDING
Video, 6K/HD, 16:9, colour, sound, 26 min, 2023
video stills

re-BIRDING
Screening and installation
Sehsaal, Vienna
April 2023

COMPOST
COMPOSE
COMPOST
COMPOSE
COMPOSE
COMPOST
COMPOST
COMPOSE
COMPOST
COMPOSE

Intensive agriculture
and increasing
conversion
of arable land into
grassland,
of wetland into
greenland
cause an
accelerated
decline of
woodlark,
mountain pipit
and hoopoe.

SYMPOETIC SOUNDINGS
Screening and intervention
Verbier, CH, 2023



SYMPOETIC SOUNDINGS
Screening of *re*-BIRDING and postcards for intervention
Verbier, CH, 2023

SYMPOETIC SOUNDINGS
LED Screen and poster intervention
Verbier, CH, 2023

The essayfilm *re*-GEO / rendering reconstructions of desire is a poetic approach to Georgette Klein (1893-1963), Swiss Germanist and sculptor from Winterthur, by means of the (re-)construction of her house as a model and her artistic work, including her numerous notes and letters.

The house built by Georgette and her husband Luigi Tentori in 1932 according to Georgette's plans is preserved in its original form and still captivates with its objectivity. The Casa Sciaredo is located above Lake Lugano and is considered the first modernist residential building in Ticino.
After her death in 1963, the house was to become a residence for artists at Georgette's request, but it remained unoccupied until the 1990s. It was only after the Sciaredo Foundation (Swiss Werkbund SWB, Visarte and the Sciaredo Association) was founded in 1996 that the house was restored, first in 1999 by Lukas Meyer and Ira Piattini, and again in 2016 by the Lugano architect Jachen Könz in close collaboration with the cantonal monument preservation office. The Fondazione Sciaredo maintains the house and the surrounding garden and organises the AiR programme.

In my film, I set out on the trail of the loner, artist and (in theory) convinced socialist Georgette Klein, primarily from the aspect of construction and the constructed image.

Who was this woman who was sceptical about marriage, because it could harm her artistic work, who then fell out with her family precisely because of her improper marriage, who was a mediocre but persistent sculptor, whose way of life and thinking was self-confident and modernly oriented, and who nevertheless could not completely free herself from established social structures, who, as a doctor of German studies, not of architecture, tailored a house for herself and made dresses for friends and acquaintances until the 1950s, always realising her conceptual vision of freedom, and who placed this architectural jewel in the landscape of the Swiss Ticino?
Why have neither Georgette Klein nor Casa Sciaredo received greater attention? Because the house was designed and built by a woman? Neither Georgette nor the building are known outside Switzerland.

The film examines the constant intertwining of reality and projection: Georgette's lifelong longing for intellectual dispute, also for Fritz Bodmer, admired fellow student from her student days in Zurich, with whom she maintained a long correspondence, left a gap that only her artistic work and that in the property she designed, including the park and vegetable garden, could fill.

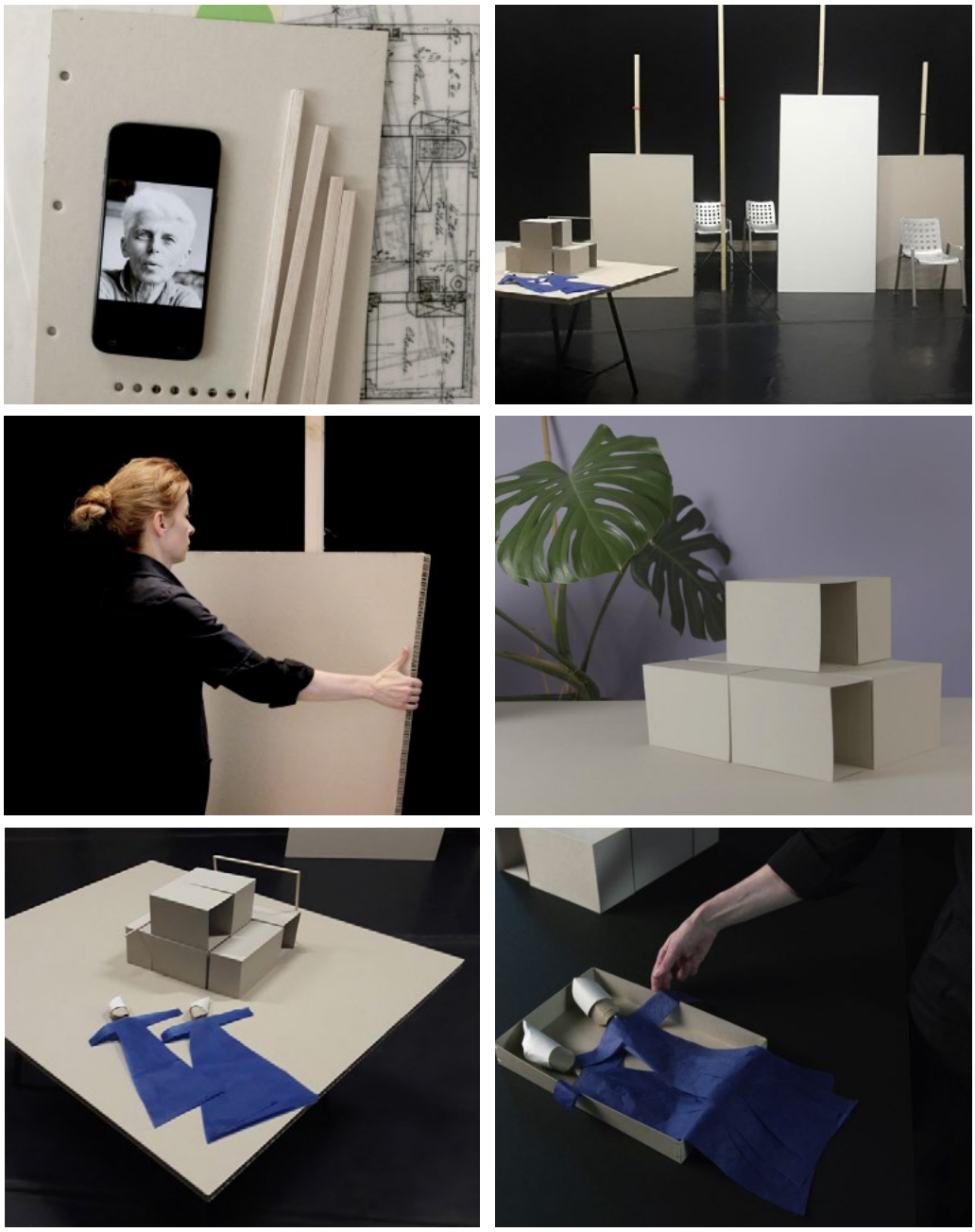
By means of a multi-layered narrative structure of newly assembled material from Georgette's estate, which is now archived at AARDT Lugano and includes records (diaries, letters, notes in books she has read) and documentary material (plans, sketches, photographs), the aim was to create an image of this woman that might give a sense of the ambivalence of her personality.

Georgette's disruption gave birth to a house that was like a skin for her, a shell that protected her — from the world, from herself, from the compulsion to function in the system.
My film works are "frameworks" that enable me to look at and negotiate an idea, a theme, more closely and objectively. Other terms for frame are framework, scaffolding, structure, staging and performance — they all outline very well my approach to cinematic reflection and realisation through fragmentary approximation and poetic image production. Thus, this is not an architectural film, but a fusion of personality, idea and housing.
The film consists of poetic images within an overall image, which corresponds to my approach and the way I deal with questions and narrative forms in a cinematic context. The approach and orientation of my work can be defined by these two thematic fields of re-PARADISE and re-STAGING: re-PARADISE comprises investigations of places and spaces that allow, evoke or reflect desire, longing, ideas, fantasy, hope, dreams, etc.; it is about constructions of heterotopic places, reconstructions of paradisiacal places and constructs and about the repair of destroyed paradises, formerly untouched places that have been almost or completely irretrievably lost through human intrusion.

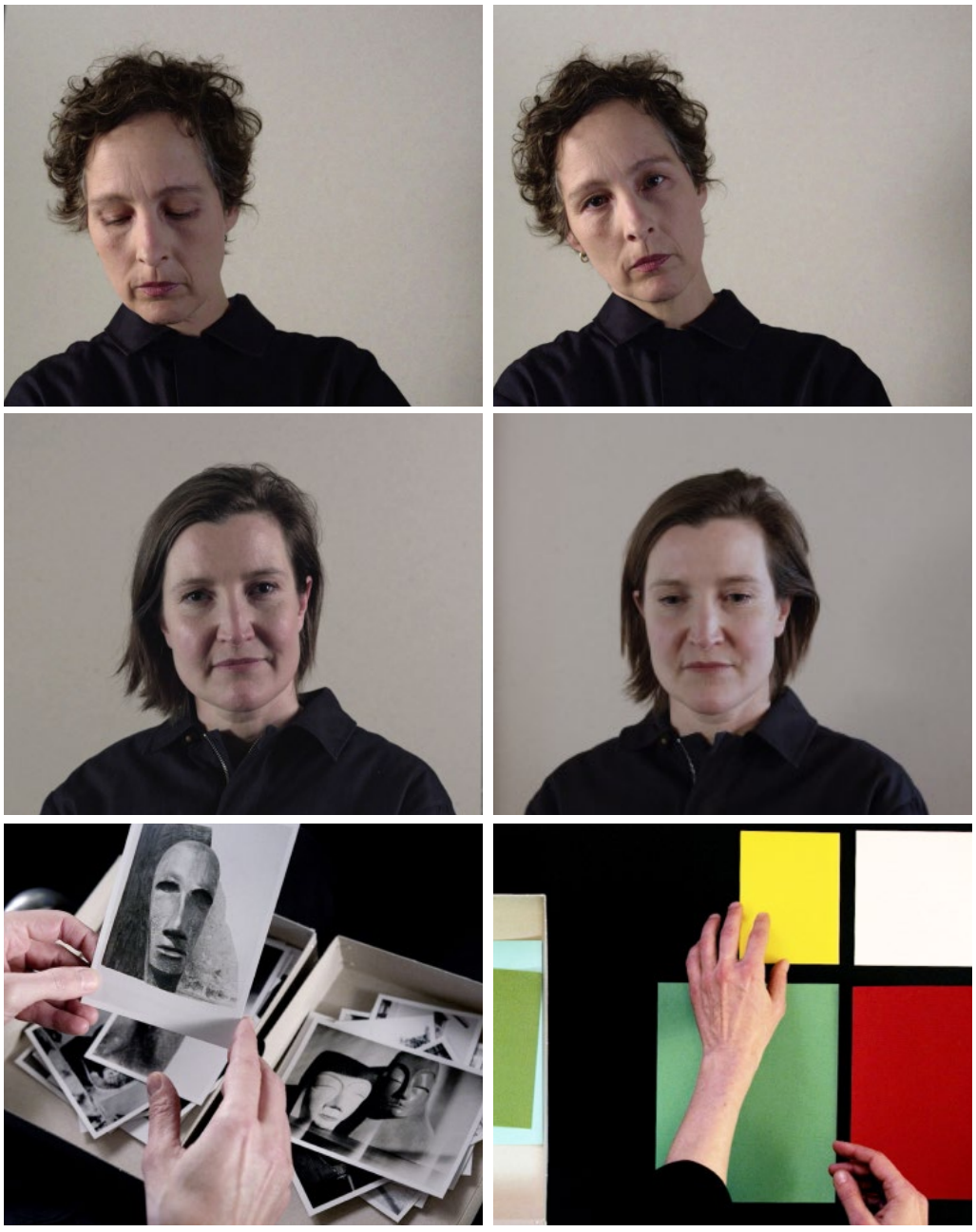
In the re-STAGING projects, I investigate and develop forms of retelling existing narratives from the collective memory (which becomes pop-cultural, mimetic, collectively experienced, remembered material) in the form of re-enactments or reconstructions.
As in earlier filmic works, each consisting of a single shot, a single space or a single existing image, the focus in *re-GEO / rendering reconstructions of desire* is also on the reduction of images and at the same time on the visualisation of an idea, a theoretical question, in this case that of construction — the construction of a building, which is negotiated in a reconstruction, like a constructed image, an image within an image. The frame here is not only a figure of thought, a frame, but a literal subject — in the form of the construction in the image, the construction of the idea, the image (of the casa), Georgette's concept of life, her self-perception.
The construction is also a re-construction: reconstruction of an idea, of Georgette's reflections on the Casa and the building as a sketched model, also in the sense of a vehicle in approaching the development history of the Casa.

The film contains different narrative strands that are interwoven: the documentary, the poetic, the topical. The history and personality of Georgette Klein are (re-)constructed through different and multiple interweavings of the strands on the visual and sound levels.

Credits:
Concept | script | set design | edit: Michaela Schwentner
Narration/reflection/Georgette: Aurelia Burckhardt
Narration/reflection/GEO: Vivien Löschner
Construction: Lisa Hinterreithner
Camera: Martin Putz, Michaela Schwentner
Drone: Nik Thoenen
Music: Julia Purgina
Sound design | mastering: Nik Hummer
Supported by BMKOES and Stadt Wien Kultur



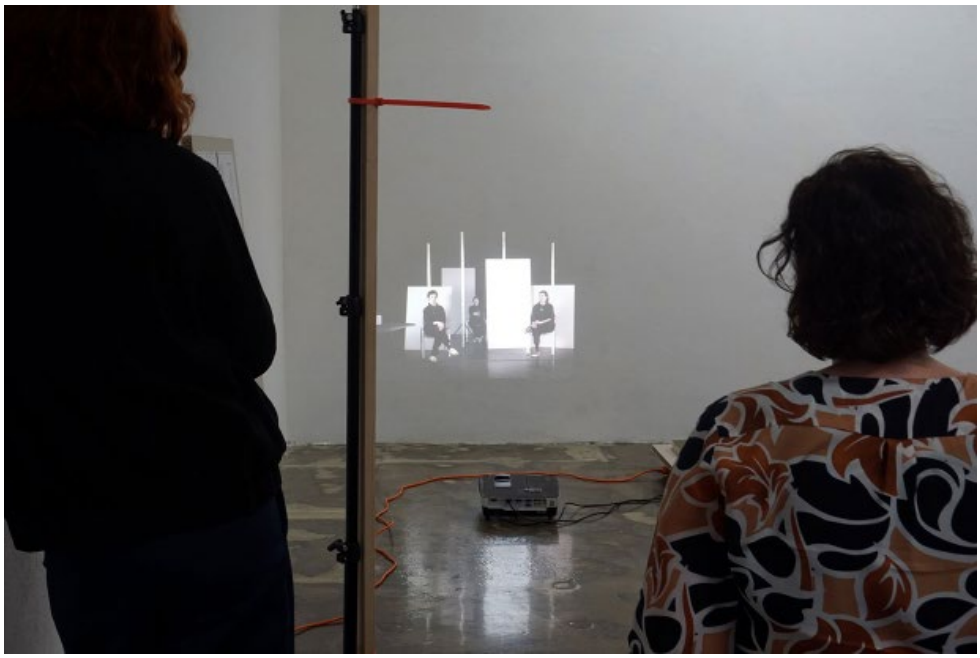
re-GEO / rendering reconstructions of desire
Video, 6K/HD, colour, sound, 33 min, 2020-21
video stills



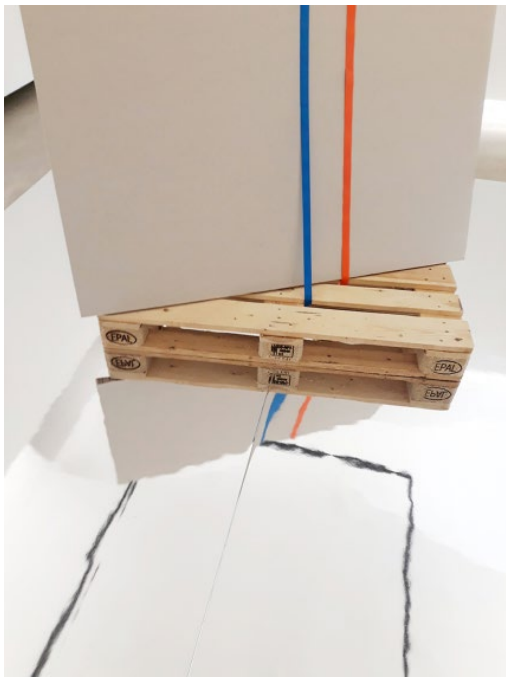
re-GEO / rendering reconstructions of desire
Video, 6K/HD, colour, sound, 33 min, 2020-21
video stills

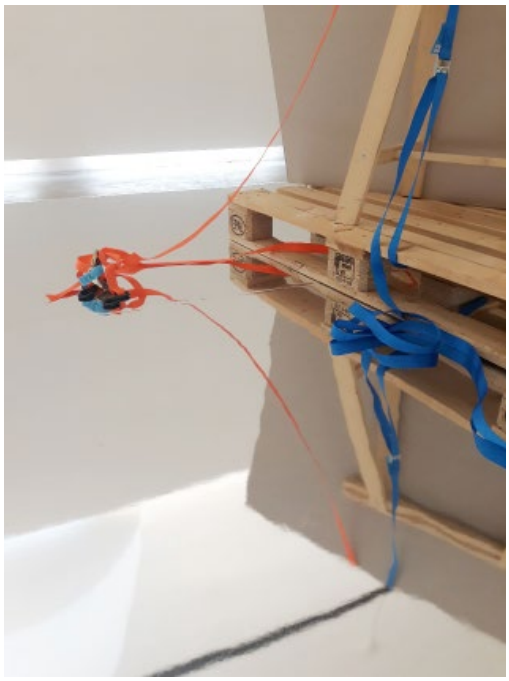
re-GEO / rendering reconstructions of desire
Video, 6K/HD, colour, sound, 33 min, 2020-21
video stills

Reconstruct, She Said
Installation views Sehsaal,
Vienna, 2022



Reconstruct, She Said
Installation views Sehsaal, Vienna, 2022





European Standards /
Miranda‘s disappointment

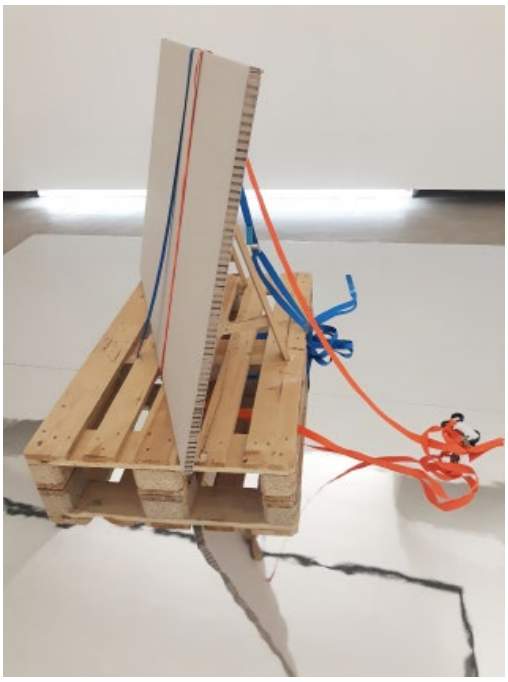
Installation, 3m x 3m mirror foil, euro pallet, comb cardboard 100cm x 140cm, 1 wooden foldable trestle, 2 tension belts (W: 2cm, L: 5m, colour optional), glass plate 70 cm x 50 cm, video (HD, 16:9, sound, 7:36 min, loop), projector on tripod

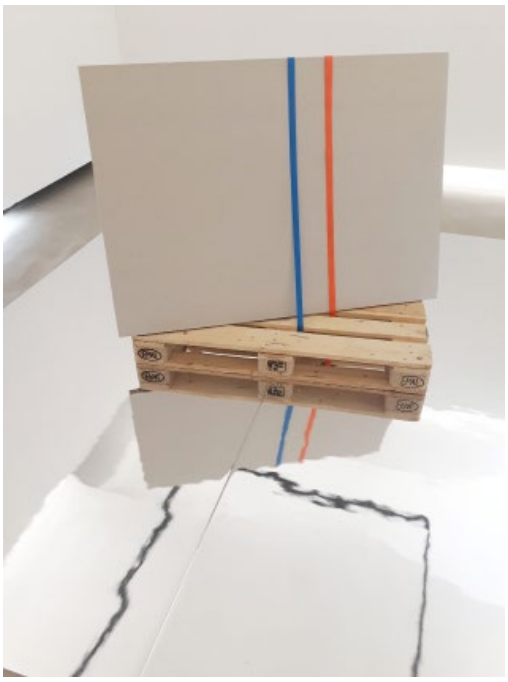
2020

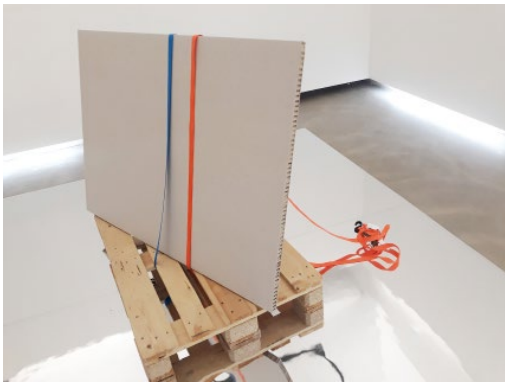
Europe / EU: construction, projection, framework, idea?
What is the idea of a united Europe today? What does it mean in times of agent‘s wars, migration as consequence, overpopulation, growth, neoliberalism, climate change?
What was the promise? Where are we now? What are these so-called European values?
‘2015 should not happen again’, European politicians claim — what do they mean by that?
The unjustifiably named refugee crisis never ever was a crisis caused by refugees but rather a crisis caused by cynical morale, democratic failure and unwillingness in terms of taking action of political systems of the Western world, in particular of the EU.

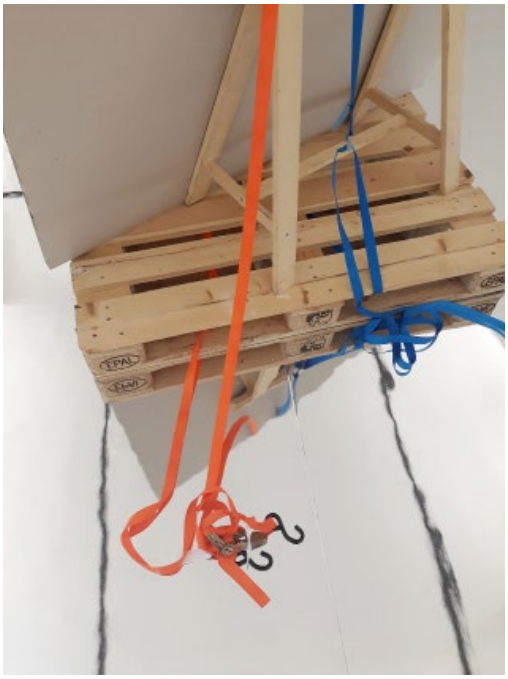
Miranda of Shakespeare‘s *The Tempest*, stranded and isolated, is surprised by the sight of people on the island who turn out to be rescuers in a way — today, there‘s only little hope for salvage of people facing a similar fate. European migration politics has failed completely.

In a poetic setting the void and shallowness of this so-called community of (shared) values, the lack of will of EU-politics are revealed by displaying a makeshift construction of assembled debris, improperly held together by belts.









European Standards /
Miranda‘s disappointment

Installation, 3m x 3m mirror foil, euro pallet, comb cardboard 100cm x 140cm, 1 wooden foldable trestle, 2 tension belts (W: 2cm, L: 5m, colour optional), glass plate 70 cm x 50 cm, projector on tripod, video (HD, 16:9, sound, 7:36 min, loop)

2020

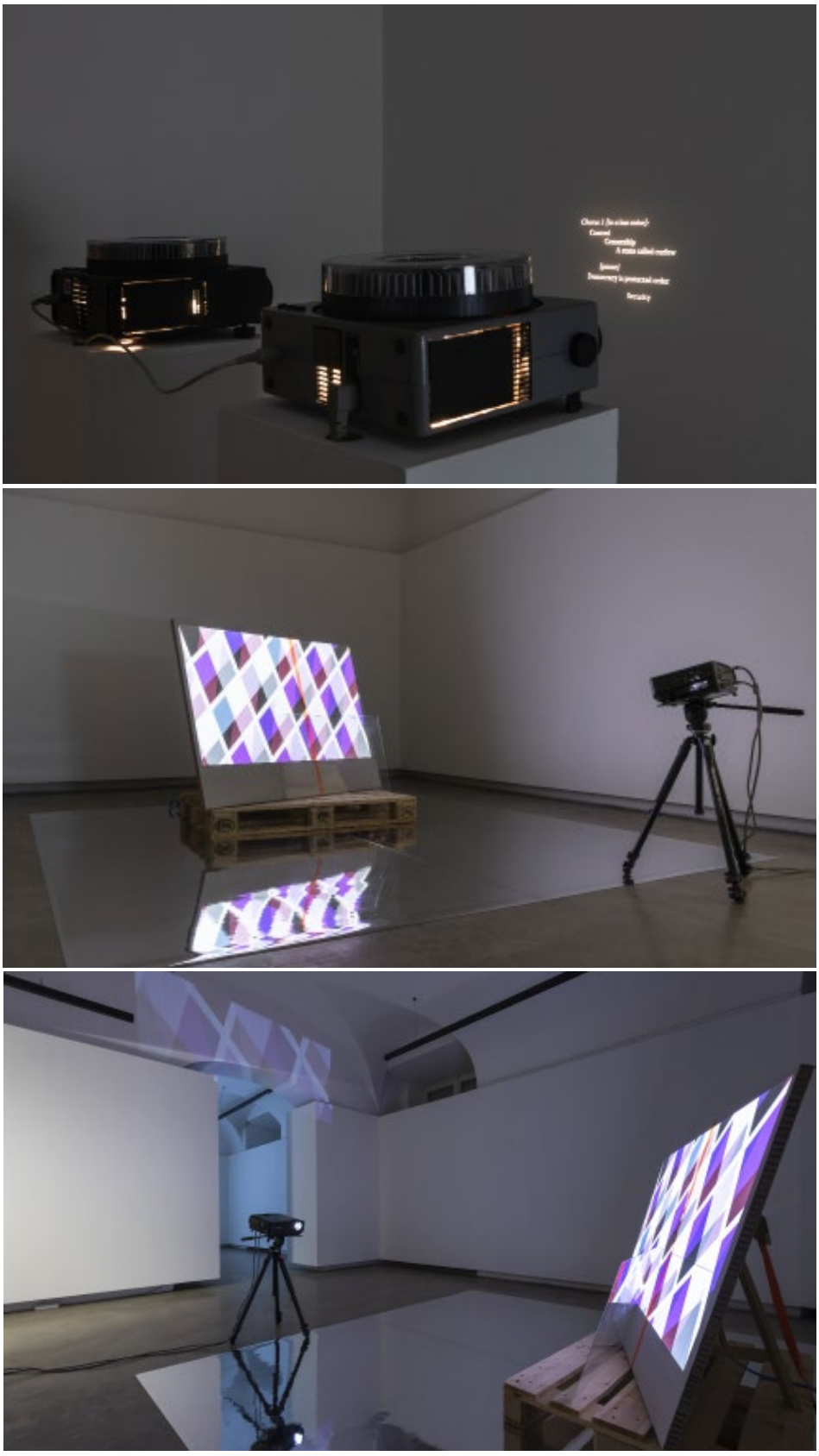
Chairs or seats are parts of social settings: we always find arrangements of chairs/seats to organise collectives in communication, socially or politically participation, perception, education or administration processes or situations. So, this performance installation assembles a variable, but rather large number of chairs, varying in form and materiality, configured and arranged in different ways, representing any kind of collective like an audience, socio-political forces, the people, society in general.
Two performers re-configure and re-form these chairs in various ways, trying to create an equilibrium. Since these performers have presumably different approaches to the world, a different sense of balance, of security/insecurity, etc, the arrangements would always be different. The dialogue/interaction might be radical, trying, discoursive, diplomatic or gentle — the challenge is to achieve an agreeable, convenient state for both performers: If we want to change discomforting states or situations, we ourselves must act.

In the act of re-arranging, re-configuring, re-forming political and social mechanisms and their moving patterns are revealed. Social and political forces form themselves in new and diverse ways. In the course of the performances various arrangements, choreographic structures and forms of action/reaction, dialogue/monologue are developed. The particular arrangements are always the result of interaction of differently characterised forces.

ASSEMBLY
Performance, installation, video and photographic series, 2020

ASSEMBLY Making of

ASSEMBLY
Video 6K/HD, colour, sound, 7:36 min, 2020
video stills



re-FORM *[again!]* Exhibition views Neue Galerie Innsbruck
© Daniel Jarosch

re-FORM *[again!]* Exhibition views Neue Galerie Innsbruck
© Daniel Jarosch

Historical, political, and social mechanisms are subject to a process of constant transformation. If you look at the details, certain movement patterns in society come to the fore. The performative installation *re*-ASSEMBLY by Michaela Schwentner investigates how these processes can be translated in the exhibition space and become tangible. To this end, materials and everyday objects found on site are employed to (re-)format art spaces over the course of the exhibition period, interpreting the semantic potentials of the term "assembly" as gathering, accumulation, and composition.
The main element in this project is the high number of available chairs, which are time and again repositioned in the space as Michaela Schwentner searches for a balanced state.
In *re*-Assembly the artist's interventions leave traces in the exhibition space, creating both an expansive installation and a permanently changing sculpture. The assemblages that emerge in the production process are documented as spatial constructs throughout the various stages of their development until the tentative end. It remains open, however, whether the camera is a part of the performance or if it only serves as a documentary medium for the performative setting.
The choreography and progression of the performance are based on the subject of and the search for the absent and its affect: the longing for balance, equality, desire, utopia. Historical and contemporary political and social mechanisms along with their movement patterns and processes are revealed; social and political powers continuously build up in new and different ways. The reconfigurations of the spatial and infrastructural conditions of the exhibition space generated during the performative setting can be retraced on the basis of film sequences.
But the question remains: Will the respective constellations of elements (as metaphors for all possible powers and mechanisms within society) ever arrive at a final arrangement? (Text: Kunstraum Lakeside, 2020)

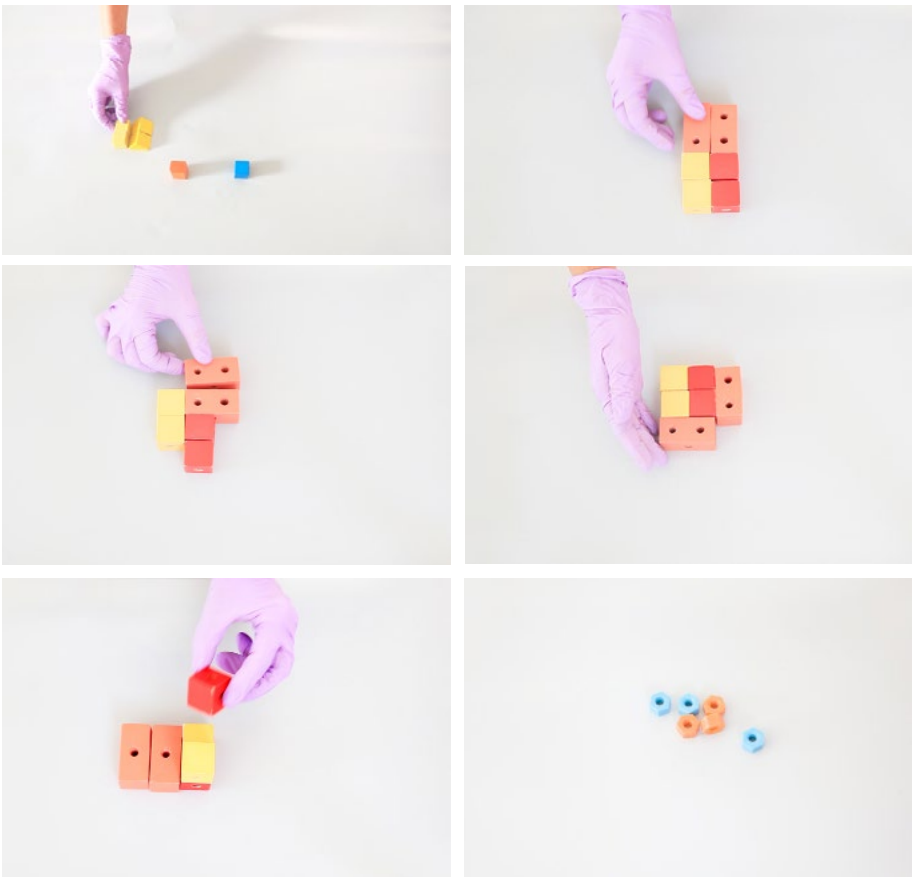
re-ASSEMBLY
Performative statement and presentation, installation and video
Statement#09: *re*-Assembly, Kunstraum Lakeside 2020
Installation views @ Johannes Puch

re-ASSEMBLY
Performative statement and presentation, installation and video*
Statement#09: *re*-ASSEMBLY, Kunstraum Lakeside 2020
*video 6K/HD, colour, sound, 10 min, 2020
video stills

re-ASSEMBLY
Performative statement and presentation, installation and video
Statement#09: *re*-Assembly, Kunstraum Lakeside 2020
Installation view @ Nik Thoenen

Credits:
Concept | choreography | edit | sound design: Michaela Schwentner
Performer: Michaela Schwentner
Camera: Martin Putz

re-ASSEMBLY
Performative Installation
Kunsthalle Exnergasse, 2021
Installationsansicht @ Marisel Bongola



zwischen mir und der welt / aufräumen
Video, HD, colour, sound, 24 min, 2020
video stills

Hands in rubber gloves steadily re-arrange building blocks into new patterns. On the voiceover are testimonials from people on the Autism spectrum. Profound self-reflections make it impossible to draw the line between normality and behaviour disorder, inviting a critical rethinking of systemic conditions and social power structures. (Michelle Koch, Diagonale catalogue, 2020)

The short film also asks questions about the concerns of the diagnosed and their reliability in terms of Asperger's own rather unquestioned history and involvement in the Nazis' eugenic policy at the children's clinic Am Spiegelgrund in Vienna in the 1930s which included selection and killing processes.

Credits:
Concept | camera | edit: Michaela Schwentner
Voice: Ulrike Zachhuber
Sound: Nik Hummer
Supported by Stadt Wien Kultur, BKA
Distributed by sixpackfilm

zwischen mir und der welt / aufräumen, video still

The playful impression disappears quickly. The wooden blocks are, indeed, luminous and colourful as bonbons, but the hands that constantly rearrange the objects for the camera are in rubber gloves. The incessant piling and arranging, twisting, turning, and moving is reminiscent of a restless search for the "right" constellation.
"But what is normal, anyway?" asks the voice superimposed over this arranging in *zwischen mir und der welt / aufräumen*. In the film, Michaela Schwentner gives people who have been diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum, more specifically, with Asperger syndrome, the chance to speak. They offer profound reflections on what isolates them from the so-called world out there, how their social handicap and the difficulties in communicating with others lead them to experience the disturbance as a prison. The limitations as well as the compulsion are reflected and intensified at the visual level: the organizing of the geometric structures becomes a Sisyphean struggle; it is a symbol of the inability to grasp the structure of a social situation.
zwischen mir und der welt / aufräumen also goes beyond the mere documentary element. When those affected by being stigmatised as "unnatural" or lacking empathy talk about hiding their "difference" and about Hans Asperger's involvement in the eugenics of the Nazis at Spiegelgrund in Vienna, a flash of defiance emerges again and again, which casts doubt on the normalcy of dominant social systems.
(Anne Katrin Feßler, sixpackfilm catalogue entry, 2020, Translation: Lisa Rosenblatt)

zwischen mir und der welt / aufräumen was selected by Diagonale Festival of Austrian Film 2020 to be presented in the Innovative film section. Due to preventive measures against Covid-19, Diagonale'20 had to be cancelled.

Official Selection Diagonale '20 Die Unvollendete

Personne
Video, 4K/HD, colour, sound, 9:40 min, 2016
video stills

"A static long shot of a spacious room, on the table is a woman applying her make-up — several minutes of self-adulation, which the camera observes from a distant perspective. The longer the gaze, the more mysterious the shot. An uncanny miniature about gazes and perception, about the experience of observing and being observed." (Michelle Koch, *Diagonale* catalogue entry, 2017)

What do we see, when we look? What do we learn, what do we know then? Can we rely on our perception, since it is just a partial aspect, one perspective of reality? Because in fact, we always see just fragments (of the world). The vague and intimate staging creates a surreal, oneiric atmosphere accompanied by a mysterious effect, which generates a confusing feeling — we are exposed to the act of observing and thus forced to be voyeurs.

Personne
Video, 5K/HD, colour, sound, 9:40 min, 2016

Credits:
Concept | set design | edit: Michaela Schwentner
Camera: Martin Putz
Sound recordings | sound design | mastering: Nik Hummer
Performer: Stephanie Cumming
Colour correction: Bernhard Schlick
Supported by Stadt Wien Kultur and BKA / innovative film

The film is a kind of "Gestell" – a framework for reflections on the essentials and mechanics of film as well as on film production itself. In this sense, the make-up s cene reveals the actress's transformation into the film figure.
Thus, it refers to Eleanor Antin's video performance *Representational Painting* (1971) in which the act of applying make-up as a traditional mode of self-expression was explored and staged, amplifying the observational aspect.
Also, connections to Ingmar Bergman and Alfred Hitchcock are at hand when it comes to the concept of the figure(s): both figure and idea refer to Bergman's *Persona* on the level of the internal conception, on the level of external conception to Hitchcock's *Rear Window*.
The cinematic action that follows a prescribed plot has been shot over the course of a day in 17 takes. Basically it's impossible to realise exact and congruent repetitions, so each take within the scope of action is slightly different — even more so by the change of daylight throughout the day a different atmosphere and light situation was created.

Penelope / In the Scenery / Reflecting / Relations
Video, 4K/HD, colour, sound, 18:45 min, 2015

Penelope / In the Scenery / Reflecting / Relations shows two women sitting in the scenery of a theatre or in the backdrop of a film set. It is not clear whether these two figures are acting or waiting for their scene, trying to kill time by telling stories and reflecting on film-immanent matters.
Are they outside their role, outside the film set, or are they acting in a film which is about two women playing in a play or a film, waiting for their scene reciting lines from other films which (seemingly) have nothing to do with the situation they are in? Are they rehearsing? Some scenes are repeated several times, still it is not a rehearsal, but instead a film that uses montage of image and sound to transfer figures from one context into another or a new one and by that question production processes and mechanisms and the aesthetic realisation of the film.
This plot is on the one hand the story of Penelope, told from a contemporary and emancipated perspective (Ulysses is not at all present, Penelope is no longer waiting), and on the other hand about storytelling, staging and playing itself: Penelope is knotting and interweaving fragments of her personal love stories, while she is also reflecting on film, acting and narration per se by retelling stories and by reenacting several iconic film scenes.
Fragments of narration from different contexts are interlinked and interwoven to assemblages and thus create a new narration-image which follows the principle of the mise en abîme. Also, the form follows this principle and consists of fragmented images and reflections. The reflection on narration itself and on projection has its equivalent on the formal level in the sense of mirroring.

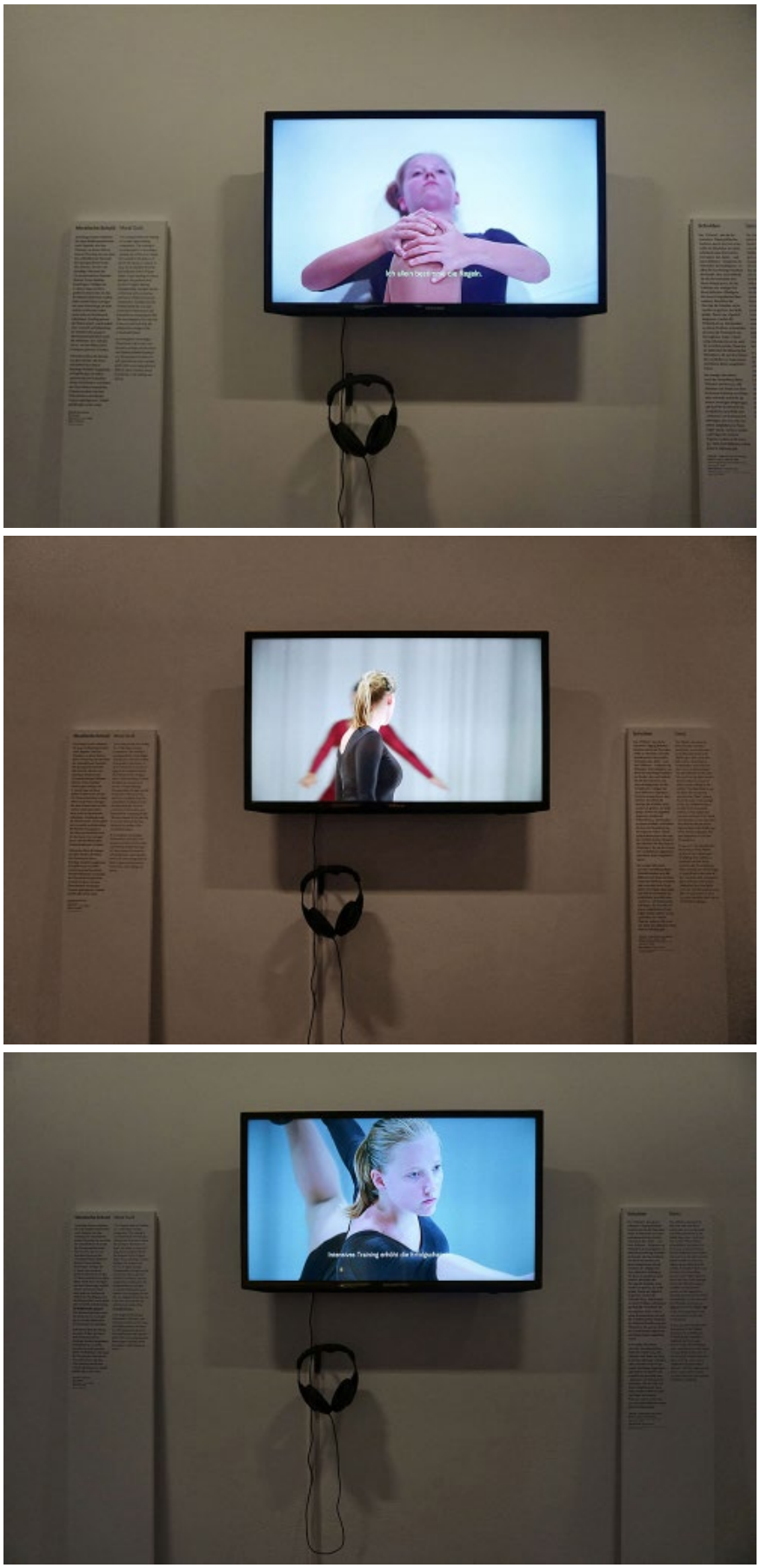
The film can be read as a passionate tribute to film and film-making, as a reflection on film-making, the interest in modernism and its reproductive technicality. It also shows by recontectualising several iconic film scenes that film production is always connected with the time present.

Credits:
Concept | edit: Michaela Schwentner
Camera: Martin Putz
Sound | sound design | mastering: Nik Hummer
Performers: Anna Mendelssohn, Irene Coticchio
Supported by BMKOES and Stadt Wien Kultur

The Contest
Video, HD, colour, sound, 16 min, 2015

The short film essay *The Contest* is both cinematic reconstruction and staging and refers to a (pop)cultural moment of 20th century history. I was interested in the intersection of historic moments and aesthetical practices and in the examination of our relationship to collective historic and visual experience.
The film shows two young female performers in a gymnastic performance situation. The minimalistic setting of the scene filmed in a real but still staged studio unfolds in static shots and shows the performers primarily in long shots by considering the symmetry of the image. The performers' movements equal real practising movements of figures skaters, still the reduced image composition lets the choreography appear somehow artificial.

The formal aesthetic approach to the historic event which is grounded in the collective memory and visual archive on one hand and to the presentation of subjective experience on the other hand result in a stylised image which is supposed to merge into a timeless form. It was not my intention though, to dissolve the historic event in the aesthetic, but to objectify it by reducing all narrative moments.
The negotiated historic event was a spectacular case in the history of US-American figure skating: during a decider preparation for a championship one of two rivals was attacked and incapacitated. The other athlete got suspected of initiating the attack and was subsequently suspended from all further championships.



SCHULD Group exhibition
Exhibition views
Jewish Museum Vienna, 2023

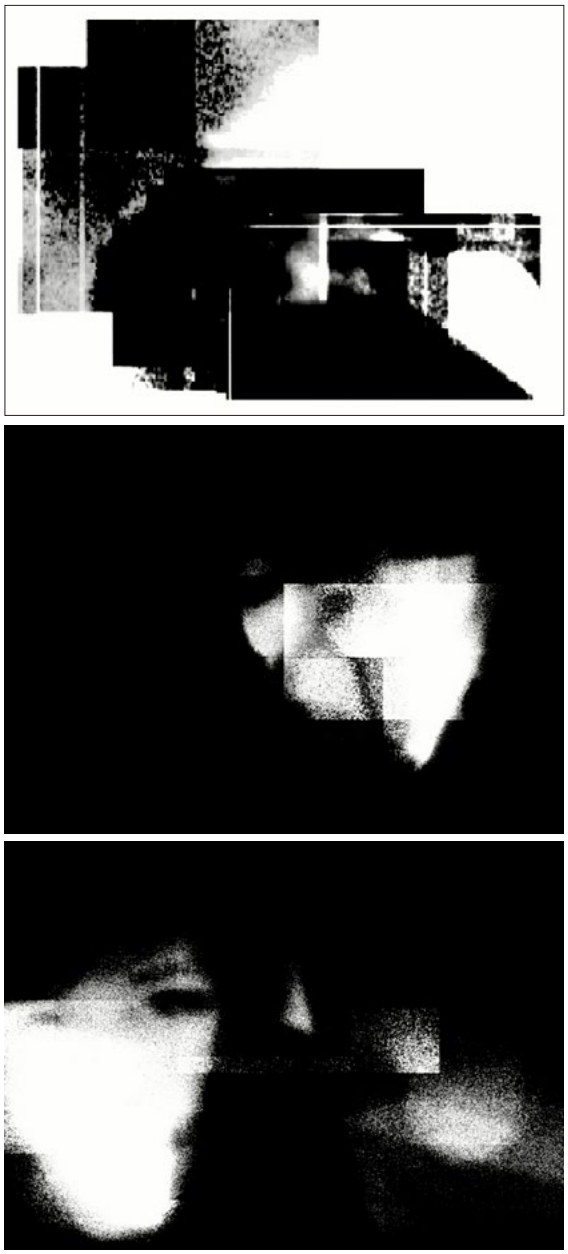
Descending a Staircase / In Shifts
Performance and video installation, 4K/HD, colour, 33 min, 2015

A woman is descending stairs wearing a yellow bathrobe — again and again. This action-image refers to a film scene from *Le Mépris* (J.-L. Godard, 1963). The title of the work refers to Duchamp's *Nu descendant un escalier no.2*. *Descending a Staircase / in Shifts* was conceived for Festival der Regionen 2015 in Ebensee. Referring to the festival's theme *Change of Shifts* I realised a reenactment based on the short sequence from *Le Mépris*. The sequence was divided into 3 shifts: 3 performers went down and up the stairs over the course of a day.
The work also consists of several changes of layers on a technical level: on one hand there's the change from one medium to another: the intervention was filmed, the film material was edited and presented as video installation later. The economic layers changed: from analogue physical performance to video and further on to the projection in a subway.
Furthermore, the title of the work refers to the change of clothes: The term "shift" not only means shift in the sense of work, it was also an expression for undergarment in former times. So the performers also changed the layers of clothing: from the bathrobe to the undergarment and back again.
The work was at the same time performance, reenactment, an intervention in public space, the making of, a video installation and finally: the work of performers of a day (on a film set).

Un divertissement d'amour
Video, 4K/HD, colour, sound, 11 min, 2012

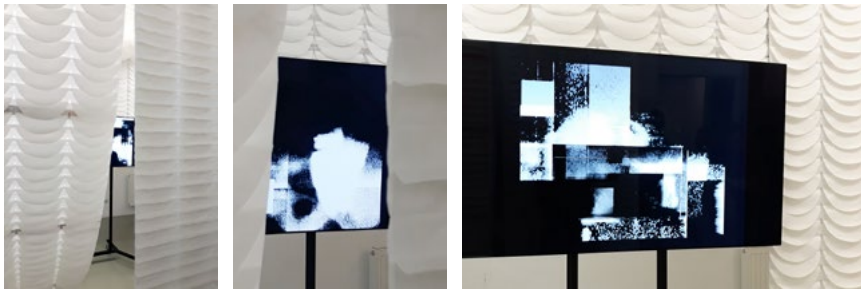
The short film un divertissement d'amour examines on the one hand the phenomen of spatial experience, on the other hand forms of communication which comprise both language and the gaze. I'm interested in the formal aspect of putting someone into picture: the mise en cadre.
After Eisenstein, every frame becomes "accelerated" if by selection of a frame in contrast to a previous or following one a movement of consciousness of the viewer is provoked like the addition of a fragment.
In this context, Roman Jakobson was talking of the pars pro toto as basic method of film for the transformation of things into signs. In this work I try the opposite: fragments and details are visible already in the beginning, but get assembled throughout the film and become a new image in the end. The camera scans the space in an unusual way. Fragments and details are not only used on the viusal level, but also on the sound level: subject of this work is a conversation which is created out of recontextualised text fragments. So the visible and the audible are assembled without subduing one of each layers to the other.

Credits:
Concept | edit: Michaela Schwentner
Camera: Martin Putz
Sound | sound design | mastering: Nik Hummer
Performers: Anna Mendelssohn, Irene Coticchio, Liese Lyon, Hubsi Kramar
Supported by BKA, Stadt Wien Kultur, Land Oberösterreich



On a white background, black rectangles fall from the left upper edge of the picture. They amass to form larger surfaces, to then immediately thereafter shrink or shift on top of one another, and from time to time be lifted off each other by thin white lines. Similar to the cinema screen, the rectangular surfaces carry the schematic, digitally processed image of a woman, which is difficult to recognize as such. Instead, its large-pixel outline merges with the abstract forms, which constantly form anew. Like in a puzzle, individual facial details show up in different places; the various parts are continually put together, yet without ever revealing a completed picture. The stark, reduced soundtrack, which stems from Antonioni's *Il deserto rosso*, as does the initial visual material, emphasizes the clarity of the images and opens the gaze to the constantly changing forms. The face reduced to flickering black and white areas takes its place in this strict composition.
At one point, the picture becomes almost completely black from the steady overlapping of different layers. Shortly thereafter, the schematic contours of the face push into the field of vision. In the end it seems to have almost won out over the abstract forms. This impression is supported by the replacement of the noise on the soundtrack with human voices. However, before the music (which begins suddenly), can spread out, and the black and white contours become completely recognizable as the reproduction of a human form, they turn quickly to the side and the picture disappears into the blackness.
(Corinna Reicher)

Giuliana 64:03
Video, b/w, sound, 3 min, 2003



Giuliana 64:03
Exhibition views Video *Kabuff*
Blickle Raum Vienna, 2019