

CHANNELING





Jo Baer
Clive Barker
Éric Baudelaire
Lothar Baumgarten
Thomas Bayrle
Franco Bellucci
Joseph Beuys
Bill Bollinger
Marcel Broodthaers
Marcel Duchamp
Jana Euler
Hans-Peter Feldmann
Ceal Floyer
Forensic Architecture
Isa Genzken
Ralph Gibson
Robert Gober
Jack Goldstein
Emilie Louise Gossiaux
Dan Graham
Sky Hopinka
Jonathan Horowitz
Anne Imhof
Donald Judd
Isaac Julien
On Kawara
Christine Sun Kim
Jutta Koether
Louise Lawler
Park McArthur
Gustav Metzger
Henrike Naumann
The Night Climbers of Cambridge
Cady Noland
Albert Oehlen
Claes Oldenburg
Henrik Olesen
Dietrich Orth
Laurie Parsons
Charlotte Posenenske
Jeroen de Rijke / Willem de Rooij
Peter Roehr
Fred Sandback
Frank Schramm
Jack Smith
Lewis Stein
Beat Streuli
Sturtevant
Larry Sultan & Mike Mandel
Martine Syms
Juergen Teller
Rosemarie Trockel
Abisag Tüllmann
James Welling
Adrian Williams
Constantina Zavitsanos

Channeling presents new acquisitions alongside other works from the MUSEUM MMK FÜR MODERNE KUNST'S collection. Different perspectives may emerge in the space between objects. This space relates to the distance of time between the works' making and their positioning in the exhibition. The collection was formed in 1981, and the museum opened in 1991. How have sensibilities and discourses changed since the museum's foundation? *Channeling* suggests a movement toward a particular destination or object, or the flow along a specified route or through a given medium.

"The whole of your body except your hands and feet are over black emptiness. Your feet are on slabs of stone sloping downwards and outwards at an angle of about thirty-five degrees to the horizontal." Serving as a review and advice for climbing the architecture of Cambridge, England, *The Night Climbers of Cambridge* is a 1937 book published under the pseudonym "Whipplesnaith." A series of photographs documents the practice of a group that went by the same name, comprising anonymous students who climbed college buildings and townhouses in the 1930s.

In *Un film dramatique* (2019), Éric Baudelaire lets school-children in the 6th grade at Collège Dora Maar reflect on and work with film. Over a four-year period, their understanding of the medium develops in parallel with an awareness of their position in society. Living in the "Neuf-Trois" (the 93rd district) of the Parisian suburb of Saint-Denis, the children, as they negotiate their teenage years, openly address social violence, identity, and power relations.

Wheat bread, artificial flowers, soap bubbles, and surfboards become associated with foam in a work by Dan Graham. *Foams* (1966/2001), a wall text in four sections, lists and describes a material to the point of dissociation. Consisting of a wholesale-size piece of acoustic foam, Park McArthur's sculpture *Polyurethane Foam* (2016) absorbs sound and physical impact. Across from two wall-mounted works by Donald Judd, *Untitled (86-24)*, 1986, and *Untitled (89-47)*, 1989, *Polyurethane Foam* reacts to the conditions of the exhibition space while also affecting the experience of it.

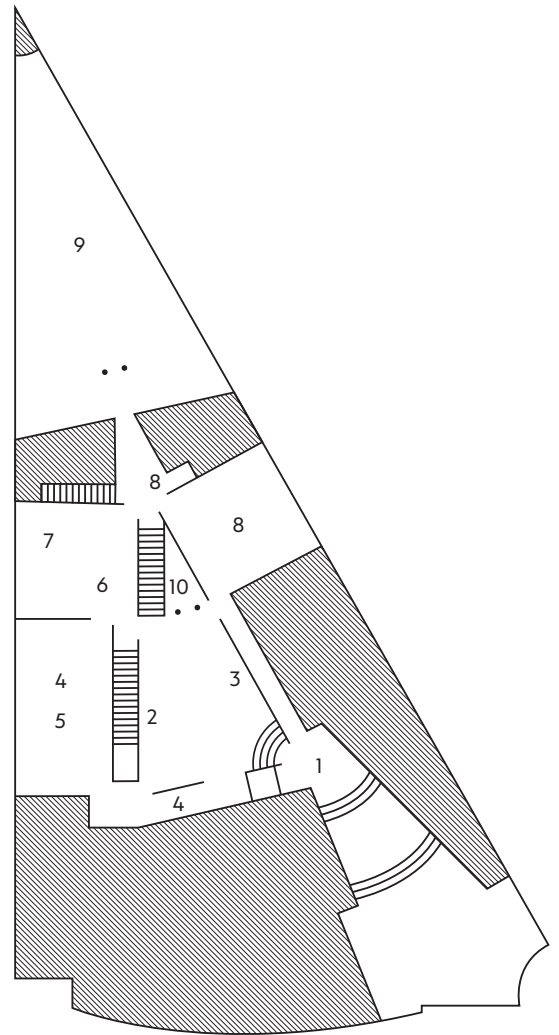
The most recent work in the collection—*Just a Soul Responding* (2023) by Sky Hopinka—captures imagery such as roads and landscapes and the traditional canoe-make process. The video combines voice-overs, text,

and music to describe the traumas of land dispossession and the colonization of North America. The inherent violence within American society and its presence in popular culture become apparent in the contrast between a wooden canoe and muscle cars. The sculpture *Untitled* (1997/1998) by Cady Noland, consisting of a whitewall tire and an aluminum pipe, attests to how violence does not only appear in roaring machines but is ingrained in decoupled material parts as well.

Channeling proposes to expand our understanding of earlier acquisitions and donations while maintaining attention to the context constituted by the collection—a context into which new works enter and with which they necessarily engage.

The exhibition is curated by Julia Eichler and Lukas Flygare.

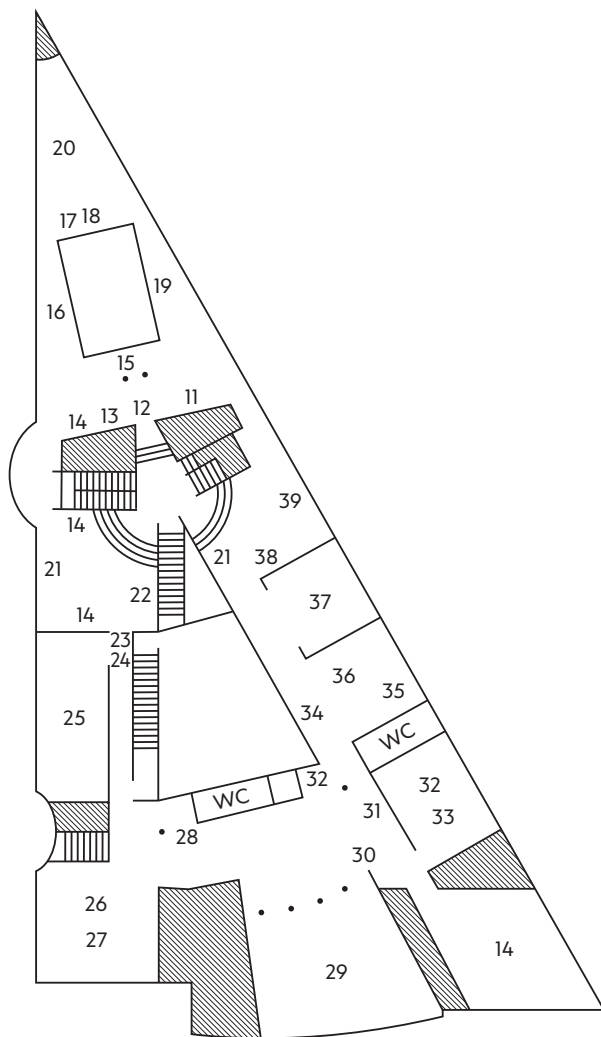
Level 1



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Laurie Parsons | 6. Donald Judd |
| 2. Isa Genzken | 7. Park McArthur |
| 3. The Night Climbers
of Cambridge | 8. Jeroen de Rijke /
Willem de Rooij |
| 4. Jack Goldstein | 9. Forensic Architecture |
| 5. Anne Imhof | 10. Sturtevant |

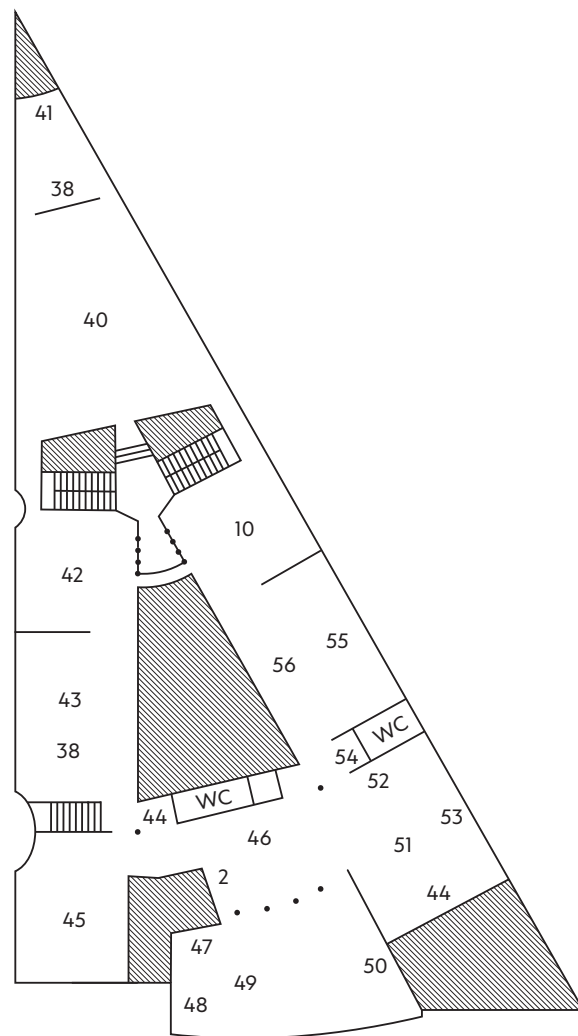
Texts on the artists whose names appear in boldface type can be found under the numbers indicated.

Level 2



- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 11. Henrik Olesen | 23. Jutta Koether |
| 12. Frank Schramm | 24. Emilie Louise Gossiaux |
| 13. Jo Baer | 25. Isaac Julien |
| 14. Joseph Beuys | 26. Dietrich Orth |
| 15. Constantina Zavitsanos | 27. Juergen Teller |
| 16. Larry Sultan & Mike Mandel | 28. Adrian Williams |
| 17. Ceal Floyer | 29. Martine Syms |
| 18. On Kawara | 30. Louise Lawler |
| 19. Franco Bellucci | 31. Dan Graham |
| 20. Jonathan Horowitz | 32. Jack Smith |
| 21. Ralph Gibson | 33. Clive Barker |
| 22. Gustav Metzger | 34. Marcel Duchamp |

Level 3



- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 35. Lothar Baumgarten | 47. Jana Euler |
| 36. Marcel Broodthaers | 48. Rosemarie Trockel |
| 37. Claes Oldenburg | 49. Hans-Peter Feldmann |
| 38. Cady Noland | 50. Albert Oehlen |
| 39. Sky Hopinka | 51. Thomas Bayrle |
| 40. Beat Streuli | 52. James Welling |
| 41. Abisag Tüllmann | 53. Peter Roehr |
| 42. Henrike Naumann | 54. Robert Gober |
| 43. Lewis Stein | 55. Christine Sun Kim |
| 44. Charlotte Posenenske | 56. Bill Bollinger |
| 45. Éric Baudelaire | |
| 46. Fred Sandback | |

1. Laurie Parsons

Untitled, 1993

Already with her first exhibition in 1988 at the Lorence-Monk Gallery in New York, it seemed that Laurie Parsons held certain suspicions about the function art had in society. She showed a series of objects that she found on the street, plainly displayed on the floor at the perimeter of the gallery: a pile of charcoal, a weathered coil of rope, a battered suitcase, a yellow nylon noose, and an uprooted log. In this tone, over a mere seven or so years, Parsons staged several exhibitions that brought the commonplace grit of everyday life into the authoritative aesthetic of gallery spaces and museums. This same body of work would be shown again the following year in Cologne at Galerie Rolf Ricke without any changes, introducing her work to a European audience. Invited to participate in the exhibition *The Big Nothing ou Le Presque Rien* at the New Museum in New York in 1992, the artist responded by introducing a sculpture of dollar bills on the floor, with the instruction that the staff should not intervene in the visitors' desire to take the money. Quickly, it was reduced to nothing; like much of her work, it was set to physically disappear.

Invited to contribute a work to an exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Antwerp in 1993, Parsons proposed to reproduce her diary of everyday observations and thoughts. This was not prepared explicitly for the exhibition, but rather, like the objects she found on the street, was an object already loaded with the matter of the quotidian. Printed in an edition of 500, yet notably neither attributed to its author nor given a title on the cover, its distribution has led to an inevitable return to the relative obscurity from which it originated.

In 1991, just prior to this work, Parsons responded to an invitation to make an exhibition as part of the Forum Kunst Rottweil, which would presage her exit from the art scene. There she produced nothing resembling art; rather, she lived in the gallery, worked at a local psychiatric hospital and school for developmentally disabled children, and formed a relationship with the local community that resulted in a large public gathering at what was announced as the exhibition closing party. As she hints towards in its writing, "Why does writing seem vaguely possibly preferable to doing art these days? For me? I tell myself +

others because the art projects just funnel all this energy into one point of contact—idea. I want to feel many points of contact." After producing this small diary, Laurie Parsons would begin life as a social worker, rarely looking back at art.

3. The Night Climbers of Cambridge

Fourteen photographs, 1930s

In the 1930s, a group of students at the University of Cambridge gathered anonymously under the name The Night Climbers of Cambridge. Amusingly preposterous, they seemed to operate as an underground society for those—young men, as far as the record goes—enjoying the delights of scaling campus buildings. Although a physical and dangerous endeavor, the group’s emphasis on the activity seemed to weigh heavily on its aesthetic and intellectual properties, as reflected in documentation of it through photography and writing. In 1937, an eponymous book was published on the group by the author “Whipplesnaith.” In the pen of this zany pseudonym are detailed descriptions of how to climb named buildings, extensive considerations of drainpipes and chimneys, and accompanying photography. Playfully and poetically, yet at times slightly ironic, Whipplesnaith reports on how to properly embody the lifestyle of a night climber, describing them as “silent and solitary, mysterious and unknown except to their own circle, preferring to live their own epics to reading those of others.”

In the group’s striking black and white photography, climbers are almost camouflaged against the gothic and neoclassical buildings they attempt to master—in some cases, as if melting into the structures and ornamentation. Their faces are rarely visible, and if so, they are far away or blurred by the bright camera flash in the night. In leisure attire typical for the time—long trousers, polo-neck sweaters, and rubber-soled shoes—one climber is photographed while reaching for something to grasp on the stone-built Trinity Bridge; another while sliding down a drainpipe. Other figures appear further from the ground, utterly daring, posing calmly on top of St. John’s New Court clock tower, or about to step into the face of the King’s College clock.

The monochromatic imagery of *The Night Climbers of Cambridge* is enigmatic; bats never seem far away from the nocturnal scenes. Although the group’s members were likely from privileged backgrounds, operating around the time of the Great Depression’s infusion of poverty, unemployment, and uncertainty in the United Kingdom, they were perhaps seeking mental refuge in this risk-taking, anti-authoritarian activity. With aspects reminiscent

of the later Situationist’s *dérive*, the night climbers generated a highly local and, to the core, playful approach to being within the institutional confines of the university.

4. Jack Goldstein

A Spotlight, 1972

Jack, 1973

Untitled, 1983

Untitled (PBR 2), 1991–1992

In Hollywood, spotlights are trained on movie stars, light up red carpets and film sets, and are part of the magic of an industry; outside this enclosed world, in the other Los Angeles, spotlights hang out of the windows of police cars, working as part of the surveillance technology that is imbued into the historical fabric of American policing. Both seem to be present in Jack Goldstein's film *A Spotlight*, while it happens to picture neither. As the artist attempts to flee the focus of the spotlight, we can't help but sense an antipathy, fear, or anxiety in the presence of the camera—in other words, it asks us what it means to be *captured* by a camera.

As this early film shows, Goldstein's work concerned itself with the production of sound and images and how their power is contingent on their making. Like many American artists of his generation, Goldstein's proximity to Hollywood—both the emblematic, almost imaginary place and the actual proper noun that designates a section of Los Angeles—was to be incredibly influential on his work and how it was made. The artist saw this relationship to pop culture as a conflation of the two final movements in American modern art: "I am interested in the gap between Minimalism and Pop Art: in the object character and autonomy of Minimalism and the subject matter of our culture that is to be encountered in Pop Art."

Rather than shoot his films himself, Goldstein worked with professionals from the film industry, and with his later paintings, he hired commercial artists to realize works that focused on spectacular images. From Goldstein's perspective, he was interested in how images or sounds might become objects. To him, objects, like props in a film, were something that could be manipulated, something that the artist could use to create an affect or feeling in the viewer. This was not something original to art but rather part of the culture industry that Goldstein imported to the places in which art is shown. Through Goldstein's work, we might notice that such an industry has neither slowed down nor exhausted itself; new technologies show the omnipresence

of images and how they form datasets on us as individuals, all the while demanding that we feel something. As suggested by Goldstein himself: "Technology does everything for us so that we no longer have to function in terms of experience. We function in terms of aesthetics."

7. Park McArthur

Polyurethane Foam, 2016

A massive block measuring almost five cubic meters, Park McArthur's *Polyurethane Foam* has a looming presence. The work consists of the eponymous material, in the form of a wholesale piece of a type used for acoustic purposes. The rough and peeling black surface—almost emanating a certain toxicity in its burnt-synthetic appearance—is underscored by its industrial origin, visible in the registration codes on the side.

As a formal investigation, the sculpture poses in relation to the other bodies in the space in which it is placed. An array of encounters thus made possible, the work can act both as a disruptive factor and as a buffer that restricts our movements or protects us. Yet McArthur's sculpture has another distinct property surpassing a formal discourse: the polyurethane foam both absorbs sound and takes any impact from within its surroundings. Affecting the latter, this saturation also generates changes in the foam itself, including in its color and texture, revealing the transformability or vulnerability of the malleable material. The moldability of the work also points to its proximity to some of our most intimate household items—polyurethane foam is widely used for bedding and furniture, sports equipment, and headphones.

McArthur's sculpture was initially made for her 2016 exhibition *Poly* at Chisenhale Gallery in London. In Ancient Greek, *poly* means "several" or "many" and could, in the context of *Polyurethane Foam*, describe its appearance in the mentioned exhibition as one of three seemingly identical blocks. Producing several other iterations of the work with differences in color and size both prior to and after this show, the artist is as if insisting on both the object and our bodies' permeability and porousness as opposed to its supposed boundaries or sovereignty.

9. Forensic Architecture

The Murder of Halit Yozgat, 2017

In 2017, the Tribunal "Unraveling the NSU Complex" commissioned Forensic Architecture to evaluate the witness testimony given by Andreas Temme—a former officer of the Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz Hessen (the intelligence agency for the German state of Hesse)—in the case of the murder of Halit Yozgat on 6 April 2006 in Kassel, Germany. The parents of Yozgat had spurred the study by repeatedly calling into question how Temme could not have seen the body of their son lying behind a table. Temme had not agreed to testify as a witness voluntarily but had been identified by other witness testimonies and by computer login data.

In *The Murder of Halit Yozgat*, Forensic Architecture reconstructs the sequence of events from 6 April 2006, with the help of a leaked police video. In this source material, Temme attempts to demonstrate and provide proof that he did not hear the lethal shots, see Yozgat's body behind the table, or notice anything suspicious.

Forensic Architecture—an independent research agency based at Goldsmiths, University of London—worked with the leaked police video and other publicly available materials, such as the protocols related to the strategy for questioning and documenting the telephone and internet connections, which were key to the Halit Yozgat case. They created a 1:1 scale model of the crime scene and carried out a second reenactment of the situation (a reenactment of the reenactment or an evaluation of the evaluation) with actors, which they also documented. In their study, and with the input of external experts, Forensic Architecture concluded that either Andreas Temme must have seen the murderer or must have been involved in the murder of Halit Yozgat himself.

11. Henrik Olesen

Untitled, 2003

Throughout his career, Henrik Olesen has used existing images relating to systemic and physical violence committed against queer people. Olesen takes these images out of their context in print and online media, repositioning them in relation to images of queer protest. *Untitled* is exemplary of this method, showing a caché of images ranging, for instance, from police photographs of the murdered gay couple Gary Matson and Winfield Mowder and the murder victim Brandon Teena, seen with his girlfriend in 1993 (later remembered by the 1999 film *Boys Don't Cry*) to street demonstrations by the organization ACT UP, who began their activism during the AIDS crisis and went on to form chapters to fight homophobia worldwide.

Olesen looks for the continuity of anti-queerness in the evidence of images, a method that recalls the German art historian Aby Warburg and his *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, a collection of images compiled in the 1920s by Warburg and his collaborators on a series of fabric-covered wooden panels tracing recurring visual themes and patterns across time, from Antiquity to the Renaissance and beyond to contemporary culture. Within Olesen's provisional archive, we see photographic evidence from court proceedings, press clippings, and activist fliers identifiably from China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Israel, South Africa, and the United States from what is only, presumably, a two-year period around the second millennium. Within this snapshot of time, Olesen suggests that the penal codes and legal prohibitions against queerness across the world are embedded in a concurrent sexual and gender normativity that produces the violent effects of homophobia, anti-queerness, and transphobia seen on display.

We might ask, considering the brutality of some of these images, why would an artist focus on such negative aspects of queerness instead of the positive messaging that we see annually during Pride celebrations in the West and in the advertising of major corporations? As one of the slogans in Olesen's box suggests—"Confront all homophobia to eradicate it"—there is something to be learned about what we associate with images of queerness, the realities that are covered up by mainstream Pride celebrations and its commercialization, and the militancy needed in order to confront persistent forms of prejudice and bigotry.

16. Larry Sultan & Mike Mandel

Untitled, 1977/2005 (from the *Evidence* series)

A person in a space suit lying face down, a fallen rocket in the desert, an isolated refrigerated cold room with frost-proof insulated piping. Unaccompanied by captions telling us when, where, or why they were taken, the photographs on display represent nothing but themselves. Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel deliberately removed them from their original contexts to reflect on the consequences for their perception and understanding.

Over a period of two and a half years, the artist duo viewed more than two million photographs from altogether seventy-seven different photographic archives—of aviation and spaceflight companies and research institutions, gas and energy enterprises, and police and fire departments on the Californian coast. In 1977, they published a selection of fifty-nine photographs in a book titled *Evidence*.

Robbed of their original meaning, the images are strange and confusing. Their viewers are left to puzzle over whether the photograph of tangled cables, for instance, comes from the NASA archive or that of a fire department—and to ponder the issue of photography's function in general. In the work by Sultan and Mandel, the camera was used not as an artistic tool but as an image-generating device. All the photographs were intended to record, document, or provide evidence for something. As part of scientific experiments or forensic investigations, they served to furnish proof. But to what extent can a photograph really show us the truth? The loss of their documentary content and their relocation to a conceptual-artistic sphere bring charges against their evidence status and, indeed, their claim to objectivity.

Above and beyond the archival search, the outcome of the two artists' work is an image series showing us a world of peculiar machinery and mysterious measurements. In the temporal context of the 1970s, the photographs propose a counternarrative to the power centers where the future is created. Through insights into the experimental development process and technical innovation, the images formulate doubts about the rationalization of human sensibility and tell an unsettling story about our loss of trust in technology.

22. Gustav Metzger

Historic Photographs: Hitler-Youth, Eingeschweisst, 1997/2020

Under National Socialism, the Hitler Youth organization prepared young people for war and trained them as soldiers. It also served as an effective means of infiltrating the minds of society's emerging generation with propaganda. Both of the Jewish artist Gustav Metzger's parents, one of his siblings, and several close relatives were deported and murdered by the Nazis during the war; Metzger himself survived by escaping to England on a "Kindertransport" at the age of twelve.

The work *Historic Photographs: Hitler-Youth, Eingeschweisst* is literally hermetic—the image the title refers to is concealed from the visitor. Sealed between two metal plates, it is entirely hidden from view. Is the sight of what lies behind the metal too terrible to show?

The work is part of *Historic Photographs*, a selection of historical photos dating from the Nazi era along with other twentieth-century events, such as the Vietnam War. When Metzger made the series in the late 1990s, the images were already well known to the public through television and print media. He employed a range of different installation methods to make it difficult to see the subject matter, forcing viewers to invest a certain amount of effort—in part intellectual, in part physical—to access each individual motif.

In the case of *Historic Photographs: Hitler-Youth, Eingeschweisst*, the metal casing does not protect the public from the content. On the contrary, it demands that the viewer adopt an attitude and a clear position in response to the material void. Simple passive consumption is not possible here. And once again, the concern is with infiltrating minds, this time by way of the mass media. Metzger warns us of the danger that everything, even the gravest historical events, can deteriorate into mere entertainment—a mechanism that can lead to complete meaninglessness and political passivity.

25. Isaac Julien

Territories, 1984

On first viewing, *Territories* is an experimental documentary about the Notting Hill Carnival, which has been taking place on the streets of Kensington, West London, every August since 1966. Initiated and organized by the British Caribbean community, the carnival continues a tradition whose origins in Trinidad and Tobago in the nineteenth century provided former slaves an opportunity to celebrate their cultural freedom with masquerades, dances, and music. Although no more than a few hundred people initially participated in the London event, by the mid-1970s it had developed into a huge festival staged by more than 150,000. In 1976, the first street riots took place during the carnival, when primarily Black teenagers demonstrated against police racism, harassment, and abuse. In the years that followed—until 1984, when Isaac Julien made the film—the unrest resurfaced regularly, though on a smaller scale. To this day, calls to prohibit the carnival have come to naught, and in recent years, it has regularly drawn crowds in the millions.

Archival images of demonstrations are as much a part of the film as scenes shot amidst the carnival with a shoulder camera. Julien was particularly interested in calling attention to ethnographic encoding in the documentary genre, reversing it, and collaging realistic impulses around recordings shaped by Western visual habits. In voiceovers, carnival participants talk about their memories of the event and attempts by the police to prohibit it. The main commentary is provided by the voices of a woman and a man in equal parts. These alternating voices shift back and forth between "herstory" and "hisstory" and characterize history as a hegemonic, male-dominated domain. History thus becomes a realm in which the story of women and that of the Afro-Caribbean community have no place, no territory. On different levels, the film documents people's attempts to create a place for themselves to live life during the carnival celebration. Music such as dub and reggae dictate the rhythm of the movements, while passages from the writings of some of the foremost Afro-Caribbean thinkers—E. R. Braithwaite, Michelle Cliff, Paul Gilroy, and Kobena Mercer—broaden the film's abundant references to include theoretical as well as activist perspectives. The interplay between text, image, and music merges in a

history and theory slam, suggesting nothing less than the reorganization of old power structures into a new, yet-to-be-formulated field.

26. Dietrich Orth

Schlaf, 1987

Begleitung zu fließbandähnlichen Arbeiten, 1988

Schwerebild, 1988

Spiegelbild Attrappe, 1988

Vorläufer zum LSD Beruhigungsbild, 1990

LSD Beruhigungsbild, 1990

Painting was a conceptual practice for Dietrich Orth—both in terms of the details and the work as a whole. “The correct application of the brushstrokes is something that must constantly be achieved anew, again and again,” he writes, “while desirous thoughts are constantly entertained about the intrinsic value of the picture and its fabrication.” For his entire adult life, Orth experienced episodes of severe psychosis, due to which he repeatedly spent extended periods in psychiatric hospitals. He began to pursue painting in 1985, in his late twenties, as part of his art therapy while on a psychiatric ward.

Concept, desire, and fabrication are key words for the artist. Orth’s paintings *Vorläufer zum LSD Beruhigungsbild* (Precursor to LSD Calming Painting) and *LSD Beruhigungsbild* (LSD Calming Painting) readily demonstrate what this means in relation to his artistic practice. On the one hand, words are given space within his images—usually in the form of short, pointed remarks that testify to a certain self-will. On the other hand, he does not hesitate to create correspondences between words and images that are not necessarily explained by linear or causal logic.

Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s LSD was considered a miracle drug in the treatment of psychosis and schizophrenia, in the decades following, the substance was considered psychosis-inducing. Only in recent years has this changed. Today, LSD is again being used in psychiatry, but in different dosages. For Orth, LSD was the means of attaining his own unique understanding of the affective mechanisms of his nervous and perceptual systems—in the sense of his credo: “The observation and processing of the smallest particle of satisfaction is the strongest weapon against social chaos.” Orth’s paintings became “Anwendungsbilder” (application paintings) in the fight against social chaos, as the artist, who died in 2018, used to call them. They bear testimony to a practice of observing and thought-processing down to the finest line.

32. Jack Smith

Normal Love, 1963–1965

“Every time I look into the mirror, I could scream because I am so beautiful.” According to an open call Jack Smith published in 1963, actors interested in doing the voice-over for *Normal Love* were to apply with a recording of this line. It’s unclear who won the competition in the end or if Smith ever really intended to do a voice-over at all. Nevertheless, the sentence reads like a love letter to everything that animated Smith’s vision: glamorous rapture, hopeless naïveté, and glittering technicolor trash!

Accordingly, *Normal Love* drips from every pore with Orientalist clichés of lasciviousness and the fantastic creatures characteristic of twentieth-century B movies—along with some of the more unsavory tropes the genre usually trafficked in. In this orgy of over-the-top identities, a drag mermaid prays at a Santería shrine devoted to Dominican starlet María Montez, while a lecherous mummy tries to take advantage of the green cobra queen, not to mention the bacchanalia on a monumental Claes Oldenburg cake.

As a bohemian who enjoyed a thoroughly abnormal life, Smith was acutely aware of the inequities of the world he inhabited and the shameless phoniness of Hollywood in the face of it all. But for him, film and photography weren’t so much a way of exposing this reality as a means of escaping it—and fabulously so.

Describing *Normal Love* as a film might be something of an exaggeration. Despite its feature-length duration, it’s hard to discern any distinct plot or narrative arc. This doesn’t, however, have so much to do with lacking background information or the work’s “unfinished” state, but rather its conception. On the one hand, Smith advocated a kind of camp modernism that sought to liberate filmic images from verisimilitude, literary pretensions, and the confines of respectable taste, preferring instead to dissolve them into a viscous stream of color, rhythm, and pure artifice. On the other hand, and more specifically, the six or seven scenes that make up *Normal Love* were also used for what Smith called “live film.” In these live screenings, Smith would literally recut the film strips during the projection and remix them with new images, live music, and theatrical performances in sessions that could last up to four hours.

During his lifetime, Smith produced many different versions of *Normal Love*, and the singular official version was only compiled by Jerry Tartaglia posthumously in 1997. All the same, the images were intended to wash over viewers like the waves of a fever dream. Ultimately, Smith didn’t care so much whether his movies were understood. Rather, he wanted them to offer contact “with something we are not, know not, think not, feel not, understand not, therefore: An expansion.”

35. Lothar Baumgarten

Unsettled Objects, 1968/1969

The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, founded in 1884, houses the collection of the British army general-turned-archaeologist Augustus Pitt Rivers. Influenced by the social Darwinism popular in the day, Rivers developed a novel method of grouping objects according to their function in order to study the evolution of human designs and the cultures that produced them. Lothar Baumgarten's *Unsettled Objects*, a projection of eighty-one 35 mm slides in color, targets this historical form of exhibition-making as well as its supposedly scientific aspirations.

The objects on view in the Pitt Rivers Museum span every continent. Feathered headdresses from the Akawaio and Waiwai peoples of South America are classified alongside headdresses from the Manyema of East Africa and even those of indigenous Melanesians. But more than any clear formal similarities, what these objects share is a history of colonialism, which led to the decimation of many of the cultures on display. Although European audiences wondered at the collection's encyclopedic scope at the time, it was also inevitably a display of unspeakable violence.

Unsettled Objects orbits this disconnect between the history of colonialism and the ostensibly scientific mode of presentation. Wandering through the museum's main hall, the slides shift between overviews and close-ups. Here and there, the images are paired with verbs that refer to typical museum activities—"collected," "protected," and "classified." The free-floating past participles underscore the passivity of the objects while implicating the activity of an invisible agent. Moreover, the frequently unpredictable combinations of image and caption suggest a fundamental arbitrariness in the elaborate taxonomies.

Thus, Baumgarten not only emphasizes how this history of exploitation is excluded from such displays but also the way in which science is consistently instrumentalized to give such practices an air of legitimacy. While Baumgarten's criticism of the entanglement of colonialism and museum history was ahead of its time, his interest was not in simply pointing out that this was bad. Rather, he sought to show an analogous violence in the way museums extract objects from their original contexts and then recontextualize them through labels and display systems, ultimately robbing

the objects of any life of their own. Or, as Baumgarten put it himself, "one could say: museums love art to death."

39. Sky Hopinka

Just a Soul Responding, 2023

Endless roads and open vistas; the camera speeds along a highway somewhere in the American West: Washington, Utah, Oregon, or maybe even Nevada. Meanwhile, muted colors and reverb synths tinge the footage with a patina of memory. The opening shots of Sky Hopinka's video *Just a Soul Responding* invoke the quintessentially American mid-century genre of the road movie. Yet, the sense of free movement and limitless access to space that constitutes the currency of these films are the direct result of the dis-possession of those who once watched over the land. And as the voice-over announces early on, this film is about their journey.

As the lens glides over land and sea, the twin narrators tell of visitations from long-gone kin whose cracked voices and scarred skins testify to the lasting wounds of colonial expansion. At the same time, the montages that span the four different screens underscore the coexistence of multiple time lines. Here: the shadow of a speedboat as it jets across the water. There: a close-up of a craftsman's hand as he finishes a canoe. As a member of the Lummi Nation, the craftsman speaks about the function of canoes as status symbols in Indigenous culture as well as how property stolen from his grandfather is still stuck in the museum. Despite the injustices of the past, his calm voice betrays no resentment, whilst his steadfast labor suggests a quiet determination to keep tradition alive.

Then comes the song. In a series of close-ups, we see the JP Falcon Band performing a rendition of Three Dog Night's 1970s hit "Shambala." It sings of an epic voyage to a mythical kingdom, casting the tumultuous history evoked earlier in an entirely new light. Hopinka's work regularly draws on elements of documentary cinema and visual ethnography, though both are labels he has increasingly come to reject. Instead, the artist sees himself as layering sound, footage, and edits to recreate memories of spaces or the possibilities he recognizes in them. In Hopinka's own words, the montage is an attempt to "reconcile who we are, who we want to be, as well as who and what was lost along the way." Though many of Hopinka's works take specific histories as their starting point, they're also driven by the poetry of what it means to survive.

42. Henrike Naumann

14 Words, 2018

The installation *14 Words* consists of the cool, turquoise-colored furnishings of a former flower shop in the town of Neugersdorf in Saxony, Germany. Black and white ceramic and metal objects have replaced the shop's flowers and floral arrangements. Evidence of the hustle and bustle of everyday business is inscribed in the residues of dirt and dust on the empty shelves. In this work, Henrike Naumann explores the subconscious effects conveyed by the design of rooms and objects and the appearance of places that contextualize and materialize certain thoughts and feelings. Or, conversely, whether and how social structures are reflected and history is transported through datable and localizable designs of environments or objects. The transposition to the exhibition context of a real former shop structure facilitates a view of the shop in general as an institution. It is a place of trade, of the everyday turnover of merchandise, a semi-public space accessible during certain opening hours—in principle, a social medium for the exchange of goods and services—and the means to earning a living. Yet it also bears relation to community, hospitality, and the organization of society.

The title of the installation cites a white supremacist numerical code that originated in the US but is also common in Germany. Because the basic idea is expressed in fourteen words ("We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children"), the number is used as a formula in various neo-fascist contexts, including the video in which the German NSU (National Socialist Underground) terrorist group claimed responsibility for their deeds. The flower shop, thus, may also remind us that all nine victims of the NSU's racist murders were independent entrepreneurs who were killed on their own business premises. In a video work that is part of the installation, Naumann examines the ways in which ideologemes—fundamental ideological units—are encoded in words or numbers and transported and disseminated as formal elements.

43. Lewis Stein

Untitled, 1970

Untitled, 1970

Untitled, 1970

“These works while simple in form are somewhat complex in implication. To give some handle on them I will just point out that these paintings deal with an inversion of the usual illusion of figure-ground. Instead of floating in abstract space or relating to a ground as a context, the figures in these paintings have weight within the perimeter of the canvas. In a sense they are supported by its bottom edge. This is of course also an illusion—but an illusion of a different order.”

—Lewis Stein, *Paintings 1967–71*

While almost always considering himself a sculptor, Lewis Stein’s earliest public works were a series of minimalist paintings made between 1967 and 1971. According to Stein, his ambitions with these paintings reached a conclusion that led him back to sculpture. These paintings already suggest sculptural themes and possess an inherent “objectness” that was also implicit in the reasoning of American minimal art of the 1960s. Yet, unlike most minimal painting, Stein’s works took up the notion of reproducibility that was essential to the work of sculptors such as Dan Flavin or Donald Judd and applied it to painting. As such, Stein produced multiples of each of these paintings, again reconfirming minimal art’s claim to its place in time alongside both factory production lines and a new sense of the individual and their encounter with a work of art.

What they show is Stein’s early predisposition to seeing the object quality of a painting. This almost blunt, rather straightforward attitude would later lead him to produce a series of readymades, which, much like Cady Noland, looked at quotidian objects as embodiments of power and containment.

45. Éric Baudelaire

Un film dramatique, 2019

In France, one percent of the budget for a public building is dedicated to the commission of a work of art to be presented within its architecture. What would usually take the form of a sculpture or mural, here became a four-year film project with Éric Baudelaire and a group of twenty-one students from Collège Dora Maar in the northern Parisian suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis. The full scope of *Un film dramatique* (A Dramatic Film) lies within its intangible framing of a collective and critical awareness of what is possible as commons and what, as a result, becomes disruptive. Challenging the concept of authorship within a collective reality, what is initially thought to be a film about the students gradually takes form as a film conceived by them.

In answer to the rather elementary question of “What are we making together?” emerges faithful, instinctive interpretations of young modern lives: racism, class struggle, family ties, political violence, and the establishment of knowledge and discourse in plural form. Entrusted with handheld cameras, the students compose their own identities beyond the neutral educational context of a public school, evincing what brings them together as much as what separates them. Upon their already political bodies, some of them confess the Islamophobia they are beginning to feel in the days following the January 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris.

As a measure, the students never desist in questioning the mechanics of their film; is it fiction, a documentary, or a “dramatic film”? Perhaps it constitutes an attempt by a group of yet-to-become adults to interpret the blurred lines between reality and fiction—between what, as one of them puts it, is “self-evident” and what seems to be “an invented story.”

47. Jana Euler

GWF 10, 2020

A giant shark leaps straight upwards out of the water with great force. The monstrous creature depicted on the canvas displays a gaping mouth unevenly framed by sharp teeth. Wildly foaming sea spray rages around the terrifying beast. Yet it is not the wild—the ocean—from which the shark thrusts itself through the water's surface, but a tile-enclosed shower tub. Rather than proposing a vibrant masculine zest, the swollen-to-bursting veins of this super-erect body with its overtly phallic appearance seem to have been activated by fear.

Jana Euler's *GWF 10* is a part and an extension of a series of paintings she first exhibited at a gallery in Berlin in 2019 under the title *GWF*, short for "Great White Fear." Depicting a similar motif on each of the eight three-by-two-meter canvases, she varied the style, which ranges from abstract expressionist to hyperrealist and even surrealist methods of depiction. The exhibition was accompanied by an unusually short press release signed by the artist herself: "Who is afraid of what, what is afraid of whom. I think there is nothing in these paintings you would not see or miss, if left undescribed. Besides maybe that it is like with the Mona Lisa, they look at you wherever you are in the room." With poignant wit and seriousness, this series delivers a socio-critical commentary on power structures and fear in general and gender disparity in particular—in painting history and discourse as well as in the broader cultural context. Coinciding with the height of the #MeToo movement in 2019, the relevance of the series of paintings has only grown since its premiere—capturing as it does the increasing exposure of disturbing power dynamics, its resultant violence, and the fear-driven media coverage of related events.

Whereas we find ourselves at a safe distance from the earlier sharks because it is the ocean from which they spring, the one in *GWF 10* comes frighteningly close. Apart from reminding us of our own shower tub at home, the tile structures can also be understood as a visual pun on the so-called "network painting" in which context Euler's practice has often been discussed. And if we imagine the upward continuation of the pictorial space, neither associations with skylight ceilings in the museum nor with neon tube lighting in the bathroom are far-fetched. And herein

lies a reference to an institutional concern: painting's and painters' perpetual negotiation between the inner and outer world.

Meanwhile, the great white shark is completely captivated and we are left with it in the moment of shock.

50. Albert Oehlen

Alles andere, 1987

Dinge, 1987

Kaffee, 1988

Tiere, 1988

Familiensack, 1989

In the late 1980s, Albert Oehlen produced a series of two-color linocuts with protective sleeves. Characterized by typography, involving texts that appear more hand-painted than handwritten, in several of the prints, contorted and broken lettering surrounds a central motif—a baby on a cross, a portrait of a young man, or an anthropomorphic he-goat holding a painter’s brush, for example.

With some of the letters and parts of words turned on their sides or upside down, the artist reveals his work process, testifying to his free handling of the printing blocks. In these cases, the contrasts are softer, but many of the other prints exhibit harsh contrasts that, with a touch of irony, make aesthetic allusions to agitprop posters and those related to the civil unrest raging in Paris in May 1968.

In these works, Oehlen’s shrill, assertive texts quote activists and authors such as Guy Debord, Walt Whitman, and Louis-Ferdinand Céline. Two of the prints that refer to Situationism revolve around its rebellion against existing conditions. In the late 1960s, joining a kind of commando action against every form of established art, the Situationists challenged the legitimacy of painting. The painter generation of the early 1980s, for its part, masterfully threw taste and convention overboard, infusing the supposedly un-rescuable painting medium with a fierce and spirited dynamic.

Words associated with a critique of capitalism are used as an expression of approval and, understood as an accusation, confirm the loss of art’s revolutionary perspective. The reference to the raw, breathless verbal cascades of Céline, on the other hand, can be read as condemnation of the ongoing intellectual appreciation for the author’s openly antisemitic oeuvre. After all, no matter how radical, explicit, and rousing the style, fascination never redeems the context. As Oehlen himself remarked, “What does not exist, however, is the autonomy of the artwork. [...] One need only change the circumstances of a thing’s making and its entire value changes.”

55. Christine Sun Kim

Echo Trap, 2021

Christine Sun Kim compares language to music; subtle nuances change meaning, which arises from the interplay of facial expressions, signs, and tone. Sign languages communicate very clearly with playful complexity and nuances. With the help of one’s ten fingers, words are formed, while facial expressions, the movements of the mouth, as well as the speed, abruptness, elegance, and ease of the signs, form what is said.

Musicality comes not only from auditory sound, for the composed movements in sign language are intrinsic to its structure as visual communication. In the mural *Echo Trap*, Christine Sun Kim presents her drawn notation of the sign for “echo,” which unfolds in the space like a sound wave. In American Sign Language, a rebounding sound—the echo—is indicated by using the fingers of one hand to reach out and touch and then glide back from the palm of the other upheld hand. The “echo” is thus produced by the movement towards the open palm—which is held out as a resonating body—and the moment the other hand touches it, at which point the palm of the unmoving hand becomes a reflecting surface. This meeting point and the continuing reverberations of the echo are visually expressed in the mural. Its lines alter with every echo—like the way such a sound dies away, repeatedly returning but with a slightly altered sound.

The phenomenon of the echo metaphorically occurs in the relationships and communication between people who work with sign language interpreters. Is it truly possible to convey and repeat individual nuance, the personal quality of speech, into another language—let alone from visual to auditory communication—without distorting what is being said?

Imprint

This booklet is published in conjunction with the exhibition

Channeling

MUSEUM^{MMK}
23 September 2023 – 11 February 2024

OPENING HOURS

Tue–Sun: 11 am–6 pm

Wed: 11 am–7 pm

CURATORS OF THE EXHIBITION

Julia Eichler, Lukas Flygare

PUBLISHER

Susanne Pfeffer

MANAGING EDITORS

Julia Eichler, Lukas Flygare

TEXTS

Hugo Bausch Belbachir, Live
Drønen, Julia Eichler, Lukas Flygare,
Ann-Charlotte Günzel, Nadine
Hahn-Rübel, Theresa Patzschke,
Cord Riechelmann, Nicholas
Tammens, Stanton Taylor

COPY EDITING / PROOFREADING

Amanda Gomez, Tina Wessel

TRANSLATIONS

Judith Rosenthal

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Zak Group, London
Anna Sukhova, Frankfurt am Main

PRINT

Kuthal Print, Mainaschaff

COVER

Jack Goldstein, *A Spotlight*, 1972,
detail from film still, © The Estate of
Jack Goldstein / Courtesy Galerie
Buchholz

INSIDE FRONT COVER

Larry Sultan & Mike Mandel, *Untitled*,
from the *Evidence* series,
1977/2005, detail, © Larry Sultan &
Mike Mandel

IMAGE PAGES

Sky Hopinka, *Just a Soul Responding*,
2023, film still, © Sky Hopinka /
Broadway Gallery

Laurie Parsons, *Untitled*, 1993,
© Laurie Parsons, photo:
Axel Schneider

MUSEUM^{MMK} FÜR MODERNE KUNST
MUSEUM^{MMK}
Domstraße 10, 60311 Frankfurt am Main
mmk.art



I ask him if he prefers Paris or Rome.
Sweating back.

Was used about giving out the sea & not returning - so
to speak.

Must emotional conflicts keep us from experiencing reality
straight. sometimes - Impede my grace. potential: self
capture self interests. last. alone. rampant.

off to another metaphorical celebration. last. reaching out &
trying to give her. very little hits came back it seems.

in this context of water. one shadow sent of beheld. No
other sun streaks straight away out. suspended. a
given like a jelly. firm. single. with no current in
the body itself. Stairs, but not quite really. Yearning.

All the stairs would me has channels of yearning lead
maybe it? It only looks like stairs? I feel caught
in the channels while others seeing the seeming stairs.