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Press preview: 10 – 12 May 2017

Press conference at the German Pavilion: 10 May 2017, 12:30

Opening of the German Pavilion: 10 May 2017, 16:00

Artist: Anne Imhof

Title of the exhibition: Faust

Curator: Susanne Pfeffer

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CATALOG

Susanne Pfeffer (ed.): Anne Imhof. Faust

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PIECE

Developed in collaboration with Franziska Aigner, Billy Bultheel, Frances Chiaverini, Emma Daniel, Eliza Douglas, Josh Johnson, Mickey Mahar, Lea Welsch

Performers Franziska Aigner, Jackson Beyda, Billy Bultheel, Frances Chiaverini, Carla Daher, Emma Daniel, Alexandre Diop, Eliza Douglas, Busy Gangnes,

Thilo Garus, Josh Johnson, Melissa Livaudais, Mickey Mahar, Enad Marouf, Stine Omar, Theresa Patzschke, Lea Welsch

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Compositions Franziska Aigner, Billy Bultheel, Eliza Douglas, Anne Imhof

Musical Advisor Yoann Durant

Costume Design Eliza Douglas, Anne Imhof

Choreographical Assistance Mickey Mahar

Photography Nadine Fraczkowski

Dogs Ares Ayman, Astrea Sunshine, Beladith, Bivien, Rio Bianco, Nefertiti

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PRESS RELEASE

At the invitation of Susanne Pfeffer, Anne Imhof has conceived the work “Faust” for the German Pavilion at the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. In a sculptural setting designed specifically for the space and the occasion, the new piece unfolds unseen compositions, elaborated together with the core members of Imhof’s team. “Faust” is both a five-hour production and a seven-month-long scenario comprised of performative dynamics, sculptural installations, painterly touches, and rigorously choreographed visual axes and movements that encompass the entire pavilion. “Faust” belongs to an unconditioned present, the essence of which is conveyed instantly to the audience:

A room, a house, a pavilion, an institution, a state. Glass walls and glass ceilings, fluid and crystalline, permeate the room as if it were one of the centers of financial power. The boundaries of the space disclose everything, making it both visible and subject to control. The heightened floor elevates bodies and modifies spatial proportions. Next to us, below us, above us, there are the bodies of individuals, the bodies of the many. The performers, elated and degraded, move across, below, and atop the pavilion. They are stationed on freestanding glass pedestals and perched against the walls, simultaneously body, sculpture, and commodity. Suddenly, we find ourselves in the midst of various constructions of power and powerlessness, capriciousness and violence, resistance and freedom. Outside, in a territory of one’s own, dogs guard the house.

The scream falls silent as the delayed blow of the hand strikes its target. What looks like an embrace grows stiff, while the subdued battle of pent-up forces is raging. The muffled sound of the chest-beating fist [*faust*] trails off, the arm rebounds mechanically. Pressed against the glass, bodies are contorted beyond recognition, forming an indistinct, carnal mass. The hand quietly, self-sufficiently, pleasures the sex. The performers’ bodies are reduced to bare life. They can be analyzed in terms of their sexual economy. Masturbation as regression and resistance, as the death of sexuality and, at the same time, an image of sexuality served up exclusively for visual consumption. Pleasure does not originate in sexual intercourse but in the act of seeing and being seen. The mute howls bear witness to the ever-increasing pain of vanishing living beings and to the zombification of capitalist bodies. Dualistic conceptions and the frontier between the subject and the object of capitalism disintegrate. But how does power act when it splits away from subjects and turns them into objects? “It is a form of control [...] whose spread throughout the social body has never been so rapid or so undetectable.” (Paul B. Preciado) The essence of capitalism consists in unrestrained consumption and the destruction of bodies.

The transparent glass allows for the dissecting gaze of the audience to be directed at the performer (and vice versa); the cold, symmetric structure enables immediate observation as well as direct control. The glass that separates creates distance and a sense of self-perception: We become aware of our watching. Gazes cross, but no communication ensues. The performers perceive others, but there is no recognition, no acknowledgment. Post-gender, individualized, peculiar and yet stereotypical: such are the human figures enacted by the performers. The individual movements and gestures stand in contrast to the uniform flow of motions—remote-controlled via text messages—that are reminiscent of social codes, continuously internalized without reflection. These disciplined and fragile bodies appear as a material pervaded by invisible power structures. They are subjects that constantly seem to defy their own objectification. Media representation is innate to these biotechno bodies. The performers know full well that

their gestures are not ends in and of themselves, but only exist as pure mediality. They seem forever on the verge of transforming themselves into pictures ready for consumption; they aspire to become images, digital commodities. In an era characterized by an extreme degree of mediality, images, far from merely depicting reality, create it.

The contemporary biopolitical body is no longer a one-dimensional surface on which power, the law, control, and punishment are inscribed. Rather, it is a dense interior, a site for both life and political control exerted by means of exchange and communication mechanisms. A new subject arises that is both hormonal and powerfully networked across media. The beauty of bodies we see and consider as what they are—the result of self-optimization—is conditioned by the commodified pictorial economy to which we are all exposed. It lies not only in the eye of the beholder but in the perfection of the commercial cycle, the algorithms.

The sound of compositions resonates, specifically created for each of the performers' voices. At first, they are scattered across the room, eventually coming together as part of a technological network of mobile phones and building into a formidable solipsistic choir. Aimless individuality persists even as it clusters into groups. They may sing together, but their song is of the I.

The dog in the kennel, the dog and its master, the dog and its companion—these pairings are evidence of how cultural change has altered power relations. They are a symbol of the changing constructions of nature: Where there used to be a dualism between nature and culture, the world now presents itself as a kennel.

In a society that conceives guilt not in religious terms but as a matter of individual responsibility, that considers ill health not as divine punishment but as a personal failure, the body becomes capital and money the measure of all things. The body is a consumer item, handed over to the vagaries of the free market. Market rationality decides whether a body is worthy of protection—or whether it falls within the remit of a necropolitics. Capitalism brings the reign of money to its highest stage. Like in Goethe's play "Faust", we trade something that does not exist. The soul does not exist, the products of the financial sector do not exist and yet—or because of all this—the system functions. Only by forming an association of bodies, only by occupying space can resistance take hold. On the balustrades and fences, underground and on the roof, the performers conquer and occupy the room, the house, the pavilion, the institution, the state.

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ANNE IMHOF

Anne Imhof, born 1978 in Giessen, Germany. Lives and works in Frankfurt am Main, Germany

EDUCATION

2008 – 2012

Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste – Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

2000 – 2003

Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach am Main, Germany

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2016

Angst II, Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, Germany

Angst, Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland

Overture, Galerie Buchholz, Cologne, Germany

2015

Deal, MoMA PS1, New York, NY

2014

Carré d'Art – Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes, France

Rage, Deborah Schamoni, Munich, Germany

2013

Sotsb njyy, New Jersey, Basel, Switzerland

Parade, Portikus, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2016

The Grand Balcony, La Biennale de Montréal, Canada

Paris, 18e Prix Fondation d'entreprise Ricard, Paris, France

Ways of Living, David Roberts Art Foundation, London, UK

2015

IN MY ABSENCE, Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris, France

Our Lacustrine Cities, Chapter NY, New York, NY

Preis der Nationalgalerie 2015, Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, Germany

Works On Paper, William Arnold, New York, NY

Angelic Sisters, 186f Kepler / Chiesa di San Paolo Converso, Milan, Italy

Do Disturb, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France

Le Nouveau Festival, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France

Our House in the Middle of Your Street, Life Gallery, Vilma Gold, London, UK

New Frankfurt Internationals: Solid Signs, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt am

Main / Nassauischer Kunstverein Wiesbaden, Germany

2014

Boom She Boom, MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Tes Yeux, 186f Kepler, Paris, France

The Mechanical Garden and Other Long Encores, CGP London, Dilston Grove, London, UK

Trust (Vita Vel Regula), Fluxia Gallery, Milan, Italy

LISTE – Art Fair Basel, Performance Project, Basel, Switzerland

Henrik Olesen – Abandon the Parents, SMK Statens Museum for Kunst, National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen, Denmark

Die Marmory Show, Deborah Schamoni, Munich, Germany

Pleasure Principles, Fondation d'entreprise Galeries Lafayette, Paris, France

2013

Gemini, Galerie Francesca Pia, Zurich, Switzerland

S.O.A.P.Y. I, Neue Alte Brücke, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Freak Out, Greene Naftali, New York, NY

Restlessness in the Barn, Nassauischer Kunstverein Wiesbaden, Germany

Coded Conduct, Pilar Corrias, London, UK

2012

Zauderberg, Graduation show Städelschule, MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

2011

Andrei Koschmieder Puts, Real Fine Arts, New York, NY

Birth Of The Worm, The Leland Hotel Ballroom, Detroit, MI

PERFORMANCES

Angst

2016

Angst III, La Biennale de Montréal, Canada

Angst II, Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, Germany

Angst, Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland

Overture, Galerie Buchholz, Cologne, Germany

Deal

2015

Deal, 2nd of at least three, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France

Deal, 1st of at least three, MoMA PS1, New York, NY

Rage

2015

For Ever Rage, Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, Germany

Rage, 4th of at least three, 186f Kepler / Chiesa di San Paolo Converso, Milan, Italy

2014

Rage, 3rd of at least three, Carré d'Art – Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes, France

Rage, 2nd of at least three, LISTE – Art Fair Basel, Performance Project, Basel, Switzerland

Rage, 1st of at least three, Deborah Schamoni, Munich, Germany

Aqua Leo

2013

Aqua Leo, 1st of at least two, Portikus, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

School of the Seven Bells (Sotsb)

2015

Sotsb, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France

Sotsb for Deal, MoMA PS1, New York, NY

2014

Sotsb, Foster Variation, Carré d'Art – Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes, France

2013

Sotsb, 5th of at least four, Galerie Francesca Pia, Zurich, Switzerland

Sotsb, 4th of at least four, New Jersey, Basel, Switzerland

Sotsb, 3rd of at least four, Portikus, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Sotsb, 2nd of at least four, Pilar Corrias, London, UK

2012

Sotsb, 1st of at least four, MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Ähjeii

2013

Ähjeii, 7th of at least four, Portikus, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Ähjeii, 6th of at least four, Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland

2011

Ähjeii, 5th of at least four, Real Fine Arts, New York, NY

Ähjeii, 4th of at least four, The Leland Hotel Ballroom, Detroit, MI

Ähjeii, 3rd of at least four, Villa Romana, Florence, Italy

SUSANNE PFEFFER

Susanne Pfeffer (b. 1973) is an art historian and curator. At the Fridericianum in Kassel, which she has directed since 2013, she has curated exhibitions including the trilogy *Inhuman* (2015), *nature after nature* (2014), and *Speculations on Anonymous Materials* (2013) as well as retrospectives of the art of Tetsumi Kudo (2016), Marcel Broodthaers (2015), and Paul Sharits (2014). She curated the Swiss Pavilion at the 56th International Art Exhibition—La Biennale di Venezia, presenting a solo exhibition of the work of Pamela Rosenkranz. She was previously chief curator of the KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin (2007–2012) and a curator and consultant at MoMA PS1 in New York. From 2004 until 2006, she was artistic director of Künstlerhaus Bremen.

Susanne Pfeffer has also served as a curator for the São Paulo Biennale and the Lyon Biennale, at the Tel Aviv Art Museum, the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, and the Museion Bozen. She has realized highly acclaimed solo exhibitions for such artists as Absalon, Kenneth Anger, Joe Coleman, Cyprien Gaillard, Emily Jacir, Sergej Jensen, Renata Lucas, and Wael Shawky. Aside from theme-based exhibitions, such as *Seeing is believing* (2011) and *You Killed Me First. The Cinema of Transgression* (2012), she has also curated experimental group exhibitions featuring newly produced works, including *... 5 minutes later* (2008) and *ONE ON ONE* (2013). Susanne Pfeffer has edited numerous exhibition catalogs and artist monographs.

ANNE IMHOF AND SUSANNE PFEFFER IN CONVERSATION

SUSANNE PFEFFER

You don't work solely in the performative register. Visitors who enter the pavilion will see an installation, paintings, sculptures, and hear sound compositions. One way in which I think your art is contemporary is the way you keep reformatting and superimposing very different visual and formal dimensions. How did your approach evolve? Did you gradually shift between media, deciding to adopt new ones, or have you always worked in several media at once?

ANNE IMHOF

When I first moved to Frankfurt—I was in my early twenties—I played a lot of music and was in a band. I'd started to draw and paint when I was very young. I'd always wanted to be an artist. But of course there's an inside and an outside world, and individual socializations are very different. So what are the ways we learn to see pictures, to read them, and to feel that they're important to us? That became tangible to me the moment I began sharing pictures with others. Stepping back and looking at them from the beholder's perspective was crucial to me. That first came when I enrolled at the Städelschule and someone saw these drawings and painterly pieces I'd started doing much earlier, when I was ten or eleven.

SP

Did your background in music inform your decision to work with bodies and performers?

AI

Indeed, that was one way for me to chart a new approach. Making a performative piece was then in a sense something that grew out of this situation and allowed me to merge my music with my drawings. Opening up the concert form and presenting it as a kind of picture worked well for me, also because it let me make mistakes and try out many different things. Since then, a major aspect of my work has been that contingencies play into the process of finding visual solutions. I think there are strong parallels between the way I draft a work that's ultimately presented as a performance and the way I construct a two-dimensional image. There are the same considerations of perspective, the same considerations concerning gesture, the same symbolisms that come in, the posture of the body, layering, even the palette.

SP

Your rehearsals, too, are very much about the process, about finding something out together—and about improvisation. In an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, you once mentioned that your first piece went live on Münchener Straße in Frankfurt. To what extent was that first piece staged or deliberately planned?

AI

Hans Ulrich Obrist had asked me about my first work and I tried to remember: When was the first time I thought, I've just made art? So that night in the neighborhood near the train station in Frankfurt came back to my mind. I'd rented a venue, a table dance bar, during a time when it was usually closed, and organized a boxing match. I didn't really know what it was I was doing. I invited the fighters, I invited spectators, and I cast a band. They were supposed to make music during the fight. The people had to fight as long as the music was playing, and the band was supposed to play as long as they were fighting. So there was no way out.

SP

And how long did they fight?

AI

I don't really remember anymore — it's been a while, before I enrolled in art school — but noses were bloodied. I got a little scared, too, it was all pretty red — the table dance bar and the noses. Looking back on it, I realized that it had been one way to create a picture. I was interested in boxing, in its colors. I had a punching bag hanging in my apartment at the time and wanted to become a boxer.

SP

You have a very distinctive way of engaging your spectators, who become part of the action and decide for themselves whether to leave after five minutes or stay for six hours. The fact that that moment isn't predetermined strikes me as very liberating, and a conscious choice on your part. Was that clear decision to have a beginning and an end something you developed to set your pieces apart from other performative work, or did it ultimately grow out of that first piece at the table dance bar?

AI

No, having my pieces have a beginning and an end was something I wanted from the outset — I wanted the time in which something takes place and people come together to be limited, and a work should not be defined by arbitrary opening hours. A separate issue is the duration of the exhibition, which, like the piece, has its own temporality. I don't want the piece to feel like it's always there, because it isn't always there. Then again, it's also not of the order of a theatrical play — it's like a picture, just one that lasts only for a few hours. I lend the whole thing a finite aspect.

SP

Within the performance, there are very precisely choreographed sequences and movements that have been rehearsed in detail, down to the finger gestures. On the other hand, you very much work with the individuality of the various people who improvise within these predetermined structures. How did this collaborative approach evolve in your art?

AI

During the preparations there are processes that take place in the ensemble and processes in which I'm in the studio by myself. My team and I work on a form that comes into being in improvisation. That's true of the work on a new piece no less than of the production in the studio. The people I collaborate with there as well as for my pieces are very talented and contribute their own ideas. With the pieces, there's a set of rules they and I agree on, but then in the moment of performance those rules often shift, are ignored or broken. Like a law. And then there's another component that comes in, the viewers, to whom the sequences also need to respond.

SP

You've said that, from the very first rehearsals, when you talk about developing the piece, about movements and what movement can be, you work not just with words but also with drawings — which is another way in which a visual dimension is crucial to the process.

AI

We try to find a language in which we can communicate about the work. Drawing is the medium in which I can best articulate myself. Of course we also talk a lot, we discuss and try things out, but sometimes there are poses, like the inclination of a head, that I find easier to draw than to demonstrate. My paintings and drawings are based on compositional decisions very similar to those that underlie the performative pieces: working with lines, placing figures in a space that's two- or three-dimensional. So there are comparable processes, and still, it's relevant that the one thing is a painting or drawing and the other is a performance. The figures are then persons, there are moments when they may want something different at that moment from what I want.

SP

What's unusual about your pieces are the diverse contexts from which you cast your performers. Some have a background in visual art, others in music or philosophy, others again in dance or performance art — which is why, although you yourself have no training in dance, your more recent pieces have increasingly included dancelike movements.

AI

There's someone with a background in law as well. Thinking together about certain things even though everyone comes from a different field is a major part of the work. What I always try to push is, on the one hand, the figural aspect, the concrete work with bodies in the space and the time we inhabit. And on the other hand, the abstraction of movements that are initially very mundane or excerpted from mundane contexts. We repeat the movements until it's clear that the meaning is shifting, until we can't really tell anymore what that actually was. Just as, in painting, I also sometimes use a color until I no longer know what it looks like, until I can't remember the red anymore that I just created.

SP

You've mentioned that, in everyday life, you pay a lot of attention to the way people's movements change. There was a farewell scene you observed where a man on a commuter train wanted to give his girlfriend the middle finger as he was getting off, but he was so drunk that the gesture went off-kilter. This kind of deflection of a gesture is a recurrent moment in your work. Is it also the kind of moment of abstraction you seek?

AI

Yes, I at first observe and then I start making the very simple gesture everyone knows disappear so that its meaning grows equivocal. The figure slips away and keeps coming back. It's a moment that occurs a lot, and that's when it's especially interesting that we have these very different backgrounds and then work together — that, say, Josh Johnson is a dancer, that Franziska Aigner has a background in philosophy, and so the signifiers are also read in different ways and everyone has his or her particular expertise.

SP

Your work keeps a large distance from sculpture as it's currently understood, but the sculptural nonetheless occupies an important space in your work. You've spoken of props — objects or readymades — the performers use. Some of them are dysfunctional,

becoming sculptural objects in the space. Does the same process of abstraction play out between this availability of an object as an article of utility, its branding, and its formal properties?

AI

It's usually their surface that's crucial, especially the colors. In earlier pieces, that was often the basis on which I selected the objects, like which cans would be consumed or where and for how long they would appear, where that would flow. To what extent is that amenable to control, to what extent can each person individually control it, how does it inform the larger picture?

SP

The inclusion of liquids, which is often part of your work — what does it mean to you?

AI

I think it's primarily symbolic in nature, and then it spreads and flows; that was especially evident at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin because there the liquids spread so far and wide: They were running down the walls. Coloration is part of it, of course, and more generally the visual design of the space.

SP

There was the memorable scene at the Hamburger Bahnhof where Josh Johnson carried Eliza Douglas through the space on his shoulders as she sprayed a line on the wall. This act of taking possession of the space, of making it their own and asserting their ownership, that struck me as very powerful.

AI

There are fine distinctions. There's a difference between playing in a space and occupying it, perhaps also reoccupying it. I'm somehow not a fan of playing in it.

SP

How did you approach making the German Pavilion — a somewhat challenging space — your own?

AI

I started by placing and conceiving the figure in the space. I also imagined what might happen to the building in a distant future. I basically asked myself — how does someone move or appear in it who's aware of this space, and what does someone look like who's also aware of the space but has come for a different reason than the one he or she is watching. When I was first inside the pavilion, it struck me as really big. Especially from the outside, the architecture was totally overbearing, without any relation to my body. Once you enter the space, it also feels a little like a church. I see the center nave and the aisles, whose large doorways make no sense to me because they don't offer a view of the next room. They mostly make the body feel small. Then, when I left Venice, the space shrank in my imagination. And as though in a strange concertina effect, it kept getting bigger again every time I went there. So one idea was to allow the bodies to relate to the space in a more human proportion. And I wanted the space to remain transparent — no cladding, no masquerade that would veil the space and its history.

SP

Why did you decide to work with rather than against the pavilion's space?

AI

I wanted to take the art that will eventually be on view there seriously enough that it can stand up to the space, but without making that the guiding theme of my work. To

my mind, the building's hardness is a challenge, but it's also an opportunity. Although I go along with the space to a certain extent in order to underscore its architecture, my work nonetheless runs counter to it. Not hiding the architecture but leaving it as it is or even reinforcing it is also a statement. There's a brutality to the architecture that I can respond to.

SP

We're currently working on inserting a glass floor into the pavilion that will alter the proportions between body and space. Which role does glass as a material play for you?

AI

The materiality of glass is hard but transparent. Everything that's behind it remains visible. The floor lets me insert a surface, a plane, without anything disappearing behind it. It can separate things from each other in a way that's intelligible as such. The use of glass also relates two architectures of power to each other. Naked glass of one variety or another is the material of first choice whenever it's about money and power, as in bank buildings, for example. And I wanted the floor so that the bodies of everyone who enters the pavilion would be raised. It lets us face the building in a different way. On the other hand, it lends the body a weight that might become dangerous as well—when it falls, it falls on glass. Despite the material's hardness and stability, although the floor could support more than 600 people, the glass, to my mind, also evokes fragility and liquidity.

SP

Francis Bacon exhibited his pictures behind glass. It allowed him to downplay the painterly aspect and heighten the interrelation between figure and space. That would seem to be a reduction to the relation between line and figure similar to the one that plays a part in your work.

AI

That makes a lot of sense to me. And then of course glass in a way always focuses your attention on the space you're in and reflects your image back to you.

SP

In Venice, the exterior around the pavilion will be part of the work as well. Rather than limiting the exhibition to the interior space, you conceive of the entire building as a body you inspect and engage with from the outside as well as inside.

AI

It was important to me to think about the approach to the pavilion. In the Giardini, each pavilion occupies a defined plot of land and represents a nation. But where does the plot end, where—if you understand the building as a body—does that body end and the other's body begin? What does it look like, and to what extent is its skin, which is to say its delimitation, visible? That's where the pavilion's columns become interesting to me and emerge as a central element. The portico with its massive size constitutes an intermediate space. The columns will be sheathed in glass and attacked in such a way that the body that's inside—be it the body of a dog that lies there or a person's—is encased together with the column.

SP

What you just said about the body and skin as a boundary reminds me of the significance of, say, the navel in *Angst*, where it figured as a point of connection or cut.

AI

And especially as a symbol of origin. The acts of exhibiting the navel and shaving it held great significance for me, both in the piece and in the paintings that were shown in connection with it. Shaving the navel was almost like a surgical moment that evoked the idea of its removal. On the other hand, passing the hand over the surface of the skin was like a caress. I associate similar ideas with the surface of the canvas and its materiality.

SP

Shaving, when you think about it, is a strange cultural technique. And what was interesting in your piece was that the performers often also shaved the soles of their feet or other places where no hair grows, making the gesture seem like an empty ritual.

AI

To my mind there was also something of an almost perverted cleansing ritual to it. It's said that people clean the palms of their hands after masturbating as well. That's where the idea of shaving the palms came from.

SP

Masturbation is also in the background of the work here in Venice. Another image you're working with is the physical posture of a dog, and dogs as such. How did you come up with the idea of working with dogs?

AI

I liked the nexus of devotion and dog. And thinking dog and man as undergoing a shared transformation.

SP

There are very different directions in which that thought could be pursued: The dog can be read as a domestication of the pavilion, in the sense of making the building a home. Conversely, the dog can also express its own domestication. Or be seen in its function as a guardian.

AI

Plus dogs are adornments, status symbols, and property. That's exactly the ambivalence I'm interested in. And the impression of something that's been abandoned, that's already over and yet must be managed and kept running. Also in the sense of decay and precipitous fall. Having dogs where there are no humans right now, which is to say, dogs as proxies for the absence of a human body. The dogs are just there. At the same time I imagined how their movements translate to the figures in the space, what happens when someone gets down on all fours in front of someone else. And then I wanted the building to be open but not accessible in its entirety, even though people can see everything.

SP

As with the levels of the glass floor, the fence we're going to put up in front of the pavilion is always a separation, or, in this instance, even more a territorial barrier that encloses and excludes. To what extent does your work with the performers reflect on the relation between power and powerlessness?

AI

That's in many ways a crucial point. To what extent are very simple movements like bowing one's head or kneeling bound up with hierarchies? To what extent may they be signs of devotion to the other, an indication that lets the other know that he is

understood in his alterity? That's being shown as a picture in the space. The figure becomes a portrait.

SP

When you say portrait, do you mean a representation of an individual or one of society?

AI

The portrait, to my mind, is primarily a form of looking at and representing the individual, which is to say, the form in which I understand or remember him or her. My work is often about making a portrait, though the people I portray aren't necessarily identifiable individuals and didn't sit for me. It's often based on pictures or photographs that I collect, that I recall and then don't even necessarily need to look at again.

SP

Your work has frequently been described as a *tableau vivant*. But that doesn't seem the right label to me, since there is the awareness on the part of the performers that they themselves become a picture at the moment of the action. Your creative process often starts with a picture, followed by the performance, which you capture in photographs, then you make paintings after the photographs, producing different representational formations that conversely affect the performance. This formatting of the picture incessantly generates individual pictures of a movement that is extracted from its continuity. As though the action were disintegrating into separate frames at the very moment it is seen.

AI

A piece, as I see it, functions not unlike a painting. This "becoming a picture" is the actual work. How do I compose a larger picture, and how do the various parts that come into being relate to the whole; how do they evolve along that trajectory, and how can the pictures be elaborated in different media?

SP

So it's a technique that helps you find compositional solutions?

AI

Absolutely. And there's no reason not to represent and reveal that. But whether the final product is a performance or a painting doesn't make a big difference for how I handle it. Of course, in the performative work, there's a collaborative process, and so there are several minds at work on the abstraction.

SP

If you push the movements into abstraction so that we can no longer assign them to a referent, which role do the viewers play in that?

AI

Sometimes the point of a movement is really just to bring something else to light. The open mouth, for example, is sometimes no longer a mouth but a black orifice that opens up and that's connected to something else that's happening concurrently. These moments make sense only from an observer's vantage point. That's why positioning the individual performers in the space is so important: occupying a position and leaving it again, changing direction and keeping in mind how that changes the perspective of the person who's watching it. Venice will be the first time these movements will take place not just horizontally but also vertically, not unlike in an arena, but without a center.

SP

Your very deliberate handling of the gaze takes up a quite classical theme in the history of art.

AI

What I think is fascinating is how scopical formations function within a picture—often quite independently of the beholder's gaze—which is to say, how the gazes of the figures depicted in a painting and their gazing at each other plays out.

SP

Besides the placement, these axes of the gaze are crucial to your work with the distribution, the governance of bodies in the space. Generally speaking, biopolitics has taken on a very different and new significance in our society in recent years. We see it in the ways people use their bodies differently today, as in which liquids we put inside them and extract from them. How do you think our bodies are currently changing?

AI

There's an ongoing conflict in my pieces between the predetermined structure and the persons who act within it. Bodies are always also products of our environments, of the technologies and forms of power imprinted upon them. As such they're apt to illustrate something. My focus is primarily on surface effects and their reflection. How do you present the body, and what might exposure look like when you don't want to be naked? How do we show ourselves today and face up to the other's gaze? How are we looked at, and how do we look back?

SP

I think it's fascinating how the sound increasingly effects a—figurative as well as tangible, architectural—displacement and interpenetration of very different spaces. There's the space the performers limn with their bodies, the space the music adds, the actual space, as well as the gaps between them that you work with.

AI

At the Hamburger Bahnhof, there was the haze I used to produce a uniform white backdrop, blurring the building's architecture in order to open up temporary new spaces. It was the attempt to create a level surface on which a great deal happens concurrently without there being a central perspective from which to take it all in at once. What I'm getting at is that music in my work shapes space in a similar way. Sounds and silence engender surfaces or spaces within the space, and then I place figures into them. I'm working with Billy Bultheel and Eliza Douglas on the musical compositions for the Venice Biennale. The music is meant to be much quieter than that in *Angst*, which grew out of operatic structures and teased the expectations elicited by the title. And since Eliza joined the team, vocals—I was previously the only one to do any singing—are back in the pieces. So now there are more classical song structures and the voices have become more prominent.

SP

The acoustics in the German Pavilion are tricky, almost impossible, and I'm very impressed with how you handled them. You treat the long reverb in the space not as a problem you're trying to resolve—instead your question is how to overcome surfaces or distances in such a space. So you work with the space rather than against it. What's the approach you're taking right now?

AI

So far, in Venice, we've worked not only on the space but within it in a concrete way, actually trying out what it's like when you whisper in it and how long the voice is sustained when you sing a note, how long it's sustained when you scream that note. What kinds of screams are there, are they audible from outside or not? The central musical theme of the piece is like an ancient melody that's woven into everything. It keeps resurfacing in the various compositions, being hinted at so that you recall it, and at other times it's rendered so abstract as to be unrecognizable.

SP

Each of your pieces is different, and so is each performance, which unfolds in the interaction with the visitors and is dependent on them as well.

AI

The moment the others come in, it's no longer obvious who's actually shaping and deciding what. Who's the one leading and who's the one following. Everyone's together in one space and that's what allows it to happen in the first place. Although it may seem like the picture is self-sufficient, the presence of the viewer is something we can never rehearse in advance. A picture doesn't work without the person looking at it.

Translated from the German by Gerrit Jackson.

DARK PLAY: ANNE IMHOF'S ABSTRACTIONS JULIANE REBENTISCH

AESTHETIC VAMPIRISM

“No double,” Sarah Kofman writes in *Mélancolie de l’art*, “without devouring, without *cutting into* what, without it, might have passed for a full, self-sufficient presence [...] In art we encounter not a ‘realm of shades’ distinct, in a simple opposition, from the real world of the living. Art upsets the opposition between these two worlds, makes them slide into each other. The shade now haunts the living form ‘itself’ (if the latter were still identifiable as such).”¹ Our fascination with art, Kofman argues, is similar to that with which we contemplate a corpse. Not unlike a dead body, art confronts us with a “double of the living that resembles it so closely it might be mistaken for it, and yet is not it.” A mirror of the living that, instead of affirming it, sucks it dry, draining it of its imaginary substance, its self-evident and unquestionable reality.

Anne Imhof has devised a way to bring the vampiric and structurally morbid dimension of aesthetic negativity to bear in an art form that may seem ill suited to it—it is conventionally associated with the catchphrase “living co-presence.” She achieves this not so much on the plane of content, although vanitas motifs sometimes circulate in her works, but rather through her staging of the structure of performative co-presence itself. The peculiar impassiveness of her performers, their indifference, undermines the impression of a space-time shared with the audience. At bottom, however, this is merely the explicit entry into the performance itself of a paradox that is constitutive of all performance art and obfuscated by the discourse of “living co-presence”: the paradox of an absence operative within presence. The world of the performers is disconnected from ours; the gazes with which we fix them have nothing to do with lived reciprocity. Indeed, the audience, however close it may choose to come to them, is not really interested in the performers’ lived reality. The fascination of the performance lies elsewhere: in the transformation of the living. Imhof’s pieces demonstrate the melancholy that implies. The performers find themselves “detached in splendid isolation, transformed by the magic of art into a still life” — “regardless of what the subject may be.”²

It stands to reason that they seem to be acting in the permanent expectation of being fixed by photography. Yet the deadening operation of transformation-into-image does not take place only in the pictures of Nadine Fraczkowski, the photographer with whom Imhof collaborates; it already overshadows the performance itself. In its vampiric interest in the transformation of life into image, Imhof’s art — which she describes as painting — indeed extends into a very different art form. Even where the performers emphasize their living presence, they turn out to be strangers, belonging to an “inaccessible elsewhere,”³ another ontological order, as though behind glass. Discussing the art of Georges Bataille, Kofman goes so far as to speak of a “sacrifice of reality.” For it is not a simple elimination of reality or its supplantation that takes place here but its alteration — just as, according to Bataille, the sacrifice “alters, destroys the victim, kills it, but does not neglect it.”⁴ Once art has done its magic, the living reality of the performers is there without being there: undead.

SOMETHING IS TAKING ITS COURSE

Unlike in *Waiting for Godot*, where the horror is that nothing happens, Stanley Cavell has argued, the horror in Beckett's *Endgame* is that something does happen.⁵ "Something is taking its course," Clov says more than once.⁶ A change is occurring, but it is not a product of subjectivity in action. The figures in *Endgame* live in a sphere beyond possible agency, and so they are also no longer characters in the traditional sense; they are sufferers who go through "something," clowns whose every act, every initiative goes absurdly awry. Even language seems to befall them rather than being spoken by them. Meanings lead a life of their own, and the subjectivity stripped of meaning regresses into pure physicality. As Clov says to Hamm, "Mean something! You and I, mean something! (*Brief laugh.*) Ah that's a good one!"⁷

Something is taking its course: The line from Beckett echoes in Anne Imhof's works. Not even those moments when something is performatively happening—in other words, when there is "action"—dispel the atmosphere that makes it impossible to determine *what* is happening, and if any of it means anything. Even, say, the interludes in *Angst II*, some of which suggested abstract versions of circus stunts—a live animal, a falcon, was carried around; someone balanced on a tightrope; there was the minimal form of a human pyramid (one performer on another's shoulders)—were executed so laconically that they came to resemble the more mundane activities. The latter for their part were staged in a way that lent them spectacular qualities: One Diet Pepsi can after another was opened and squeezed against the wall, the contents running down the whitewashed surface; the cigarette smoke drifting from open mouths mingled in dramatic fashion with the fog with which Imhof had blanketed the scenes. Similarly, the precisely choreographed duality in her pieces of movement and motionlessness, of running and reclining, feeds into a latency period, an extended dramaturgical void, in which whatever is taking its course seems to happen to the performers rather than being performed by them. Yet her very contemporary "epilogue"⁸ to subjectivity marks the state of alienation no longer by presenting the bodies as cut off from meaning, as in Beckett's world. On the contrary, there is no escape for them from meaning.

The figure of this endless openness to investment with meaning is not the clown but the fashion model. That is not only because the model can be anything, but also because there is nothing about him or her that is not ultimately amenable to being fetishized. Back in the 1950s, Kirk Douglas's dimple, a detail that defied the razor blade as well as investment, was ostensibly a stumbling block for the culture industry's production of the "handsome guy," but this very recalcitrance proved to be an especially marketable mystery. More recently, the industry has learned to purposely produce such details. That is why Imhof's performers, precisely because their singularity is on demonstrative display, represent something universal. They all look like contemporary models, regardless of whether they actually are professional models or might be discovered by an agent. Their uniqueness is under the spell of universal commercial exploitability. Everything about them—including and especially their queerness—is commodifiable down to the last detail. "Mean nothing! You and I, mean nothing! (*Opens mouth in an expression between sexual pleasure, anger, and a yawn.*) Ah that's a good one!"

MIMETIC ASSIMILATION TO ALIENATED LIFE

The "new spirit of capitalism,"⁹ where it rules,¹⁰ generates structures within which the objective shifts from standardizing the subjects in accordance with certain role models to exploiting their potential for deviation. In other words, it homes in on the very point that, to Hannah Arendt, for instance, still acted as the barrier to the "degradation of the human person [...] prevalent in commercial society":¹¹ the fact that the person's aliveness escapes "all generalization and therefore all reification."¹² This potentiality,

the individual's excess above and beyond any concrete—economic and/or theatrical—performance, is exactly what is now prized in the commodity that is labor. To the extent that it is put on display, that is to say, it presents itself as a version of what it can be; the optimum version, surely, but forever only a version. None of the images of the self is to assert itself as the true image; what must be demonstrated is that the subjects are one thing above all: open to the future. On the other hand, that same openness must prove its compatibility—it is restrained; potentiality is subject to “modulation”;¹³ difference is domesticated.

Imhof's works stay true to the emancipatory promise of an unfixable difference, the promise of an un-reified queerness; not in some kind of “artistic” excess over its domesticated version meant to establish a zone of authenticity against the corrupted rest but, on the contrary, by worming their way into the state of alienation such that it becomes perceptible and can gradually be set at a distance. Alienation is accordingly neither the object of an explicit critique nor exhibited with a clinical air, as though a standpoint external to it were possible; distance, here, instead derives from the experience of alienation's patterns. Imhof's genius for abstraction lies in the way she distills the universal from the particular, the social from the psychological, the quotable gesture from the ostensibly individual expression, in short: in performing the mimesis of alienated life as an assimilation to an objective reality.¹⁴ In this regard she turns out to be a contemporary allegorist: Selected elements are wrested from the lived contexts in which they are embedded and preserved in quotations that, in their repetition, confront the spectator with the shocking absence of living abundance.¹⁵ Once again, the allegorist's procedure betrays a certain melancholy, an anti-presentism that has become accustomed to seeing death looming in life.

FAUSTUS

It is certainly not a coincidence that performance art is Imhof's medium. The performance has come to play a key role today to the extent that its dynamic of permanent self-transgression has emerged as the paradigm of immaterial labor.¹⁶ Imhof's plays have their moment, their emphatic contemporariness, not least importantly in the way they let the artistic medium intersect with the social productive force—not in order to erase the difference between art and non-art, but so as to engender out of their proximity a new distance: dialectical images. As dialectical or thought-images, Imhof's performative tableaux must nonetheless be read; for their pictorial constellations provoke the verbal punch line they at once withhold. Legible and illegible at the same time, unfolded and sealed, frozen and disintegrating, Imhof's dialectical images achieve their effects not in the space of manifest knowledge gained but out of a space of aesthetic latency. Each of her scenes appears in provocative superficiality, and each appears fraught with meaning. The alternatives stand starkly apart and suddenly metamorphose into each other along the dissociation of vacuous surface and intellectual depth, in whose repulsions all living presence is undercut, also and especially the presence of the performance.

In Imhof's dialectical images, the performance itself comes into view as a commodity fetish. In financial capitalism, this quality of performance, its fetishistic aspect, is a consequence of the fact that it tends to break free of the particular subjective purposes of a given moment. It is interesting no longer primarily for its concrete utility in a particular setting, its application, and instead for what transcends that setting: the possibility of prospective actualizations, its applicability, a promise of a future. Yet for this promise to be realized, the performative capacity of the subjects must be shown to possess a certain quality: It must be exhibited or staged as essentially flexible. The potentiality of the performance then attains a virtually separate existence above and beyond its possible actualizations. The alienation that is at issue here is no longer that between subjects and things; it is one between the subject and itself-as-agent.

The subject prompted to mold itself in accordance with economic criteria is Faustian, restless in its pursuits, forever racing ahead of or trying to catch up with itself: such a subject knows no “instant of fulfillment.”¹⁷ On the contrary, the lopsided orientation towards its allegedly endless possibilities perverts its future into a present and condemns its genuine present to an ahistorical timelessness. Here the economic consciousness already reveals itself to be an unhappy one. What is more, to the extent that the subject cannot but live in a concrete world with concrete constraints and accept responsibility for its actions, the postulate of lived infinity is doomed to fail. Hence the symptom of the neoliberal attempt to actually install the (self-contradictory) idea of an abstract infinity (which is historically associated with Romanticism)¹⁸ in the space of praxis: the perversion of the euphoric sense of possibility into a feeling of emptiness.

WELTSCHMERZ

Under these conditions, *weltschmerz*, the artist's heroic melancholy, has long joined the enemy, the world, where it spreads as the depression of the masses. Neurosis was the ailment that signaled the cost to the individual of the identification expected by society with the role models of a certain social order. Depression, by contrast, is the pathology that highlights the cost associated with the interpellation to the individual to invent — and keep reinventing — himself or herself beyond society's models. Oedipus, locked in conflict with the paternal law, has been superseded by Narcissus, devastated by an overly ideal image of himself. Depression is the narcissistic pathology suggesting the individual's struggles in trying to live up to an ego-ideal that ascribes to the self the capacity to defy all constraints in projecting forever new versions of itself in its performances. The flip side of this requirement is depression: a precariousness of identity that entails not only a sense of inferiority but also an apathetic disposition and indifference in acting, even a severe lack of motivation that makes it difficult to initiate an action in the first place.¹⁹

The choreographies Imhof develops in collaboration with her performers — Franziska Aigner, Frances Chiaverini, Mickey Mahar, and others — make the two sides, virtuoso performance and depressive collapse, blend into each other to the point of indistinguishability. The triumphant gesture of outspread arms deflates because it is unbearable or just because it must make room for the next gesture. Similarly, deceleration, the tortoise's pace, figures here not as the liberated other of the generalized performance framework but simply as its shadow and inverse. The transition between the two: a pirouette on a slanted glass floor. The dark general mood suffuses the scenes in their entirety. It is set not least by the musical compositions; in Imhof's *Faust* (Fist), some of them toy, in a laconic and unfussy way, with the fatalism and indeed defeatism that loom in the march, especially the baroque march. Each song and piece is assigned to an individual performer, yet all share an undertone of melancholy. This darkness suits a generation-specific taste, but that does not mean her works should be dismissed as an intellectual fad: They subject that taste to a work of abstraction, bringing out its objective core. What comes across as melancholy in Imhof's pieces is the identification, reflecting on itself as negative, with the real negativity of the social state of affairs. The undeniable hipness factor is one reason, perhaps the most salient reason, why their profound melancholy should not be equated with a generation's penchant for doom and gloom. The darkness they explore has seized their audience long before the performance. In that sense, Imhof's works would be not so much pieces with a vague depressive air as rather pieces performed *before* depressives.

IT WAS REALLY NOTHING

The implication of the audience in Imhof's work is a consequence not least importantly of its open form. An atmosphere prevails in it in which everything is meaningful — or

nothing is — because whatever is gathering is kept in suspension. Yet this impression is elicited not solely by the specific world the work represents. It is an effect also of the manner in which that world presents itself. The open structure of her productions is designed to allow the zone of indeterminacy that traditionally cordons the work of art to become temporarily entrenched in the surrounding non-artistic reality. Rather than posing self-contained worlds before an audience, she creates situations in which spectators become attendees who, if simply by virtue of their positions and movements in the space, exercise a latent influence over what happens. However, this influence should not be mistaken for some sort of participatory “involvement” of the audience in the performative work. No community comes into being here. Not only does the asymmetry between performers and audience persist, even when the former, as guardians of a sort, stand very close to the latter. The audience, too, does not remain what it was; the openness of the situation explodes its unity. No path is prescribed, no place is assigned to the audience, and so the details — of the architecture, the things, the performers’ or other attendees’ gestures and figures — become elements in an anti-/dramatic action whose spectators are constitutively individuated. Furthermore, because there is no unequivocal narrative, no dramatic action, in Imhof’s performative arrangements, everything appears potentially significant to this individualized gaze, as even the most ordinary and incidental detail is disfigured into its theatrical double, becoming dissimilar to itself or uncanny. In retrospect, there may have been *nothing*, or certainly nothing that could be ascertained in the world. Yet this nothing is not nil; its name in aesthetic theory is “semblance.”

Imhof’s *Angst* trilogy demonstrated that, in this regard, aesthetic experience shares certain traits with the experience of anxiety. Martin Heidegger writes in § 40 of *Being and Time*, the section on the “Fundamental Attunement of Anxiety as an Eminent Disclosedness of Being,” that once a spell of anxiety has ebbed, we typically say: “It was really nothing.”²⁰ Yet instead of closing the lid on anxiety, Heidegger argues, this commonplace articulates one of its basic features. The object of anxiety — unlike that of fear — is essentially indeterminate. Fear always fears something specific in the world, whereas anxiety is directed toward nothing in particular; the source of the threat, in this sense, is indeed “nothing” and “nowhere”: It cannot be identified as a concrete object in the world and so also cannot be localized. Anxiety has no foothold in the world. Instead, in anxiety, the concrete surrounding world in its practical meaningful relevance “sinks away.” “The ‘world’ can offer nothing more” to the anxious person, “nor can the fellowship-in-existence [*Mitdasein*] of others.”²¹ Anxiety isolates because it alienates the individual from the world — the world of things as much as the social world. The true object of anxiety, Heidegger concludes, is not anything in the world but “being-in-the-world itself,”²² which anxiety strips of its everyday ordinariness. The world, in anxiety, ceases to be familiar, it becomes *un-heimlich* — the way the presence of something in the dark becomes palpable, obtrusively so, because it can no longer be seen clearly.²³

The experience of such an alienation from the world precipitated by anxiety, Heidegger goes on to argue, is nothing less than the condition of the possibility of an existential self-choice that lifts the individual above its indolent being-at-home in “average everydayness” and into freedom for his or her own possibilities.²⁴ Yet clearly this assertion, buoyed as it is by the heroism of a choice in favor of authenticity, largely ignores the nexus between anxiety and the damaged life. For anxiety — as the feeling of being exposed to the alienness of the world as such — is mounting among those who are not members of a community whose habits, entrenched language games, and practices remain dependable even when there is reason for fear.

DREADING THE UNCANNY

As Paolo Virno has pointed out, the distinction between fear and anxiety, between relative and absolute danger, necessarily ceases to be persuasive in a situation in which the destabilization of the ways of life has become the new normal—in which “no longer having fixed customs” is itself becoming customary: “The permanent mutability of the forms of life, and the training needed for confronting the unchecked uncertainty of life, lead us to a direct and continuous relation with the world as such, with the imprecise context of our existence.”²⁵ In an increasingly deregulated labor market, the threat of the loss of one’s job is constant and concrete; the consequent precariousness of one’s way of life is existential. Determinate fear and indeterminate anxiety fuse into a new dread of what Virno calls “the uncanny.”²⁶

In another sense, too, this novel experience undoes the distinction between fear and anxiety. Where fear, due to the determinacy of its objects, is public in nature, anxiety isolates the individual. Under the aegis of the uncanny, the experience of “not-being-at-home”²⁷ has now become universal. “There is nothing more shared and more common, and in a certain sense more *public*,” Virno writes, “than the feeling of ‘not feeling at home.’”²⁸ The experience of the uncanny is a concern of the many; it is the central experience of the multitude.

Imhof’s works mobilize the aesthetic becoming-uncanny of the world in such a way that its experience allows the social condition of the uncanny to become alien in turn, to shed its familiarity. The fact that this reflection, aesthetic reflection, is constitutively a reflection of individuals, underlines not only the difference between aesthetics and politics but at once also the gulf that separates the implicit public of the scattered multitude from a political public. Closing this gulf, however, is an endeavor for which we will have to leave the spaces of art. It is time. They are leaking.

Juliane Rebentisch’s and Kerstin Stakemeier’s essays were written in a dialogue between the two authors. Translated from the German by Gerrit Jackson.

1
Sarah Kofman, *Mélancolie de l’art* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1985), 18.
2
Ibid., 16.
3
Ibid., 17.
4
Ibid., 16.
5
Stanley Cavell, “Ending the Waiting Game: A Reading of Beckett’s *Endgame*,” in *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 115–62, esp. 158.

6
Samuel Beckett, *Endgame, a Play in One Act: Followed by Act Without Words, a Mime for One Player* (New York: Grove, 1970), 13, 32.
7
Ibid., 33.
8
Theodor W. Adorno, “Trying to Understand *Endgame*,” in *Notes to Literature*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 259.
9
Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2005).

- 10
The new spirit of capitalism does not simply supplant the old one — the two coexist.
- 11
Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 211.
- 12
Ibid., 187–88.
- 13
Maurizio Lazzarato, “The Concepts of Life and the Living in the Societies of Control,” in *Deleuze and the Social*, ed. Martin Fuglsang and Bent Meier Sørensen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 171–90, esp. 178.
- 14
This aspect aligns Imhof with the Baudelairean tradition; see Theodor W. Adorno’s discussion of Baudelaire in his *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2004), 28.
- 15
For a discussion of allegory inspired by Walter Benjamin’s readings of Baudelaire, see Anselm Haverkamp and Bettine Menke, “Allegorie,” in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe: Ein historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*, vol. 1, ed. Karlheinz Barck et al. (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2000), 49–104, esp. 94.
- 16
See Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, trans. Isabella Bertolotti, James Cascaito, and Andrea Casson, foreword by Sylvère Lotringer (Los Angeles and New York: Semiotext(e), 2004).
- 17
See the widely debated study by Hans Christoph Binswanger, *Geld und Magie: Eine ökonomische Deutung von Goethes Faust* (Hamburg: Murmann, 2005), according to which *Faust II* portrays the modern economy as an alchemical process centered on the creation of paper money. The (colonial) entrepreneur Faust has faith in the infinite proliferation of capital, which makes “the future the present and the present timeless” (ibid., 73). However, as Binswanger argues, Faust’s “attempt to overcome time” is bound to fail “because, in the realm of artificial monetary values, the real losses bound up with the realization of profits can no longer be recognized” (ibid., 77).
- 18
On the political-ethical critique of Romanticism in Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Carl Schmitt, see Juliane Rebentisch, *The Art of Freedom: On the Dialectics of Democratic Existence*, trans. Joseph Ganahl (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2016).
- 19
See Alain Ehrenberg, *The Weariness of the Self: Diagnosing the History of Depression in the Contemporary Age*, trans. Enrico Caouette, et al. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010).
- 20
Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. and foreword by Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2010), 181.
- 21
Ibid. (translation modified).
- 22
Ibid.
- 23
See ibid., 183.
- 24
See ibid., 182.
- 25
Virno, *Grammar of the Multitude*, 33.
- 26
Ibid.
- 27
Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 182.
- 28
Virno, *Grammar of the Multitude*, 34.



Federal Foreign Office

The German contribution to the Biennale di Venezia, the 57th International Art Exhibition, has been commissioned by the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany and is being realised in cooperation with the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa).

The Federal Republic of Germany is traditionally represented at the world's most important biennial art exhibition with an official contribution commissioned and funded primarily by the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany and presented in the German Pavilion.

On the recommendation of the Federal Foreign Office Art and Exhibitions Committee, which is composed of renowned museum directors and art experts, the Federal Foreign Minister appoints a curator, who is responsible for selecting the participating artists and organising the contribution in cooperation with the ifa.

With the German presentation at the Biennale d'Arte, the Federal Foreign Office aims to contribute to a vital and creative art scene both in Germany and abroad and to promote the international exchange of art and culture. The Biennale d'Arte is not only a magnet for art lovers the world over, it is also a pathbreaking forum for contemporary positions and artistic reflections that attracts people from all over the world.

www.auswaertiges-amt.de

ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)

ifa's main objective is to promote international exchange in the fields of art and culture. Since 1971 and on behalf of the German Federal Foreign Office, the ifa has coordinated and realized the German contribution to the Biennale di Venezia.

Renowned international artists such as Gerhard Richter, Joseph Beuys, Jochen Gerz, Ulrich Rückriem, Hanne Darboven, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Hans Haacke, Nam June Paik, Katharina Fritsch, Gerhard Merz, Rosemarie Trockel, Martin Kippenberger, Candida Höfer, Tino Sehgal, Isa Genzken, Ai Weiwei and Hito Steyerl have exhibited at the German Pavilion at the Biennale di Venezia. A Golden Lion has gone to the German contribution on five occasions: 1984 Lothar Baumgarten and A. R. Penck (Commissioner: Johannes Cladders); 1986 Sigmar Polke (Commissioner: Dierk Stemmler), 1993 Hans Haacke and Nam June Paik (Commissioner: Klaus Bußmann), 2001 Gregor Schneider (Commissioner: Udo Kittelmann) and in 2011 Christoph Schlingensiefel (Curator: Susanne Gaensheimer).

Through its support for biennials and exhibitions abroad, since 1982 ifa has also supported artists who are represented at the international art biennials. As a centre of competence on academic research into biennials, the ifa is a firm part of global networks of biennial organizers. It is a founding member of the International Biennial Association (IBA), founded in 2012. In 2000, in cooperation with partners the ifa initiated the conference series "Biennials in Dialogue", which has taken place among others in Christchurch (2015), Karlsruhe (2014), Shanghai (2008) and Singapore (2006). Together with the Biennial Foundation and other partners from the biennial world, the ifa arranged 2012 the "World Biennial Forum", an international network meeting of the world's biennial organizers: The event took place in 2012 in Gwangju, China and in 2014 in São Paulo, Brazil. In this context, the ifa publishes the findings of the forums. For further information on ifa publications on biennials, please visit www.ifa.de/biennalen.

Promoted by the ifa at the Biennale di Venezia 2017

In the main exhibition, curated by Christine Macel, the participation of 19 German artists or artists living in Germany, including Nevin Aladag, Léonor Antunes, Kader Attia, Michael Beutler, Julian Charrière, Mariechen Danz, Olafur Eliasson, Andy Hope, Alicja Kwade, Marwan, Peter Miller, Agnieszka Polska, Anri Sala, Yorgos Sapountzis and Jeremy Shaw is supported by ifa's exhibition funding programme. In 1993 the ifa provided grants for the first time to enable German artists to participate in the main exhibition. In 1999 that financial support was placed on a regular footing.

ifa's Visual Arts Department

Exhibitions abroad

In some 40 solo shows and thematic exhibitions world-wide, the ifa presents 20th and 21st-century German visual arts, photography, film, architecture and design. These exhibitions tour for several years and reach many locations off the beaten international art track.

The exhibitions are intended to be platforms for dialogue. For this reason, no exhibition opens without an accompanying cultural education programme. The coming programme will also include various types of co-creation and co-production. Local positions and references can thus take their place in the exhibition, such as the "The Whole World is a Bauhaus", a show planned for spring 2018.

In its work abroad, the ifa initiates artistic platforms, workshops and conferences on pressing social discourses that are then addressed from the vantage point of art. For example, a key topic the ifa is addressing at the "Staging the City" conference in November 2017 in Teheran is that of public space. Designers, architects and urban planners will meet for the first round of talks, and a subsequent conference in Berlin will integrate the positions of musicians and filmmakers.

ifa galleries in Stuttgart and Berlin

The ifa galleries in Stuttgart and Berlin provide space for international artistic perspectives from Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Islamic countries. In future, both venues will place the emphasis on a thematic focal point: The gallery in Stuttgart prioritizes cooperation with institutions and universities. The plan includes a summer studio where students will respond to substantive focal themes. One such theme will be architecture. The gallery in Berlin addresses the field of colonialism.

Promotion of the free art scene

In Germany ifa is the central institution for funding the free visual arts scene as regards projects abroad. To the extent that there is a link to intercultural exchange, funding may also be possible for events in Germany. In this context, the ifa provides open advisory formats, makes information available, and enables an exchange of experiences between fellows and art projects it funds.

Online magazine Contemporary And (C&)

At this year's Biennale di Venezia contemporary art from an African perspective will be represented in seven pavilions: Angola, Egypt, Ivory Coast, Kenya, South Africa, Zimbabwe and, for the first time, Nigeria. The online magazine ifa has published since 2013 – C&, contemporaryand.com – will report extensively on the Biennale di Venezia in the form of features, interviews and essays as well as portraits of the artists taking part both in advance and on the ground in Venice. It will feature artists William Pope.L, Mark Bradford and Abdoulaye Konaté and Achraf Touloub and even an extensive article on the Kenyan Pavilion, which opens for the first time in 2017.

About the ifa

ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) is an independent intermediary organisation and one of the most important institutions for international art exchange. With its work ifa helps shape Germany's foreign cultural and educational policy. The focus is on creating networks and platforms that strengthen intercultural dialogue. ifa stands for international art funding and substantive interaction between cultural activists in Germany and countries in transformation.

ifa is financed by the German Federal Foreign Office, the State of Baden-Württemberg and the State capital of Stuttgart.

For further information please visit www.ifa.de

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La Biennale di Venezia 2017: Dornbracht sponsors contribution by Anne Imhof for the German Pavilion

Iserlohn, April 2017

The 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia is set to start on 13 May 2017. For the third time, Dornbracht will be sponsoring the contribution for the German Pavilion which is to be designed by Anne Imhof this year. Especially for the German Pavilion, Imhof is developing a piece of work which travels through space and time, comprising sculptural, installative and performative elements. In her scenarios, she envisions how the human body is constituted within material and discursive, technological, socio-economic and pharmaceutical demarcations.

In its personal and social dimension, the physical describes a range of topics with which Dornbracht has been preoccupied for many years within the framework of various cultural projects and discussion formats. For example, the company sponsored the videos and installations presented by Rosemarie Trockel in the German Pavilion on the occasion of the 48th Biennale di Venezia as well as Gregor Schneider's solo exhibition entitled "Totes Haus u r", which was awarded a Golden Lion at the 49th Biennale di Venezia.

Since then, the tension between physicality, intimacy and publicity has remained a starting point for Dornbracht Culture Projects: for example, the one-hour "Dendron" dance performance by Mark Jarecke, presented in 2005 as an initial edition of the "Dornbracht Performances" series at the Milan Furniture Fair, or the "Into Me/Out of me" exhibition sponsored in 2006. Only recently, the New York artists' collective DIS picked up on the theme with its *The Island* (KEN) installation developed in collaboration with Dornbracht and Creative Director Mike Meiré: a hybrid product which links the otherwise separate areas of the (social) kitchen and the (private) bathroom. Within the framework of the third Triennale by the New Museum ("Surround Audience", in spring 2015), *The Island* (KEN) was the setting for a performance organised by DIS and featuring alternating actors.

And Dornbracht has also often collaborated with Susanne Pfeffer, curator of this year's German Pavilion. In 2012, the company promoted the "One on One" exhibition which she curated in the Kunst-Werke Berlin, thereby re-addressing the issues of privacy and publicity. The concept of the exhibition was based on an unfiltered confrontation by the visitor with art: alone with the piece, without being observed or influenced by others. A supporting event entitled "Public Intimacy" took place in the form of "Dornbracht Conversations 4" which involved Susanne Pfeffer, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev and Jeremy Shaw discussing the loss and repositioning of privacy with Charlotte Klonk.

"We are delighted to be able to pick up on this range of topics in the form of this renewed sponsorship of the German Pavilion which is also of particular importance in our everyday work", claims Managing Partner Andreas Dornbracht. "Exchanges with artists such as Anne Imhof are a significant component of our brand awareness and deliver key impulses in order to continually develop bathroom and kitchen design."

Following on from Anne Imhof's work for this year's German Pavilion at the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, Dornbracht will be hosting the sixth edition of the "Dornbracht Conversations" series in *The Magazine* at London's Serpentine Sackler Gallery on 23 May 2017. Participants in this discussion will include Anne Imhof, Susanne Pfeffer and the Swiss curator Hans Ulrich Obrist.

Dornbracht Culture Projects

In its capacity as an international manufacturer of premium design fittings and accessories for bathrooms and kitchens, Dornbracht has been promoting selected exhibitions and cultural projects since 1996. Originally intended to further expand the idea of a “culture in the bathroom”, lending it complexity, credibility and relevance, the discussions now have a more far-reaching quality. Meanwhile, we have a continuous exchange of ideas, a dialogue between independent artists, musicians, architects, designers and the company.

The Dornbracht Culture Projects comprise six series: Statements, Performances, Installation Projects, Sponsorships, Edges and Conversations.

More information available at: <https://www.dornbracht.com/culture-projects/>

About Dornbracht

Aloys F. Dornbracht GmbH & Co. KG, with headquarters in Iserlohn, is a globally active, family-run manufacturer of high-quality designer fittings and accessories for bathroom/spa and kitchen. The Dornbracht brand claim “Culturing Life” continues the years of discussion and debate about these environments and expands the company’s fundamental design and water expertise: technological innovation to promote connectivity and comfort, and the prevention of ill health through a focus on daily well-being, will increasingly characterise the company’s future brand orientation and product development. Dornbracht is forever designing - and cultivating - life anew. A long-running cultural commitment through the Culture Projects provides Dornbracht with an ongoing source of fresh inspiration, while advancing innovation and technology leadership in bathrooms and kitchens. The intelligent, open Smart Water system makes Dornbracht one of the first to transpose the opportunities and possibilities of digitalisation to these environments. Dornbracht is part of the Dornbracht Group that, along with Alape, brings together two premium bathroom and kitchen suppliers.

More about Dornbracht online:
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Finanzgruppe Deutscher Sparkassen- und Giroverband

Press release

La Biennale di Venezia: opening of German Pavilion 2017, with sponsorship from the Savings Banks Finance Group

On 10th May 2017, the German contribution to the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia – will open in the German Pavilion. For the third time in succession, the Sparkassen-Kulturfonds of the German Savings Banks Association (DSGV) is the main sponsor of the German Pavilion – this year in conjunction with Deutsche Leasing and Deutscher Sparkassenverlag.

“Together with the documenta exhibition, which we have also been sponsoring for many years, La Biennale di Venezia is one of the most influential exhibitions in the field of the visual arts. With our support we hope to encourage people to engage with various art forms and to contribute to an intercultural dialogue,” said DSGV President Georg Fahrenschon.

Held every two years, the International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia showcases current trends in international contemporary art. Since 1909 the German contribution has been exhibited in its own pavilion. Susanne Pfeffer, Director of the Fridericianum in Kassel, is curating the German contribution in 2017 and presenting a spatially and temporally large-scale work by artist Anne Imhof.

The Savings Banks Finance Group is Germany's largest non-public promoter and sponsor of arts and culture, providing funding of more than 130 million euros per year.

The German Savings Banks Association (DSGV) is the umbrella organisation for the Savings Banks Finance Group and encompasses 396 savings banks, seven Landesbank groups, DekaBank, nine regional building societies, eleven savings bank direct insurers and many more financial services companies.

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PRESS RELEASE

Art at Würth – An Integral Part of our Corporate Culture

Künzelsau/Germany, The worldwide trade with fastening and assembly materials is the core business of the Würth Group. The parent company of the Würth Group, Adolf Würth GmbH & Co. KG, was founded by Adolf Würth in Künzelsau in 1945. After the early death of his father in 1954, Prof. Dr. h. c. mult. Reinhold Würth, today's Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Würth Group's Family Trusts, took over the company. The company began to expand into international territory in 1962 as the first foreign company was founded in the Netherlands. In 1963, Würth Italy was established. The company employs approximately 3,000 people and reported a sales volume of EUR 412 million in the last year. Today, the Würth Group has more than 71,000 employees on its payroll and over 400 companies operating in more than 80 countries.

At Würth, we do not consider the company to be the mere sum of all its operating results. Ambitious architectural manifestations and a diverse cultural and social commitment have been as much a part of Würth's corporate culture as the combination of visionary thinking and concrete action.

This is why, as far back as in 1991, an art and technology museum and a hall for events were integrated into the administration building of the Group's headquarters in Künzelsau-Gaisbach on the initiative of Professor Dr. h. c. mult. Reinhold Würth. This way, art and everyday work are meeting at eye level. In 2001, the in-house museums were complemented by the opening of Kunsthalle Würth in Schwäbisch Hall, only 20 km away from the Group's headquarters. The most recently opened museum, Johanniterkirche, is located in Schwäbisch Hall as well. It was opened in 2008 and hosts the Würth Collection's medieval works. Exhibitions have been organized at Künzelsau-based Hirschwirtscheuer since 1989. All museums are funded by Adolf Würth GmbH & Co.KG.

Since 1999, associated galleries have been opened successively at the Würth companies in Austria, Denmark, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Switzerland. Based on the Künzelsau model, they all serve the inspirational co-existence of art and everyday business. The work of all galleries is based on the art collection of the Würth Group, which currently comprises more than 17,000 pieces of art. Modern and contemporary art are at the heart of the collection, along with several special collection themes and late-medieval paintings and sculptures. The museum exhibitions are complemented by an extensive cultural program in the truest sense of "life-long learning".

The interaction with art promotes tolerance and association skills and sparks new ways of thinking. Without the latter, neither the future of technology, nor the future of our economy and society would be conceivable. For this reason, Adolf Würth GmbH & Co. KG is supporting the German Pavilion at the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The German Pavilion at the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia has been realized on behalf of the German Federal Foreign Office and in cooperation with ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen).



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The realization of the exhibition would not have been possible without substantial support from the following partners and patrons, to whom we are most grateful:

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