

Checklist / press release

Artists: Alexandra Leykauf and Dominik Styk

Exhibition title: What We Do in the Shadows

Venue: GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen, Germany

Date: 19. February – 15. May 2022

Photography: Franziska von den Driesch

Press release

The GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst is pleased to present the two-person exhibition of Alexandra Leykauf (*1976) and Dominik Styk (*1996): *What We Do in the Shadows*. From different viewpoints, the two artists address perspectives and proportions while questioning the expectations and positions of the viewers. Within each artist's practice, one grounded in photography and the other in sculpture, the eye and body become entangled. It is neither about the image nor the object itself, rather about how they can be approached, and the hierarchies, projections and desires that become revealed or shifted therein.

Alexandra Leykauf often works with photographic imaging processes, where questioning the relationship between image and viewer, and context and space is central to her work. Being conscious of illusionist techniques such as pareidolia or trompe l'oeil, Leykauf exploits the gaze as both a communicative and deceptive element. She maintains an on-going interest in landscape and horizon as an obvious reference point for a person's gaze. Throughout her practice, she removes certain images of landscapes from publications that seem to look back at her. Using photo emulsion, she processes these pages so that a face emerges from the landscape painting, thus allowing for a counterpart to materialize. Such counterparts continue to turn up in the other works of the exhibition: from photograms wedged between glass doors, to a video of animated public animal sculptures in Berlin, to a fox relief. Perspectives become altered in which the human gaze observes more than just an object in the picture, and as a result shift the hierarchies inherent to one's gaze.

While the fox and the doors make reference to body sizes in Alexandra Leykauf's images, Dominik Styk's works are much smaller in scale. His sculptures and installations often illustrate their narratives at low levels close to the ground, allowing idiosyncratic landscapes and horizons to take place.

With a simple but effective sewing technique, Dominik Styk produces abstracted forms that are simultaneously strange and familiar. Occasionally the form is created only from fabric, but in other instances Styk encases everyday objects and natural substances such as rootstocks. In a double bind between appropriation and alienation, the repetitious stitches in Styk's sculptural works create tightly bound figures of fabric. As objects, they may recall upon a cuddly toy elephant stuck within, but similar to the behaviour of mushrooms or moss, the process of stitching is also reminiscent of overgrowth. These visual patterns reflect a symbiosis, or organic coexistence, that is omnipresent in nature, but the attractive and often shiny surface of the fabrics remains evidently visible as an artificial construction. The materiality of fabric hints to the human body, especially since some objects are wearable and occasionally used by Styk in his performances. Their forms typically involve openings and passages through which potential dwellings or nests arise for unknown beings. At the same time, these organic structures regularly become being-like themselves, as is the case of the aforementioned elephant. This process alters a range of dualistic relationships; between subject and object, of using and serving, or constructed and found, all of which dissolve into one-another through their entanglements. As the gallery becomes populated by Styk's works, a fictitious landscape develops within the space, creating a second level. Within this setting, one may discover counterparts, traces, shadows, constellations, wishes and desires.

A large-format poster by Alexandra Leykauf provides the visual backdrop to the exhibition, showing a sheepskin on which a laptop is standing. The screen's image displays the transition between the dark cave and the surrounding landscape in Lascaux, where the silhouettes that belong to a tree and two humans distinguish the image's boundary. The entire front part of the picture gets lost in the darkness of the cave, along with its clear attributions. Knowing that, thanks to elaborate photographic reproduction techniques, Lascaux exists several times (currently I-IV) only adds to this. Thus, *What We Do in the Shadows* questions where our gaze leads to, what remains visible and hidden, and what becomes revealed depending on which point of view one takes on.

Curated by Annette Hans

Events

Thu 17 Mar 2022, 7 pm

Guided tour with Sarah Maria Kaiser

Fri 06 May 2022, 7 pm

Reading / Book presentation by Eske Schlüters

Thu 12 May 2022, 7 pm

Lecture by Oxana Timofeeva

Sun 15 May 2022, 3 pm

Guided tour with Annette Hans

Alexandra Leykauf (*1976), lives and works in Berlin. Studied at the academies in Nuremberg and Amsterdam as well as the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten. Solo and group exhibitions (selection): 2021 Kunstverein Springhornhof, Kunstverein Siegen; 2020 Villa du Parc, Annemasse (FR), KM Berlin; 2019 Künstlerhaus Dortmund, Galerie Bo Bjerggaard, Kopenhagen (DK); 2018 Focal Point Gallery, Southend (GB), 2016 Les Rencontres de la Photographie, Arles (FR), 2015 GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst Bremen. Works in collections at Centre Pompidou (FR), Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (FR), Royal Dutch KPN Collection (NL) among others.

Dominik Styk (*1996), lives and works in Hamburg. Studies at HfBK Hamburg with Michaela Mélian, before scenography of alternative and puppet theatre at DAMU, Academy of Performing Arts Prague (CZ). Exhibitions: 2022 Kunstforum Rottweil; 2021 Galerie Města Blanska, Blansko (CZ), 35m2 gallery, Prag (CZ), Galerie A.M.180, Prag (CZ); MÚTÓ, Budapest (HU); 2020 Jiri Svestka Gallery, Prag (CZ).

Instagram:

@gak_bremen.de

@alexandra_leykauf

@dominikstyk

GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Teerhof 21, D-28199 Bremen
More information: www.gak-bremen.de

Image caption:

GAK_22LS_FvdD_01

Dominik Styk: Mudpact Series, 2022. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Franziska von den Driesch

GAK_22LS_FvdD_04

Dominik Styk: Mudpact Series, 2022. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Franziska von den Driesch

GAK_22LS_FvdD_06

Alexandra Leykauf and Dominik Styk. What We Do in the Shadows, exhibition view, GAK 2022. Photo: Franziska von den Driesch

GAK_22LS_FvdD_08

Dominik Styk: Mudpact Series (Detail), 2022. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Franziska von den Driesch

GAK_22LS_FvdD_09

Alexandra Leykauf and Dominik Styk. What We Do in the Shadows, exhibition view, GAK 2022. Photo: Franziska von den Driesch

GAK_22LS_FvdD_10

(Front) Dominik Styk: Mudpact Series (Detail), 2022. Courtesy the artist. (Back) Alexandra Leykauf: Ohne Titel I-VI, 2020. Courtesy: KM, Berlin. Photo: Franziska von den Driesch

GAK_22LS_FvdD_12

(le-ri) Alexandra Leykauf: Altogether Now, 2021. Courtesy: Galerie Martin van Zomeren. Alexandra Leykauf: Ohne Titel I-VI, 2020. Courtesy: KM, Berlin. Photo: Franziska von den Driesch

GAK_22LS_FvdD_13

Alexandra Leykauf and Dominik Styk. What We Do in the Shadows, exhibition view, GAK 2022. Photo: Franziska von den Driesch

GAK_22LS_FvdD_09

Alexandra Leykauf and Dominik Styk. What We Do in the Shadows, exhibition view, GAK 2022. Photo: Franziska von den Driesch

GAK_22LS_FvdD_21

Alexandra Leykauf and Dominik Styk. What We Do in the Shadows, exhibition view, GAK 2022. Photo: Franziska von den Driesch

GAK_22LS_FvdD_23

Alexandra Leykauf and Dominik Styk. What We Do in the Shadows, exhibition view, GAK 2022. Photo: Franziska von den Driesch

GAK_22LS_FvdD_24

Alexandra Leykauf and Dominik Styk. What We Do in the Shadows, exhibition view, GAK 2022. Photo: Franziska von den Driesch